

**MINUTES OF the 12<sup>th</sup> PEE DEE RIVER BASIN COUNCIL (RBC) MEETING (HYBRID FORMAT) HELD ON MAY 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, at Clemson Pee Dee Research and Education Center, Classroom #240 Darlington, SC 29532**

**RBC Members Present:** Walt Beard, Tim Brown, Doug Newton, Megan Hyman, Frances McClary, John Crutchfield, Buddy Richardson, Michael Bankert, Jeff Steinmetz, Jason Gamble, John Rivers, Michael Hemingway, Snipe Allen, Bob Perry, Cara Schildtknecht, Cliff Chamblee, Eric Krueger, Cynthia Walters, Lindsay Privette, & Hughes Page

**Absent:** Cricket Adams, Brandon Durant, & Jeff Parkey

**Planning Team Present:** JD Solomon, Matt Lindburg, Scott Harder, Brooke Czwartacki, Andy Wachob, Joe Koon, Leigh Anne Monroe, Hannah Hartley, Alexis Modzelesky, Tom Walker, & Chikezie Isiguzo.

**Total Attendance:** 40

**1. Call the Meeting to Order (Buddy Richardson, Chair of RBC, J. D. Solomon (Facilitator))**

**a. Review of Meeting Objectives**

JD Solomon (the Facilitator) called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and welcomed members to the 12<sup>th</sup> Pee Dee RBC meeting. The main objectives of the meeting included receiving the statement from the SC Department of Agriculture, reviewing groundwater resources, and a presentation from McCall Farms.

He announced that a member of the Pee Dee RBC resigned from the Pee Dee RBC. The reason mainly is that the scope of Pee Dee RBC does not meet his current objectives in the Waccamaw River. Going forward, the Pee Dee RBC will decide whether to fill the vacancy created by his exit, especially if there are alternates from the sector he represents.

**b. Approval of Agenda, April 28th Minutes and Summary**

The agenda was unanimously approved. Tim Brown made a motion to approve minutes and summary documents, which Michael Hemingway seconded and which were unanimously approved by the RBC.

**2. Public Comment (JD Solomon)**

There were no public comments. Also, there were no Agency comments.

**3. Statement from SC Dept. of Agriculture (Norris Thigpen, SCDA)**

Norris Thigpen, Director of Agribusiness Development (SCDA), read a statement on behalf of Hugh Weathers, Commissioner of SCDA. A copy of the statement was submitted to the Pee Dee RBC (**see Appendix**).

4. **Review of Groundwater Resources (Brooke Czwartacki, SCDNR)**

Brooke Czwartacki reviewed groundwater resources in preparation for other presentations based on USGS modeling.

She described the South Carolina Physiographic provinces, Blue Ridge, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain. Narrowing down to the Coastal Plan, she noted that it encompasses two-thirds of the state, characterized as a wedge of sand, clay, silt, and limestone. She described elevation range from 470ft at Fall Line to Sea level at the coast.

Brooke emphasized that Groundwater is an important resource in the Pee Dee basin. The Crouch Branch and McQueen Branch aquifers are the primary aquifers used in the Pee Dee Basin, and the aquifers are highly transmissive with large volumes of water. She noted that regional groundwater declines have been observed due to pumping rates exceeding the recharge rates. She illustrated the areas of decline using Groundwater-level data and potentiometric maps. She explained that these datasets could identify data gaps and inform where additional monitoring is needed.

5. **Food Production Presentation (Thomas Hunter, McCall Farms)**

Thomas Hunter spoke about the importance of water in food production. He introduced McCall Farms, explaining that it focuses on washing, processing, and canning of farm products for the market. It sources its farm products from local farms within South Carolina and from other farms in the United States. He explained the process of canning farm products, highlighting the quality of canned products and emphasizing that there is no added preservative.

Thomas described the variety of plants processed by the farm and how the mix supports the operations of the farm. They include Greens, Spinach, Green Beans, Squash, Tomatoes, Peanuts, Sweet Potatoes, Rutabagas, Cabbage, and Black-eye Peas. About 50% of these products processed by the farm are grown in South Carolina, and the farm supports SC farmers to operate a sustainable and timely process, planting crops that can support lower water use. The farm employs all local labor and operates its facilities all year round. The farm captures the methane gas and reinjects it into the natural gas stream. It also has a state-of-the-art water treatment facility that helps it reinject processed water into the system.

Finally, the farm prides itself as “family owned, and USA grown.”

6. **Field Trip (Travel to Farm Tour – Woodard Farms, Darlington, SC)**

The members of the Pee Dee RBC proceeded to Woodard Farms for a guided tour of the cotton farms focusing on water management practices and viewed a Center Pivot audit live demonstration.

7. **Closing Comments (Jason and JD Solomon)**

The facilitator and Matt Lindburg will meet with the committees before the next meeting to kick off the chapter writing task. JD Solomon advised the members to keep working based on existing frameworks and policies and not get distracted by trying to preempt the state government's policy direction. Discussions about the subcommittees will continue in the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at Clemson Pee Dee Research and Education Center, Classroom #240 Darlington, SC 29532

Minutes: Chikezie Isiguzo and Tom Walker

Approved: June 27, 2023

**RBC Chat:**

09:15:42 From Alex Pellett to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):

In a typical year, crop irrigation in SC averages roughly 10 inches. It could be half that, or double that, on a field scale, but averaged across the state it is roughly 10 inches per year on average for the past couple of decades. (USDA Irrigation and Water Management Survey)

09:38:59 From Alex Pellett to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):

Domestic use in South Carolina averages around 50 to 100 gallons per capita. Including commercial use and considering a household scale, we can say 200+ gallons per day per household (even more if we include public supplied industrial uses). If we consider that on a 1/4 acre lot, then I'm calculating over 10 inches per year. Over half of that would be returned to wastewater treatment plants or septic leachfields. Both agriculture and household use can vary widely, and the numbers I've included here are rough estimates. Agricultural water use is more highly seasonal, and arguably may be less flexible for reductions during times of drought. There are a lot of considerations for making a comparison between domestic use and agricultural irrigation. I hope my comment can start to address the question that was raised, and I would encourage further thought/discussion.

10:12:59 From Thomas Walker to Alex Pellett(Direct Message):

we may need to save it for next time since we are behind but i'll put it in the minutes

10:13:29 From Alex Pellett to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):

Sounds like a plan.

10:23:58 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

meeting adjourned

**Appendix: SCDA Agency Statement**



**South Carolina  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

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Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

May 23, 2023

Dear Chairman Richardson and the Pee Dee River Basin Council:

With nearly 25,000 farms and 4.8 million acres of farmland, constituting 25% of the land in the state, South Carolina is driven by agriculture. Agribusiness is the state's number one industry, with an economic impact of over \$50 billion dollars annually, providing more than 259,000 jobs.

Water is a critical component of a successful agribusiness industry and essential for food security in South Carolina. Sufficient amounts of clean, usable water enable crops and livestock to thrive and allow South Carolinians to continue to put high-quality, locally produced food on their tables. Water also allows for the production of essential raw materials and the creation and maintenance of countless jobs in our state.

As this Council continues to consider water use and allocations in the Pee Dee River Basin area, it is imperative that the Council recognize the significant role that water plays in the agriculture industry in South Carolina.

It is also crucial that as the conversation continues, this Council ensures that the facts and dialogue surrounding the agriculture industry's water use are presented fairly, objectively, and without bias. The South Carolina Department of Agriculture is not only committed to being a part of the conversation but will also continue to advocate for our state's farmers and agribusiness stakeholders to ensure that agriculture is treated fairly and allocated appropriate water resources essential to the industry.

Sincerely,

  
Hugh E. Weathers