Saluda River Basin Council
February 19th Meeting Minutes

RBC Members Present: KC Price, Katherine Amidon, Larry Nates, Tate Davis, Rick Huffman, Robert Hanley, Jason Davis, Thompson Smith, Rebecca Wade, Josie Newton, Kevin Miller, David Coggins, Patrick Jackson, Melanie Ruhlman, Eddie Owen, Brandon Grooms, Phil Fragapane, Rett Templeton, Paul Lewis, Charlie Timmons, & Michael Waddell

RBC Members Absent: Jeff Boss (Jeff Phillips, alternate, present), Kaleigh Sims (Haley Denison, alternate, present), Jay Nicholson, & Devin Orr

Planning Team Present: Kirk Westphal, Tom Walker, Scott Harder, Alexis Modzelesky, Leigh Anne Monroe, Hannah Hartley, Andy Wachob, & Jeff Allen

Total Present: 32

K.C. Price, Chair, called the February 19th, 2025, meeting to order at 10:02 am. The Saluda RBC's February 19th meeting objectives meeting included developing Progress Metrics, Reviewing and discussing RBC comments and edits to the draft River Basin Plan, Reviewing the draft Executive Summary and beginning to plan for the public meeting.
K.C. Price called for approval of the meeting agenda. Kevin Miller – 1st made a motion to approve the meeting agenda with Robert Hanley – 2nd, which was approved unanimously.
There was a motion to approve the January 15th meeting minutes and summary. Tate Davis – 1st – made a motion which was seconded by Kevin Miller – 2nd. Members unanimously approved the last meeting minutes and summary.

Announcement and WaterSC Update:
K.C. Price talked about attending the meetings by WaterSC just as a public member. However, Jill Miller from the South Carolina Rural Water Association asked if KC would be her alternate on that group, and KC accepted. In addition, Myra Reese and Governor McMaster didn't have a comfort level regarding submitting a plan to the legislative group by the end of January as

envisioned. They had recommended making a joint resolution to both the SC House and Senate that their charter be changed to allow WaterSC to complete its work, including a look at groundwater as well as surface water.

There were no public and agency comments.

Development of Progress Metrics:

Kirk Westphal facilitated this session by introducing performance metrics (ways that can measure success and make adjustments).

Progress Metrics: To assess the performance and quality of actions taken by the RBC, the framework proposes the development of progress metrics. A progress metric is a "benchmark used to monitor the success or failure of an action taken by an RBC."

These are 6 implementation Plan -Prioritized Objectives with 1 as the highest priority and 6 as the lowest priority, which include:

Objective 1: Improve water use efficiency to conserve water resources (Priority-4)

Objective 2: Communicate, coordinate, and promote findings and recommendations from the River Basin Plan (Priority-1)

Objective 3: Improve technical understanding of water resource management issues (Priority-3)

Objective 4: Protect water resources (Priority- 5)

Objective 5: Improve drought management (Priority- 6)

Objective 6: Promote engagement in water planning process (Priority- 2)

K.C Price further talked about how the priority measurement process is based on how long it has been a conversation about what we thought/tasks, etc., some degree of likelihood of success, and mechanisms already in place to do it. The goal of these objectives is to develop performance metrics to measure each objective's degree of success.

Progress Metrics:

Objective 1: Improve water use efficiency to conserve water resources (Priority-4)

a. Are utilities meeting industry standards for water loss/leak detection
b. Funding opportunities are identified and used to implement conservation strategies.

Q: a has a clear owner, and b does not

A: a and b are just questions that could be used to gauge the success of the things that are recommended. It is better to think of (a & b) as questions rather than as actions.

C: is the measurement approach going to be a Yes or No?

A: Correct, or you can ask to what scale/ how much funding has been identified to gauge the effectiveness of the plan.

Q: how did we arrive at the different priority numbers?

A: these priorities, in some cases, reflect the fact that a lot of these activities are already going on, things that are new and that have some direct control over in relation to limited time and energy. Also, these priorities can change depending on the actions taken.

Q: how do we connect these priorities to the 5-year implementation plan?

A: the linkage here is that these metrics are ways to gauge how effective those objectives are.

C: We looked at the 5-year implementation plans and further prioritized the strategy by all these sub-actions such that anything that's happening in a 5-year period is inherently important. So they are all priorities because we care about all of them and highlight the most important ones. The difference between the action and the way to measure its success is by the statements of each action (question asked about the effectiveness). Also, the process of determining or accessing the level of funding is found.

Objective 2: Communicate, coordinate, and promote findings and recommendations from the River Basin Plan (Priority-1)

a. The Saluda RBC continues to meet regularly, including regular coordination meetings with other RBCs.
b. The State has approved funding for river basin planning activities.
c. The River Basin Plan is referenced during complementary planning processes such as resilience planning, watershed-based planning, economic development planning, and education program planning.
d. The Saluda RBC participate in the WaterSC process
e. Saluda RBP is incorporated into the statewide plan

f. Coordination occurs with groups who have planning responsibility that have existing education and outreach efforts focused on water planning.
g. Is the plan available, accessible, and easy to find (for public, for utilities, for agencies etc)

Q: Do we need to distinguish why outreach is important?
A: Objective 2 focuses on outreach to promote the strategies and the River Basin plan, whereas Objective 6 promotes engagement and awareness of the planning process.
A: We could argue that outreach is important for these objectives. I suggest that in these project metrics, we use these to assess how well the outreach is going for any of these objectives.
C: The RBC should be engaging with other planning groups and not just making sure that the plan is referenced or other groups that are using the plan.

Objective 3: Improve technical data and understanding of water resource management issues (Priority-3)

a. Impacts of groundwater uses are assessed in future planning phases
b. Future modeling efforts consider county-collection flow data
c. Consider future uncertainties such as changes in changing weather patterns, population growth, land use, water use scenarios, etc
d. Water quality issues and concerns in the basin are identified, and a strategy to study approaches to address them is developed.
e. USGS streamflow gages in the basin are maintained and increased - keep track of changes in the system (data additions, removals, continued maintenance and operability)
f. All data necessary to support implementation actions and future areas of study is accessible and made available to the RBC and public.
g. The financial impacts of sedimentation on reservoirs and water resources are identified. Results are communicated to local governments.
h. Is the RBC advocating for the mesonet data network, and is the state working towards its implementation? (to be added to Ch.10 implementation table).

C: Use the same language as the strategy

C: Land use – major impacts we're seeing on development

C: Improving tech info as models move forward. Mesoscale weather data comes in here? We support new/improved data sets. Concepts covered in other matrix or all here in 3

Q: Clarify metrics more?

A: Yes we can

C: Does DES need to approve?

C: Plenty of USGS sites not guided by DES

C: Monitor the number of streamgages and note if one is added or recued. Note changes in system

C: Do we want to make comment about mesoscale SCO request in Ch 9 not Ch 10? Put it in a table in Ch 10 and mention the RBC supports it

Objective 4: Protect water resources (Priority- 5)

a. The primary sources of sediment loading to reservoirs are identified
b. Measures are put in place by local governments to mitigate and minimize sediment loading to reservoirs
c. Removal of the hydrologic impairment (4C) below Saluda Lake

Q: Does financial stay in previous one or do we need it here as well?

A: Related but metrics are different

C: Logical opportunity for it – not only opportunity. Matrix is more along the lines of removing hydrologic impairment. Are we making efforts to have that removed?

C: Goal should be removal

Objective 5: Improve drought management (Priority- 6)

a. One hundred percent of public water supplier's drought management plans are upgraded within the last 5 years and submitted to the SCO for review.

Objective 6: Promote engagement in water planning process (Priority- 2)

a. The RBC continues beyond 2025 with a diverse, active and representative membership with balanced representation from all 8 interest categories.

b. Coordination occurs with groups that have existing education and outreach efforts focused on water planning.
c. RBC is actively engaging the public

C: All 8 designated categories be represented

C: I'd like to get one from each category

C: Place for RBC to solicit folks for representation – industry has been a struggle to get everywhere. DES technically puts members on the councils

C: Don't see metric about public outreach – actively working to engage the public

C: Someone should go through all the objectives and performance metrics and do a parallel structure of the goals.

Review of RBC Comments and Edits to the Draft River Basin Plan:

Comment Log- We have at least 450 comments, and for today, 10 comments that represent questions/concerns from multiple chapters and warrant group discussion. The 10 comments basically are recurring themes and representative comments that allow for group discussion.

Comment 1: Chapter 2, Pg 23 (Original Line 112): Katherine Amidon

Text: The North, Middle, and South Saluda tributaries, as well as several mountain lakes in the basin, are stocked with a mix of rainbow, brook, and brown trout, among other popular recreational fish such as striped bass (SCDNR 2023d)

Comment: Other species? Plants?

Draft Response: This particular assessment/paragraph is focused on fish. Other species are addressed in the following section and table.

Discussions:

C: My comment is actually on the 1st sentence of that paragraph, which states the rivers and tributaries of the Saluda River Basin are the most ecologically diverse for fish in South Carolina and also has data to support that. There are other species, not just fish. Ecological value as a whole

C: It is also important to identify the distinction between different basins.

Chapter 2, Throughout (Original Line 137): Josie Newton

Text: General in Chapter 2 (Basin Description)

Comment: There are few times in Chapter 2 where "current" or "at the time of this document" are used (I noted this on page 2-16, and once before Ch. 2 as well). We need to update this language as needed before the document is published or adjust the language to "as of DATE," instead.

Draft Response: One of these references is accompanied by the year (as of 2024). Others were checked to be sure there is a reference timeframe in the text. On page 2-12, text was changed to "the publication of this document," and the date of the report cover should provide the timestamp.

Chapter 3, Pg 14, Original Line 172: KC Price

Text: Several RBC members commented that the frequency and severity of low flows at the Saluda River near the Greenville gage have increased in recent years. It is also noted by RBC members that the Saluda River Yacht Club and Anderson County Parks Department have observed increasing impacts on tubing business and other recreational uses.

Comment: After reading the background information on this, I think there needs to be a discussion before we make some of these statements.

Draft Response- We can discuss with the RBC. What statements are in question?

Discussion:

C: The most certainly was the hard data in the petition way back in 2018. We didn't have the luxury of looking into the future; we used data from 2011 to 2016 and employed the old hydrologic studies that define some thresholds. We also looked at the percentages of days that were below those different thresholds.

C: My observation is dropping it to 20% of MADF. 2017 going lower. 35% needed for navigation. Boyd Mill Pond – should be added to the list. Holiday Dam – talking about operations. Don't have data to support the other 2.

C: There was hard data in the petition. Looked at 2011-2016 data. Hydro studies defined thresholds and looked at trends. This has not been updated with current data. Looks like releasing more currently.

C: So I suggest, based on what I'm hearing from everybody, that we include some references or citations to some of the numbers that were used in the 2018 petition. And also say that through the RBC process, a number of members noted that these conditions, through their perception and experience, appear to be persisting.
C: Cite data and note it needs to be reviewed/updated.

Chapter 3, Pg 14, original Line 173: Rebecca Wade:
Text- Other surface water-related concerns have been raised by the RBC members during the planning process. Some concerns regarding surface water resources identified by one or more RBC members at the first and subsequent meetings included rapid population growth, releases from non-FERC hydropower facilities, droughts of increasing severity, loss of riparian buffers, and changing climate conditions.

Comment- Several RBC members are concerned that the current Surface Water Withdrawal Act allows permit holders to withdraw all available water in certain circumstances. This could lead to significant shortages during high-demand or drought conditions if permittees use their full allocation. While members were encouraged to overlook this issue since permit holders claim they do not and would not use their full permits, some still find it problematic that they are legally entitled to such a large share of the water resource.

Draft Response- Added to list, with references to section 5. " As discussed in Chapter 5, current water law allows water usage rates that likely exceed actual current or future need (" Fully Permitted and Registered" planning scenario), but could result in significant water shortages if water is withdrawn at allowable rates during periods of hydrologic stress.

Discussion:
C: Opposed
C: Good step – real issue. What is the metric? Safe yield is how they evaluate – it is a measuring stick

C: We are not suggesting or promoting anything here but rather identified some of the issues like population growth, drought concerns, etc., addressed quantitatively with the modeling later in the report.

Q: what came before this?

A: we are talking here about water availability.

C: Again in this context brought up as a concern. Did not get consensus

C: Can I add one more point to this discussion? I need to bring up something we haven't talked about, but I've heard it mentioned in other forums. What if data centers were to arrive? That could significantly change future demand calculations. Unlike population growth, data centers operate independently and aren't necessarily tied to it. Perhaps industrial growth could account for this, but it's worth considering separately.

C: I'd like to suggest that this list doesn't need to be exhaustive, but it should reflect key topics that have repeatedly come up during the planning process. I propose rephrasing the first bullet point as "rapid population and demand growth" and simplifying the "current state water law," which we address later with recommendations.

Chapter 3, Pg 21, Original Line 186: Kaleigh Sims

Text: General in Chapter 3 (Water Resources of the Basin)

Comment: Is there a conclusion to this chapter? (to include some sort of conclusion in chapter 3)

Draft Response: The chapter follows the Water Planning Framework outline, and is intended to be informational across a wide range of topics. As such, no concise conclusion is provided, but the chapter is summarized more briefly in the Executive Summary.

C: Can ask her how strongly she feels

C: Existing conditions

C: Are conclusions in other chapters?

C: In some – not later chapters

C: Also on Ch 4 – did not include summary

C: Ch 3 and 4 summaries – CDM Smith to author

Chapter 4, Pg 6, Original Line 226: Katherine Amidon

Text: Talks about demand.

Comment: According to Table 4.4, this is assumed constant (mining and gold courses and thermoelectric), and projections were not developed.

Draft Response: The text was revised to indicate that while projections were developed for all use categories, only three use categories had projected increases in demands. The others (mining, golf course, thermoelectric) were projected to remain stable at either the high end of their recent historic use (High Demand Scenario) or the median/moderate end of their historic recent use (Moderate Demand Scenario).

Q: The demand didn't increase over time, but assumptions were constantly made about the future release in the United States based on the scenario.

A: Yes, the moderate seems like a really a million value. The high demand is maximum value based on your base period, so it did change.

Chapter 5, Pg 3, Original line 330: KC Price

Text: Performance measures were developed as a means for comparing water resource impacts (negative and positive) of each scenario. A performance measure is a quantitative measure of change in a user-defined condition from established baseline, which is used to assess the performance of a proposed water management strategy or combination of strategies.

Comment: Are the biological measures truly quantitative?

Draft Response: Yes, changes in quantitative biological outcomes are estimated based on the changes to the hydrologic statistic.

Discussion:

C: How I was looking at it was as early science - quasi

C: You do certain metrics on the population, and you can then statistically analyze those metrics to see if there are differences over time or if there are differences between reference reach and test reach.

C: They analyzed various hydrologic and biological parameters, looking for correlations. When correlations were found, those hydrologic parameters were selected as indicators. Then, they applied a computer-generated tree learning model, but much of the process feels like a "black box." I realize I should have raised this concern earlier, but I was initially confused, and it still

seems overly complex to me. Each basin has its own set of metrics for determining conditions using different hydrologic and biological indicators. DES primarily relies on macroinvertebrates because they are sessile, unlike fish that can migrate, making them more reliable indicators of environmental conditions. Consequently, different basins may use different sets of hydrologic and biological metrics.
C: We should give Clemson Research the first opportunity to further throw light on this or seek clarification from them.
C: I have always understood it using quantitative factors or indicators to develop a relative assessment of suitability. The fact that is been done we are not changing that. The context of how the RBC used the information was more on a context of relative risk.
C: Relative risk used subjectively – Saluda RBC concerned about wording doesn't reflect your work. Ask them if it is an accurate assessment of their work.
(Skipped ahead to Executive Summary due to time constraints)

Review of the Draft Executive Summary:
The sections are summarized as follows: Chapters 1 through to Chapter 5 are executive summaries. In Chapter 6, we blend all of the different recommendations, including water management recommendations, drought management and all the planning processes (technical and policy, regulatory, and legislative) recommendations, all in that section of the executive summary, even though they have their report chapters. Also, there is a summary section on implementation. The executive summary's key takeaway includes the key findings, current water use assessment, the demand assessment, issue of over-allocation, ecological flow metrics, reservoir safe yield, and what happens if drought worsens. Chapter 7 is the Saluda River Basin Plan Implementation (including objectives, performance measures, actions, funding opportunities and implementation considerations).

C: A 30-page executive summary is a bit much; most people prefer a 2-page summary, which will serve as a handout to give out regardless of who they are talking to. The 2 pages should capture the fundamentals reading level. The graphics should have some captions. They can always be referred to the full document since it is available online.

C: In other states where this has been done, all 3 documents have been stand-alone; you can use them individually. The downsize of forcing this executive summary stands a chance of missing key information that is important.
C: We should have both call them differently, including 2 pages.
C: We want to see the 2-page summary of the executive summary.
C: We should have the executive summary with the introduction of the 2 pages summary.
C: I would suggest we call the 2-page executive summary and 30-page plan overview. Audiences may be different. 2 pager is a handout regardless. Longer document would be given out in certain forums. 2 pager needs to be at a fundamental reading level. High School level for the general public.
C: We should go ahead and work on the 3 documents and decide the appropriate name for them.
C: Would be awesome if it went through ADA compliance – accessibility. Some duplicate photos – could be more equitable across the basin.
C: RBC members please send in pictures of the basin.

Public Meeting Discussion:

Examples of the topics include; Welcome and Introductions, Overview of the Planning Process, Draft Broad River Basin Plan Highlights (Vision and Goals, Water Demand, Surface Water Availability, Streamflow-Ecology Relationships, Water Management Strategies, Plan Recommendations, Issues and Challenges and Implementation Plan), and Public Comments Period and Questions and Answers.
If there are people who would volunteer to speak to any of these topics should indicate interest.
C: WaterSC public meeting – Ag, Water Utilities, etc talked. The most impactful comments were from the Ag group. Encourage constituents to come to the meeting.
C: Thompson Smith is willing, Kevin Miller is willing, Phil Fragapane is willing, Tate, Patrick, or Jay as possibles for water utility speakers.
C: For me, its on us to get people at the meeting. Most who show up are associated with RBC members.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

Jan: Finalize Implementation Plan

Feb: Review and Discuss Draft Plan and Executive Summary

Mar: Final Discussion and possible vote on Draft Plan

Apr: 1st Public Meeting (no specific date in April yet)

May: Address Draft Plan Comments and Finalize Plan

Jun: 2nd Public meeting (Tentative)

Decision Making -River Basin Plan Approval Process:

Step 1: Testing for consensus of Draft Plan having a five-point rating scale which includes:

- Full Endorsement (live with it)
- Endorsement, but with minor points of contention
- Endorsement, but with major points of contention
- Stand aside with major reservations (requires changes)
- Withdrawal (Member leaves)

Step 2:

- For the Final Plan, each RBC Member will indicate their support or disagreement
- By supporting the Final Plan, each member acknowledges their:
    - Concurrence with the plan
    - Commitment to support implementation of the Plan

Housekeeping Items:

Chapters 1 and 9 were due today for comment back. Chapter 10 will be sent out with a potential due date; Chapter 7 is due on the 28th, and the executive summary is due on the 28th.

Motion to Adjourn:

1st – Thompson Smith and 2nd – Kevin Miller

Meeting Adjourned: 1:48 PM

Minutes: Iffy Ogbekene and Tom Walker

Approved: 3/19/25

RBC Chat:

10:00:40 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

KC will kick us off here in a minute

11:06:08 From Eddie Owen to Everyone:

streamflow gages at times may need additional data collection. For example adding rainfall data to a stream flow

11:15:08 From Melanie Ruhlman to Everyone:

Should we limit responsibility to local Govs?

11:16:52 From Melanie Ruhlman to Everyone:

Also mitigate is different from minimize

11:28:09 From Eddie Owen to Everyone:

yes

11:28:11 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

yes

11:29:25 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

could you repeat that return time

11:29:36 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

thank you

11:29:39 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

11:55 return

12:02:49 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

agreed

12:14:18 From Melanie Ruhlman to Everyone:

Yes there certainly was hard data. I'm glad to resend the petition

12:27:13 From Melanie Ruhlman to Everyone:

I would support including

12:27:34 From Charlie Timmons to Everyone:

I would support including this as well

12:28:27 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

I couldn't hear that comment

12:31:59 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

couldnt understand that either

12:33:29 From Melanie Ruhlman to Everyone:

Sounds good

12:37:56 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

Kaleigh is not here today but I am serving as her alternate

12:46:25 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

agreeing with Robert 100%

12:47:59 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

yes, they just didn't have enough comprehensive data in our basin for the flow-ecology studies

12:54:57 From Haley Denison to Everyone:

I would agree

12:55:53 From Charlie Timmons to Everyone:

lolol

13:15:47 From PFragap to Everyone:

I like the idea of a summary sheet to allow the audience to receive in a few minutes our most important messages.

13:33:00 From PFragap to Everyone:

I will volunteer to share a word of support.

13:46:24 From Melanie Ruhlman to Everyone:

Can you please send an email with deadlines on chapters

13:47:55 From Charlie Timmons to Everyone:

thank you

13:48:22 From Eddie Owen to Everyone:

yep

13:48:30 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

adjourned