

Upper Savannah River Basin Council

**October 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

**RBC Members Present:** Daniel Milam, Harry Shelley, John Hains, Mark Warner, Mack Beaty, Melisa Ramey, Reagan Osbon, Jill Miller, Alan Stuart, Katie Hottel, Jeff Phillips, Tonya Bonitatibus, Will Williams, Cole Rogers, Jon Batson, & Tonya Winbush

**RBC Members Absent:** Cheryl Daniels (Eddie Brown, alternate, present), Scott Willett (Jeff Caldwell, alternate, present), Billy Owens (Don Todd, alternate, present), Chuck Connolly, Dan Murph, & Tim Hall

**Planning Team Present:** John Boyer, Ashely Reid, Joe Koon, Scott Harder, Tom Walker, Kirk Westphal, Andy Wachob, Alex Pellett, Jeff Allen, Alexis Modzelesky, & Hannah Hartley

**Total Present: 35**

1. Call the Meeting to Order (Jill Miller, RBC Chair) 10:00–10:10
  - a. Review of Meeting Objectives
  - b. Approval of Agenda
    - i. Agenda approved
    - ii. Daniel Milam – 1<sup>st</sup> and
    - iii. Reagan Osbon – 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - c. Approval of September 11<sup>th</sup> Minutes and Summary
    - i. Minutes approved
    - ii. Harry Shelley – 1<sup>st</sup> and
    - iii. Katie Hottel – 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - d. Announcements and Housekeeping Items
    - i. Executive order 2024-22- Establishing “WaterSC” Water Resources working group
      1. Replacing PPAC
      2. DES is chairing working group
      3. 1<sup>st</sup> order of business: develop stakeholder engagement plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> order of business to present to Standing Legislative Committee on Surface Water in January. Then write a state water plan by the end of next year
      4. Q: This organization feeds info? A: basin plans will continue as planned. Recommendations from each RBC will be consolidated, and this group will figure out what should go to state
    - ii. USRBC planning process schedule
      1. 2024 (slide wrong): Oct: work on recommendations, Nov: finalize recommendations, December: work on implementation plan
      2. 2025 (slide wrong): Jan: finalize implementation plan, Feb: review and discuss draft plan/ executive summary, March: final draft plan

and first public meeting, April: address draft plan concerns, May: finalize plan and 2<sup>nd</sup> public meeting

3. Q: how far off is this timeline compared to the previous timeline?  
A: this is pretty much the same timeline. Point of showing it is to get an idea of when to finish because WaterSC group has to review recommendations from all RBCs.
4. Q: what's the catalyst for all the rushing we have to do all of a sudden? A: better question for the governor, he wants to prioritize water planning
5. What does everyone think about the schedule? Everyone is indifferent

2. Public Comment (Ashley Reid) 10:10–10:15
  - a. Public Comment Period
    - i. Q: do we have a quorum? A: we do
  - b. Agency Comment Period
    - i. none
  
3. September RBC Meeting Review (Ashley Reid and John Boyer) 10:15–10:20
  - a. River Basin Planning process recommendations
    - i. Develop and implement an engagement plan
    - ii. Elected officials should be invited/ considered to participate as part of the local government water interest category
    - iii. SCDES should develop a strategy for maintaining membership and sustaining the RBCs
    - iv. Following the development of initial RBPs, the RBCs should work with SCDES to identify the score of future RBC activities and develop funding needs/ requests
    - v. Future water planning efforts should consider increased collaboration between all of SC's RBCs
  
4. Georgia Regional Water Plan Seed Grant Program (Clete Barton, Georgia EPD) 10:20–10:40
  - a. History of water planning in GA
    - i. 2001- Metropolitan North GA Water Planning Act passed, creating Metro Water District
    - ii. 2003- Metro Water District adopted 3 regional water plans
    - iii. 2004- Comprehensive State-wide Water Planning Act
    - iv. 2008- State Water Plan adopted
    - v. 2009- Regional Water Planning Councils formed, Metro Water District revised plans
    - vi. 2011- Regional Water Plans adopted

- vii. 2017- revised regional water plans adopted by Regional Water Councils and Metro District
  - viii. Revise plans every 5 years
- b. Regional water planning regions
  - i. GA's 14 major river basins
  - ii. Match up with county boundaries and river basins
- c. Regional water plan seed grants
  - i. Established 2014
  - ii. "Provides funds to eligible recipients in GA to support and incentivize local governments and other appropriate water users as they collect and manage the requisite data and info and undertake their implementation responsibilities as provided in the applicable Regional Water Plans"
  - iii. Up to \$75000. Like a Kickstarter, give money to get it started
  - iv. Competitive funding for projects that: implement Regional Water Plans, enhance water supply/ quality improvements that also provide water availability benefits, address critical info and/or data needs, prepare and distribute technical guidance, provide technical assistance. Projects that are implementations to the RWP
  - v. Applicants have a pre-application meeting with the seed grant coordinator
  - vi. Competitive
  - vii. Require letter of support from Regional Water Planning Council
  - viii. Applications accepted from July-October
  - ix. Apply online
  - x. Eligible applicants: state agencies, city/ county governments, regional commissions, soil and water conservation districts, resource conservation and development councils, community/ business improvement districts, local and regional school systems, state colleges/ universities
- d. Award and match
  - i. Funding available up to \$75000 and 60% of total project cost
  - ii. Minimum 40% match, 10% at least must be cash expenditures
- e. Number of applicants and funded projects
  - i. Mostly 2-4 projects a year funded
- f. Some councils are active in seed grants, some aren't
- g. Website
- h. Savannah Upper Ogeechee RWP Council
  - i. Initiating and upgrading publicly accessible water monitoring
    - 1. Knowyourriver.com
  - ii. Upgrading publicly accessible water monitoring
- i. Q: where does the funding come from? A: state funded. Have a general budget.
- j. Q: examples of other projects seed grant has funded? A: nutrient trading project, stormwater sewer systems and education

- k. Q: are there occasions where councils received multiple awards for 1 fiscal year?  
A: yes, they can have multiple people who receive money. Pre application meetings very important
- l. Q: if this is state funded, can they match with federal funds? A: yes, they can leverage more funds
- m. Q: GA has a grant office, does SC? A: would think there is a grant office in SC, not sure

*Break*

5. Discussion and Development of Technical, Policy, Regulatory, and Legislative Recommendations (Ashley Reid and John Boyer)

10:40–12:00

- a. USRBC vision statement
  - i. A resilient USRB that collaboratively, sustainable, and equitably manages and balances human and ecological needs
    - 1. Resiliency appropriate for last couple of weeks
- b. USRBC goals
  - i. Within 24 months, develop water use strategies, policies and legislative recommendations for the USRB to
    - 1. Ensure water resources are maintained to support current and future human and ecosystem needs
    - 2. Improve the resiliency of the water resources and help minimize disruptions in the basin
    - 3. Promote balance between development, industry and economic growth in areas with adequate water resources
    - 4. Advocate for responsible land use practices
    - 5. Identify funding sources
  - ii. Develop/ implement an education and communication plan to promote the strategies, policies and recommendations developed for USRB
  - iii. Enhance collaboration between all stakeholders and water interest groups including GA and LSSRB
- c. Green/ yellow/ red bucket
  - i. Green- recommendation only needs minor revisions, clear RBC consensus
  - ii. Yellow- not full RBC support, may revisit to see if consensus can be achieved with revisions
  - iii. Red- minimal RBC support, no clear path to consensus, drop
- d. Technical and program recommendations
  - i. Need for more data
  - ii. Model improvement
  - iii. Need for additional models

- iv. Improved water use data, population data, water demand estimates, etc.
- v. Recommendations for technical studies to improve knowledge of specific issues
- vi. Need for additional technical training for RBC members
- vii. Improved instream flow requirement info
- e. Small breakout group options for developing technical recommendations
  - i. 1: Land use and sedimentation
  - ii. 2: Water quality and data gaps
  - iii. 3: Growth and development
  - iv. 4: Everything else

*Lunch*

*12:00–12:20*

- 6. Continue Discussion and Development of Technical, Policy, Regulatory, and Legislative Recommendations 12:20–1:40
  - a. Group 1- land use and sedimentation
    - i. Reducing sediment loading to reservoirs
      - 1. Changed language in yellow bucket because it was soft
        - a. Through the implementation of infiltration, riparian buffers, land use planning, setbacks, minimizing streambank erosion, scour, and sources of sedimentation to reservoirs
        - b. Further incentivize the establishment of riparian buffers, streambank restoration and other practices that reduce sediment load to streams and reservoirs
        - c. Develop and incentivize green infrastructure/ stormwater ordinances
        - d. Strengthen penalties for noncompliance of stormwater ordinances
        - e. Q: how do you measure? A: new bathymetric surveys, in stream sampling
        - f. Green
    - ii. Study impacts of changing land use on streamflow characteristics
      - 1. Green
    - iii. Study impact of land use changes on streamflow and identify and prioritize land for conservation
      - 1. Added develop and fund county conservation and mitigation banks for land conservation
      - 2. Develop a strategy to identify and prioritize properties that could impact quantity and quality of water. Collaborate with SC Conservation Bank and Land Trusts to conserve those properties

- a. Watershed model for Catawba basin. Presentation for Broad RBC 11/21
    - 3. Green
  - iv. Identify the financial impacts of increased sedimentation on reservoirs and water resources and communicate the results
    - 1. Same as Broad
    - 2. green
  - v. Each local jurisdiction across the state consult the Resilience Plan developed by SC Office of Resilience
    - 1. Same as Saluda
    - 2. Cities and counties are required to go through a comp plan process every 5 years. This enumerates specific resources they can use
    - 3. If you want to do more than encourage, you have to change the comprehensive plan
    - 4. Green
  - vi. Advocate for the development of county ordinances such as riparian buffers and tree ordinances
    - 1. Change county to local
    - 2. C: see the greater good
    - 3. Q: when you're talking about the local county orders, is it for development, residential and commercial properties, or all encompassing? A: new development
      - a. C: leave forest ag out of it
    - 4. Green
  - vii. Audit and update the state stormwater standards to reflect new storm scenarios and data and consider regional differences. Mandate analysis of new developments' impact in receiving water bodies on a watershed scale
    - 1. Q: does it add substantial costs? A: yes, would add costs to engineering and design
    - 2. Q: how much do developers fuss about paying for current stormwater protection plans?
    - 3. Yellow, further wordsmith (how would DES analyze it and approve plans?)
- b. Group 2- water quality and data gaps
  - i. SWAM model improvement, need for additional models, improved water use data deleted- group 4 touched on
  - ii. Incorporate recommendations from stream audit to expand number of stream flows
    - 1. Changed to review recommendations from stream audit/studies and consider new locations based on changing conditions

- 2. Yellow- Tonya may have had a recommendation location
- iii. Recommendations for technical studies to improve knowledge of specific issues
  - 1. Yellow- vague, homework: are there any studies needed? Improved instream flow requirement info?
- iv. Study impacts of drought on fishkills due to low dissolved oxygen
  - 1. Yellow.
  - 2. C: need to grow out available data so people know what's happening. Root is the lack of publicly available data. Already addressed by other recommendations
  - 3. Removed
- v. Discuss and identify potential pollutants of concern (bacteria, nutrient and sediment)
  - 1. C: all these are change in scope
  - 2. Used what Broad recommended instead "future planning efforts should include evaluation of surface water quality, including bacteria, nutrient loading and sedimentation..."
  - 3. Broad is green, original is deleted
- vi. Deleted other 3
- vii. Broad "While the RBC should maintain its focus on the assessment of water quantity, future planning efforts should include evaluation of surface water quality, including bacteria, nutrient loading and sedimentation which is important to maintaining affordable public water supplies and the ecological health of the streams, rivers and lakes"
  - 1. C: issue of consistency of data
  - 2. C: if were running this country like were supposed to its all publicly available anyways. A: everything's FOIAble
  - 3. C: add easily accessible. A: have publicly accessible in group 4 recommendations
  - 4. C: ways that SC is able to make the data more accessible
- c. Group 3- growth and development
  - i. Use of the RBP to highlight area where water is more abundant and amenable to growth
    - 1. Green
  - ii. Ensure that developers work with water utilities to ensure adequate water availability and infrastructure by working with counties and municipalities to make it part of the building process
    - 1. Q: is adequate water availability speaking of infrastructure in the ground to get the water to the new development or in capacity?  
A: in capacity
    - 2. Q: how do you guarantee adequate water availability?

3. Changed to “Amend the building permitting process in counties and municipalities to require developers work with water utilities to ensure adequate water availability”
4. Green
- iii. Deleted next 2- covered by previous groups
- iv. In future planning phases, the RBC recommends understanding the potential impacts of private and community wells and how they may affect surface water (Saluda)
  1. Not sure how applicable this is to US
  2. Did a water balance, can compare to stream flow
- d. Group 4: everything else
  - i. “Your rain gauge is not as good as my rain gauge”
  - ii. Extend flood mapping in SC beyond 100-year floodplain to include 200-, 500-, or 1000-year floodplains with the most current technology and data reflecting current land use patterns and recent weather patterns
    1. Is this recommendation already reflected in SC resilience and risk plan? Not sure
    2. Need more detail and reflect current land use patterns and recent patterns instead of over relying on historical patterns
    3. C: should advocate for 100-year floodplain to be available everywhere
    4. Changed to “extend flood mapping in SC to include the 100-year floodplain in all areas and expand with additional (200, 500, 1000) with the most recent technology and data to reflect current land use patterns and recent weather patterns”
    5. Yellow- going to check what Resilience office has done
  - iii. Utilize the data obtained from established credible systems in alignment with RBC goals across the state before creating new systems, databases, or monitoring stations. When new data is developed, it needs to be publicly accessible and in a consistent, standardized format that supports public comprehension
    1. Example of data: data in GA is accessible in a single portal. 2 sets of rain gauge networks
    2. Need to get the data standardized
    3. Changed utilize to compile, added “in alignment with RBC goals for utilization across the state”
    4. Green
  - iv. Update future models to consider anthropogenic uncertainties (climate change, population growth, development scenarios, etc.)
    1. Q: Models that look into the future or that are created in the future? A: Both
    2. Removed anthropogenic



3. Q: is the recommendation to use different models? A: could be different, could be SWAM
  4. Q: is climate change going to raise concern because political climate? A: we can see weather changes. Maybe change climate change to climate or hydrologic variability
  5. Will try to remember discussion to use for recommendations. Discussion helps us plan chapter 9
  6. Sent implementation ideas
  7. Green
  8. Thanks for staying focused on technical issues!
- v. Hope suggested fund and establish a mesoscale network of weather and climate monitoring stations
1. Broad made
  2. Talked about in generality
  3. Need broader and more consistent rain gauge data
  4. Q: are we supposed to be looking at existing recommendations too? A: once we go through the groups we'll go back through existing recommendations
  5. \$50000 just for install
  6. If climatology office thinks this is important then it is important
  7. Q: is this combined with the 2<sup>nd</sup> point? A: no
  8. Green
- vi. Broad and Saluda
1. Q: wasn't to change regulatory structure, just to change the amount of data available?
  2. Low tech process-based approaches to stream restoration. Will present on that at the Water Resources Conference.
    - a. Lowest tech is just letting the grass grow, put sticks and stones into creeks
    - b. Will send Alex's slides
    - c. Yellow- consider adding to existing bullet
- e. Policy, legislative, or regulatory recommendations
- i. Modifications to existing state or local laws, regulations or ordinances, new state or local laws, regulations or ordinances, ideas for recurring funding for water planning work, restructuring existing groups or agencies
  - ii. Seed grant or AgWRAP programs
  - iii. SC legislature should authorize recurring funding for state water planning activities, including river basin planning
    1. C: needs may differ from region to region
    2. green

- iv. A grant program should be established to help support the implementation of the actions and strategies identified in each RBC's RBP
  - 1. C: with some small tweaks, could be great
  - 2. C: smaller counties may have less funding available than bigger counties
  - 3. C: important enough to start, important enough to continue funding
  - 4. C: expand eligibility to include nonprofit entities, currently have to work with a government agency
  - 5. C: like AgWRAP idea but don't like the eligibility requirements
  - 6. C: could use state resources to match federal resources
  - 7. C: whole farm survey gets complicated
  - 8. Stayed yellow
- v. Broad came up with overarching ideas. Review for next month
- 7. Update on Draft River Basin Plan Chapter Status and RBC review schedule (Ashley Reid and John Boyer) 1:40–1:50
  - a. 2024
    - i. Oct: 2-4
    - ii. Nov: 5-8
    - iii. Dec: 1, 9
  - b. 2025
    - i. Jan: 10
    - ii. Feb: full draft plan and executive summary
  - c. RBC is asked to review and provide comment on each chapter withing 3 weeks of receipt
  - d. Want pics of water resources or things that rely on water resources in the basin
- 8. Upcoming Meeting Schedule (Ashley Reid and John Boyer) 1:50–2:00
  - a. Review results of modeling to assess impact of continued sedimentation on USACE reservoirs
  - b. Finalize recommendations
  - c. Discuss draft chapters 2-4
  - d. 11/13
  - e. Large group discussions
  - f. Water Resources Conference. Columbia Convention Center 10/16-17

Meeting adjourned: 2:01 PM

Minutes: Taylor Le Moal and Tom Walker

Approved: 11/13/2024

RBC Chat:

10:07:50 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

the years are off in this slide. finish next may 2025 is the plan.

10:08:32 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

one second mack, i'll get you in

10:46:37 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

10 minute break

11:03:07 From Tonya B to Everyone:

How do we reconsider adding flooding back in? Not to study but to recognize this is a critical component to water availability abs flow. And kills people if we get it wrong.

11:04:22 From Tonya B to Everyone:

It can just be in everything else I guess

11:05:10 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

we'll be paused and muted for the group breakouts. return in about 45 minutes or so

11:51:59 From Alex Pellett to Everyone:

"Extend flood mapping in SC beyond the 100yr floodplain (200, 500, 1000) with the most recent, current, and up-to-date technology and data, to reflect current land-use patterns and recent weather patterns."

11:52:56 From Alex Pellett to Everyone:

"Data Usage and Acquisition: utilize the data obtained from established credible systems in alignment with RBC goals across the State before creating new systems, databases, or monitoring stations. When new data is developed, it needs to be publicly accessible and in a consistent, standardized, format that supports public comprehension."

11:56:36 From Alex Pellett to Everyone:

"Update future models to consider anthropogenic uncertainties (climate change, population growth, development scenarios, etc.)."

12:13:30 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

break until 12:30ish to get lunch

12:13:56 From Will Williams to Everyone:

Reacted to "break until 12:30ish..." with 🙌

13:24:30 From Tonya B to Everyone:

I'm fine with however it makes sense

13:41:44 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

alex did the hurricane impact your property where you've done some trials on that low tech process?

13:50:38 From Tonya B to Everyone:

I'm sorry. The reception keeps going in and out

14:01:15 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

adjourned