

**Minutes of the Edisto RBC Meeting
Wednesday, May 18, 2022**

Meeting was held at Edisto REC and virtually via the Zoom application

Members Present: John Bass, Jerry Waters, Alta Mae Marvin, Hugo Krispyn, Jason Thompson, David Bishop, Hank Stallworth, Eric Odom, Brandon Stutts, Kirk Bell, Laura Bagwell, Amanda Sievers, Jeremy Walther, Alex Tolbert, Mark Aakhus, Landrum Weathers, Johny Haralson, Joel Duke, JJ Jowers & Alan Mehrzad

Members Absent: Danny Burbage & Will Williams

Planning Team Present: John Boyer, Tom Walker, Andrew Waters, Scott Harder, Leigh Anne Monroe, Matt Petkewich, Andrea Hughes, Greg Cherry, Chikezie Isiguzo, Andy Wachob, Joe Gellici & Rob Devlin

Total Attendance: 45

1. Call to Order, Approval of Agenda, and Approval of March 16 minutes.

Hank Stallworth called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. He reminded everyone the meeting is being recorded. He announced we have a quorum of Council members in person and online.

Hank reviewed the agenda that had been previously submitted to the council. He noted that it was an aggressive agenda so asked members to pay attention and participate actively. Hugo made motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Alta Mae Marvin. Approved unanimously.

Hank asked for motions to approve the minutes from the April 20 meeting. Approved unanimously.

2. Public and Agency Comment

John opened the public and agency comment at 9:06. There was no comment from public or agency representatives.

3. Old Business/New Business

Scott Harder gave an update on the PPAC meeting regarding groundwater and groundwater management. He reported that the PPAC affirmed that the RBC process is intended to look at both groundwater and surface water availability and resource management. However, he said a caveat is that any recommendations on groundwater management must be consistent with DHEC groundwater management planning.

Hugo noted that there about a public information meeting. He invited RBC members to attend the meeting.

4. Update on Edisto River Basin Plan Chapters

John reported that he has working versions of five chapters but he has not been able to send those to the subcommittees for review. He said he would begin sending out those chapter drafts to subcommittee members before the next RBC meeting.

5. Review Groundwater Model Sensitivity and Management Strategy Modeling Results

Andrea Hughes reviewed the results of the requested groundwater modeling scenarios. *Please review meeting slides/packet for results of modeling scenarios presented by Andrea.*

Discussion:

Jason suggested future presentations have the top aquifer marked in the graphs. Jeremy Walther asked if we could see the modeling results for both moderate and high growth scenarios with reduced pumping and relocation together. Andrea said that modeling could be conducted but would require a new run. John Boyer said that modeling depends on DNR budget approval. John asked the RBC if the council wanted to request these modeling scenarios. David Bishop asked Andrea if she thought the two requested scenarios would be worthwhile. Andrea said she can't speculate. David noted we are already seeing that there is benefit to pumping from deeper aquifers—how likely is requested modeling to change that assumption? Jeremy said that his objective is to show benefits of deeper pumping to farmers and other water users. The RBC agreed by consensus to request the modeling. DNR will check the budget to see if they can order these modeling scenarios from USGS.

RBC took a break at 10:07. John asked RBC to reconvene at 10:20.

John reminded the group there is a Groundwater Technical Advisory Committee meeting this Friday. If RBC members have questions for the Groundwater TAC, send them in an email to Tom, John, or Scott before Friday.

6. Selection of Groundwater and Surface Water Management Strategies

a. Discuss Feasibility of Demand Side Strategies

John started discussion by reviewing previous groundwater discussion and recommendations. (See meeting slides for review.) John asked the group to discuss feasibility and select recommended strategies.

Agricultural Water Efficiency strategy:

John reviewed results from the statewide irrigation survey but noted we do not have specific results for Edisto basin respondents. He noted that 53% respondents in final statewide survey indicated they intend to increase irrigated area. Only 4% indicated they planned to decrease irrigated areas. Jeremy, Landrum, and Laura commented that increased efficiencies probably lead to less water use in South Carolina, since additional land is not abundantly available here (in comparison to western states like Texas). Landrum suggested that changes in land use (development) is probably driving decreases in irrigation here in SC. He believes irrigation demand will continue to decrease due to land-use and development trends.

John reviewed survey results on Irrigation Scheduling Methods. Jeremy and Landrum agreed this is a fair reflection of Edisto Basin. Jeremy said that as technology gets cheaper, farmers will use it more for determining irrigation schedules. Landrum suggested these technologies are leading to less water waste. Jeremy said it will eventually lead to less water use, in his opinion.

John introduced the portfolio of Agricultural Water Efficiency Strategies. He asked the RBC to pass a motion on recommended strategies. (See slides for summary of recommendation portfolio). John said the RBC could recommend strategies as a portfolio or on an individual basis. David Bishop suggested that there be more discussion of cover crop management in soil management strategies. Jeremy and Landrum supported David's recommendation. Hugo noted that he would like to see broader, more general recommendations for enhanced water efficiencies—he worries that we are limiting ourselves by recommending specific strategies if new strategies become available in the future. John responded that the plan will not limit additional efficiency strategies as they evolve and become prevalent. Jason agreed and added that he doesn't think RBC needs to prioritize certain strategies over others. John said the "Priority" category is in the PPAC framework but we don't necessarily have to prioritize certain strategies over others. Hank said if we wanted to prioritize we would need more data about potential efficiencies of each one. The group discussed generally the benefits of prioritizing or not. Landrum suggested adding a recommendation to "Support and Develop Future Technologies/Strategies." Laura made a motion to recommend the strategies generally in the order that they were listed (see below). Joel Duke seconded. Vote passed unanimously.

Recommended Order:

Water Audits and Nozzle Retrofits

Irrigation Equipment Changes

Soil Management and Cover Cropping

Irrigation Scheduling

Crop Variety, Crop Type, and Crop Conversions

Future Technologies

Municipal Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategies

John reviewed this suite of strategy recommendations (see slides). Jason suggested it would be complicated to put these recommendations in preference order because water supply issues are different for each community. General discussion ensued about the recommendations. The

group agreed to recommend the whole list without prioritizations. Jason motioned to recommend the presented list without prioritization. Hugo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

b. Discuss Feasibility of Supply Side Strategies

Transitioning New Pumping to McQueen Branch in the Calhoun County Area of Concern

John asked if the group felt like they had enough information to endorse this recommendation now or defer decision until additional modeling was presented. Laura noted that she felt like we had enough information to proceed with this recommendation. Hugo asked if we should be making recommendations more generally, instead of focusing on one specific aquifer. General discussion ensued over the appropriateness of this recommendation. John noted that the discussion seemed to suggest we should make this recommendation and DHEC can consider it in further planning/permitting.

David Bishop makes a motion to recommend that cones of depression suggested by modeling should be tested and verified by DHEC and then taken into account when approving new registrations and permits in order to transition pumping to deeper aquifers as necessary. (Broad version). J.J. Jowers modifies David's motion to include description of McQueen Branch as an example of motion.

After discussion of David and J.J.'s motions, John typed the following motion to summarize discussion: "The RBC recommends that responsible agencies and stakeholders consider transitioning new pumping in areas of concern to other aquifers. One example indicated by modeling was the area of concern in the Crouch Branch of Calhoun County, where the RBC recommends that future pumping be transitioned to McQueen Branch, if monitoring suggests increasing drawdowns in the Crouch Branch."

Jerry Waters made a motion to approve John's summary of David and JJ's motion. Hugo seconds. Motion passes with 16 votes in favor (Amanda, John, Alan, Johnney, Alex, Mark, Kirk, David, Jerry, Eric, JJ, Joel, Alta Mae, Hugo, Hank, Laura); 3 votes opposed (Brandon, Jeremy, Landrum), and 1 abstaining (Jason).

Other Supply Side Strategies

Small Impoundments

David Bishop recommends limiting recommendation to 2nd order or lower tributaries. Laura makes motion to approve strategy recommendation with David's revision. David seconds. Motion passes with 17 votes in favor and 1 abstaining (Hugo) (Johnney and Mark absent).

Conjunctive Use

Conjunctive use refers to use of both groundwater and surface water resources. This recommendation is based on the premise that conjunctive use (using both groundwater and surface water during low-flow periods) builds resilience in low-flow conditions. The recommendation is not for permanent conjunctive use, but only during low-flow periods. David Bishop makes a motion to recommend conjunctive use as a supplement to surface water use during low flow periods (conjunctive use refers to both surface and groundwater use depending on specific situation). Laura seconds motion. Motion passes unanimously – 17 in favor (Alan, Johney, and Mark absent).

c. Discuss Low Flow Surface Water Management Strategy and Surface Water Condition

Issue: Address identified shortage at CWS Intake during High Demand Scenario and allow for some water to remain in river (environmental flow).

Recommended strategy: In low-flow conditions, recommend incremental shifts (see meeting slides for proposed shift schedule) to other upstream surface withdrawers able to do so and/or temporarily reduce demand where possible.

John noted that the Catawba-Wateree Water Management group has a similar low-flow protocol to the one in this proposed recommendation. In their protocol, public water suppliers have reduction goals, not requirements.

Jason asks RBC to suggest revisions that might change their vote to support the recommendation. J.J. Jowers said this appears to be a good compromise strategy. Landrum said that from a small business owner perspective, he is concerned that the largest user on the river is proposing the numbers that will influence smaller users' ability to use the river. There are a lot of small businesses that this could potentially affect, he said. That is why he is opposed. Jason responds that this is an issue that does or will influence all basins due to ongoing growth. He feels we need to set a precedent that we will have strategies based on specific river levels as an example to others across the state. Laura agrees that RBC needs to represent the best-interest of all the users in the basin; therefore we have to acknowledge a significant number of those users reside in the Charleston area. This proposal is one way of spreading management responsibility to all users of the basin. Jeremy notes that all suggested curtailments have significant influence on agricultural use. He does not understand why threshold level is at 332 cfs. He feels this could be a crushing blow to small farmers. Jason notes that 332 cfs is the unimpaired threshold in worst-case scenario low-flow conditions (based on 2002 drought). Hugo counters that we all have to recognize that each resource user group can't get everything they want. We have to find the best compromise for all users. In response, to Jeremy's concerns, Jason is willing to adapt his proposal to apply only to high-withdrawal users.

Hank asks for a straw vote in favor of Jason's compromise proposal—limiting proposed conditions to users of 60 mgm or over. In response to a question from Hank, Jason notes that this proposal is also subject to stipulations of the Drought Response Act. Jeremy asks if 60 mgm threshold is based on registration or actual use? Jason said the cutoff should be based on

registration or permit. Jeremy recommends making the 60 mgm threshold based on average monthly usage per year. JJ asks if we can do an analysis to decide the actual threshold numbers for low versus high-use withdrawers. John says we can look at statistics on actual agricultural surface water withdrawals.

John asked for two straw votes to bring discussion to a close:

Are you behind some threshold for low-flow management strategy: 13 votes in favor of this approach.

Do you want thresholds to apply to everyone equally: No votes in favor.

John says vote suggests we need to calculate appropriate threshold and put forward vote on agreed upon threshold at upcoming meeting.

7. Drought Response

John reviewed RBC drought-response obligations in the Planning Framework (see meeting slides) and drought response information presented to RBC at previous meetings.

John asks the RBC if there any other drought response initiatives we want to consider for inclusion in the plan (aside from Jason's low-flow proposal)? There were no additional initiatives suggested by RBC members for consideration.

John notes that we need to develop a drought response communication plan according to PPAC guidelines. John asks how the RBC wants to communicate with other RBCs, public, and stakeholders during drought. He recommends forming an ERBC Drought Subcommittee to develop and manage Drought Response Communication Plan (see meeting slide for suggested proposal). Landrum suggests increasing RBC representation on Southern Drought Management Area commission rather than create a new subcommittee. Jason suggests letting the chair and vice chair serve as communication liaisons for drought response. Hank states he prefers having a subcommittee to advise chair and vice chair on implementing communication plan, so that the chair and vice chair are not communicating to the public without consultation with other RBC members. RBC agrees by consensus to allow chair and vice chair to conduct electronic communication (email) with RBC members for drought response feedback and guidance that can then be conveyed to public and partner agencies if necessary.

8. Upcoming RBC Agenda and Schedule

Next meeting is June 22. We will focus on beginning to develop technical, policy, and planning recommendations. John asks members to write down in an email any plan recommendations they would like to propose for consideration by RBC and send them to him before meeting. He will send out a reminder to ask for recommendations before the next meeting.

Upcoming Meetings:

July 20

August 17

September (date TBD)

October (date TBD)

November (date TBD)

9. Meeting Conclusion

Meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Minutes by: Andrew Waters and Tom Walker

Approved: June 22, 2022

RBC Chat:

08:39:19 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):

Good Morning seems for a length day!!

08:40:52 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):

yes sir it does

08:54:57 From A Sievers to Everyone:

Good morning!

08:56:36 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

good morning!

09:05:59 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):

did you get my voting

09:06:07 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

public comments?

09:06:18 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):

yes

09:06:24 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

agency comment

09:06:25 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

?

09:19:17 From ahmehrzaad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):

I'm here. Sorry I was late

09:19:34 From Thomas Walker to ahmehrzaad(Direct Message):

got you on roll, thanks for letting me know

09:20:13 From ahmehrzaad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):



09:28:36 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

any questions for andrea at this point from rbc members?

09:28:57 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
thanks no

09:38:24 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
reduced my speaker volume and sound improved

09:38:50 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
roger that. I do have the mic volume up high to try and boost the sound

09:43:25 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
questions?

09:43:34 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
none

10:08:08 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
taking a 10 min break

10:56:47 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
that is a good idea for priority

10:59:06 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
did thye hear my comment

10:59:42 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
yes they did

10:59:51 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
thanks for jumping in

10:59:52 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
thanks

11:03:37 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
yeah

11:03:39 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:
in favor

11:04:53 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
johney, did you vote against the adoption of this recommendation?

11:10:58 From Thomas Walker to Johney Haralson(Direct Message):
hi johney, did you vote against the recommendation of these ag efficiency strategies?

11:16:28 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:
when looking at reducing rates one thing to consider is bonding requirements to charge
a particular rate in order to cover the cost of the bond to pay for infrastructure

11:16:56 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
do you mind sharing this point with the group in a second?

11:17:35 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:
sure

11:17:45 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
ok one second

11:29:15 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:
in favor

11:56:54 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
yeah

11:56:59 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:

yes
11:59:02 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:
I
11:59:13 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
yeah
11:59:54 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
opposed?
12:00:13 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:
in favor
12:00:40 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
we are going to write it down for the vote. may take a re-vote
12:09:15 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
yeah
12:09:33 From Mark Aakhus to Everyone:
in favor
12:13:14 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
lunch break
12:26:56 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
yeah
12:28:14 From Alex's iPad to Everyone:
Favor
12:28:17 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
I vote in favor
12:30:40 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
are you still with us
12:31:19 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
yes
12:31:31 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
thanks
13:49:52 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
I like the threshold concept
14:08:03 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
1 am back with you thanks
14:09:31 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
thanks, cdm is going to go forward with evaluating a threshold (60 mgm a month) for the
low flow strategy to be presented at the next meeting. I think that's all you missed.
14:09:54 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
low flows for big users leaving out little guys
14:10:02 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
thanks do i need to vote for this
14:10:08 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
next time
14:10:17 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
ok

14:10:20 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
it was a straw poll for support

14:10:39 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
thanks

14:23:41 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
thanks for your help today

14:23:53 From Thomas Walker to John(Direct Message):
thanks for staying on

14:25:07 From John to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
good meeting and hope people have read info before meeting next time to be more
efficient

14:26:52 From ahmehrzad to Thomas Walker(Direct Message):
thank you

14:27:00 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
thanks all