



Edisto River Basin Council Annual Report on Progress and Process Metrics

June 2023

1.0 Introduction

The South Carolina State Water Planning Framework (the Planning Framework) requires River Basin Councils (RBCs) develop process and progress metrics. The process and progress metrics are used throughout the planning process to monitor the success or failure of (1) processes that lead to RBC actions, and (2) the actions themselves. This report discusses the success (or failure) in meeting the process metrics during the second and third years of Edisto River Basin planning, and the development of progress metrics, which will be evaluated during the subsequent phases of the planning process.

2.0 Process Metrics

As defined in the Planning Framework, process metrics are *benchmarks used to monitor the success or failure of the processes which led to RBC actions*. The Edisto RBC developed 12 process metrics in December 2020. The success (or failure) in meeting each of the adopted process metrics during the second and third year of the planning process is discussed below.

1. **The process to select RBC members is well documented, transparent, and reflects broad-based outreach.**

Result: The process of soliciting applicants and selecting RBC members is the responsibility of SCDNR. At the outset of the process, SCDNR solicited applicants through their [Water Planning](#) website and through outreach to organizations and interest groups that have interest in water resources of the basin. Applications were reviewed by SCDNR and discussed with the Planning Process Advisory Committee (PPAC). After the initial selection of the RBC members, SCDNR has continued to advertise and accept applications for several openings in the Water and Sewer Utilities, Industry, Economic Development, and Water-based Recreation Interest groups.

As of June 2023, there are 16 RBC members that have agreed to continue serving. The Water-based Recreation, Local Governments, Industry and Economic Development, and Electric-Power Utilities water interest groups each have only one remaining, active member. Outreach should be performed to identify new members in these categories.

2. **RBCs develop a River Basin Plan within two years of RBC formation.**

Result: The planning process in the Edisto River basin finished behind schedule due to several factors, including the need to conduct meetings virtually for the first year due to the COVID pandemic, a delay in getting the coastal plain groundwater model finalized for use, and a delay in getting the USGS under contract to perform groundwater modeling. Because of these delays, completion of the River Basin Plan took 3 years.

3. RBC meetings adhere to timelines.

Result: RBC meetings typically adhered to the timelines established in each meeting agenda. Meetings were typically scheduled for 3 or 4 hours and were completed in 3 to 4 hours. Due to extended discussion, several meetings went over the scheduled time by 5 to 20 minutes.

4. River Basin Plans are actionable, logical, and address or prevent challenges with a level of detail to be cost-accountable.

Result: The Final Edisto River Basin Plan includes a well-documented Implementation Plan that identifies overall objectives, develops strategies to achieve those objectives, identifies specific actions that support the strategies, names responsible parties, estimates the cost of implementation, and identifies potential funding opportunities.

5. Information used and generated during the planning process is shared openly, publicly, and is easily accessible.

Result: All RBC meeting materials, including handouts, slides, meeting summaries and meeting minutes are posted to the [Edisto Basin Planning](#) website within 1-2 weeks of the meeting. All meetings, including both virtual and hybrid meetings have been recorded via Zoom and the recordings are also posted to the website. The Final Edisto River Basin Plan and its Executive Summary were posted to the [Edisto Basin Planning](#) website.

6. RBC meeting agendas are focused and promote efficient and productive meetings.

Result: All RBC meeting agendas have clearly stated the meeting objectives and have typically included no more than 5-7 agenda items to keep them focused. The Planning Team meets prior to each meeting to set the agenda for the meeting and discuss potential agenda topics for the following meeting.

7. RBC members are able to effectively consider, digest, and understand technical information through presentations, discussion, and self-study.

Result: Feedback from the RBC suggests that members have been able to effectively consider, digest, and understand the technical information presented. RBC survey responses received during the first year of the planning process suggested that members felt they understood the technical information that was presented and could use it to make informed decisions. In several instances, members noted that they needed more details on how the data, models, and other tools will be used (for example). To address this, additional review of the data and models was provided at subsequent RBC meetings. Also, one technical recommendation was developed and included in the Plan, which was to *“Develop and provide a handout of groundwater and surface water concepts to establish a common knowledge base among RBC members.”*

8. Decisions are made using best available scientific, technical, legal, or other objective criteria.

Result: RBC decisions made during Phases 3 and 4 have been primarily related to selecting water management strategies, developing recommendations, developing the Implementation Plan, and finalizing the River Basin Plan. The RBC made decisions using the best available scientific, technical, legal, or other objective criteria. A wide variety of speakers presented information to the RBC during all four planning phases to better educate the RBC members on a range of technical, scientific, and legal issues pertinent to the Edisto basin.

9. Controversial issues are discussed openly in a respectful manner, and multiple options for resolution are considered.

Result: Several controversial issues were discussed or debated by the RBC during the development of recommendations. These were primarily related to the permitting and registration process (i.e., the Surface Water Withdrawal, Permitting, Use, and Reporting Act). Debate occurred around the registrations that have been issued within the last several years that have effectively used up the remaining safe yield of the basin, and about potential changes to surface water law and regulation. These discussions were generally conducted productively; however, it served as a reminder that RBC members need to respect each member's right to have a different opinion, even if they do not agree with it.

10. Information is presented in an unbiased manner.

Result: The Planning Team has sought out respected speakers that have a history of presenting technical and scientific information, without imparting bias or any personal agenda. The Facilitator reviews speaker slides prior to RBC meetings to make sure they are void of unsubstantiated statements or conclusions.

11. RBC members are provided equal opportunity to be heard and express their interests, ideas, and concerns.

Result: The Facilitator sought input from all RBC members during discussions and following each informational presentation. Feedback received from the RBC indicates that they have sufficient and equal opportunity to make comments, ask questions, and express their interests.

12. The use and outcomes of models and other tools to assess water availability and evaluate strategies are appropriately documented.

Result: Documentation was provided to the RBC summarizing the results of the surface water modeling and groundwater modeling. RBC members were given the opportunity to review and provide comments on all chapters of the Draft Plan, including Chapters 5 and 6, which presented the results of modeling. Very few comments were received, suggesting that the RBC members felt that model documentation was appropriate.



3.0 Progress Metrics

Progress metrics are *benchmarks used to monitor the success or failure of selected actions taken by an RBC*. Noting that the ultimate value and impact of the river basin planning process is the dissemination of its findings and implementation of its recommendations, the Edisto RBC developed progress metrics around each of the six implementation objectives defined at the beginning of Chapter 10 of the Final Edisto River Basin Plan. The progress metrics are:

1. **Reduce demand to conserve water resources**
 - a. Metric 1a: Municipal and agricultural water conservation and efficiency strategies are considered, evaluated, and implemented. On the municipal side, a 5-year reduction in per capita demand is realized and water utility financial strength is maintained.
 - b. Metric 1b: Funding opportunities are identified and used to implement strategies.
2. **Conserve surface water during low-flow conditions**
 - a. Metric 2a: The low-flow strategy is effectively implemented when triggered
3. **Augment sources of supply**
 - a. Metric 3a: Supply augmentation strategies are implemented
 - b. Metric 3b: Funding opportunities are identified and successfully used to implement supply augmentation strategies
4. **Effectively communicate RBC findings and recommendations**
 - a. Metric 4a: The public develops a better understanding of the Edisto River Basin resources, challenges, and opportunities. Myths and falsehoods are eliminated and sound science is accepted.
 - b. Metric 4b: Outreach is effective, prompting Legislative actions, decisions and funding that support implementation strategies and actions
5. **Improve technical understanding of water resource management issues**
 - a. Metric 5a: Research into land use impacts on recharge is completed
 - b. Metric 5b: Regional groundwater model of area of concern is developed (if needed)
 - c. Metric 5c: Research into impacts of seasonal drawdown below the top of an aquifer is completed
6. **Protect groundwater supplies and existing users**



- a. Metric 6a: Monitoring wells in the Calhoun County groundwater area of concern are identified or constructed

Future updates of the Edisto River Basin Plan will evaluate the Edisto RBC's performance relative to the progress metrics.