

MINUTES OF PEE DEE RIVER BASIN COUNCIL (RBC) MEETING (HYBRID FORMAT) HELD OCTOBER 25th, 2022, AT SUMTER WATER PLANT 6, SUMTER, SC

RBC Members Present: Bob Perry, Michael Hemingway, John Crutchfield, Megan Hyman, Doug Newton, Walt Beard, Michael Bankert, John Rivers, Brandon Durant, Everett Allen, Buddy Richardson, Frances McClary, Cara Schildtknecht, Cynthia Walters, Eric Krueger, Hughes Page, Jason Gamble, Bill Wiegand, & Cliff Chamblee

Absent: Jeff Steinmetz, Jeff Parkey, Christy Everett (Tim Brown, Alternate, Present), Cricket Adams, Lindsay Privette (Joseph Lewis, Alternate, Present)

Planning Team Present: Scott Harder, Brooke Czwartacki, JD Solomon, Thomas Walker, Joe Koon, Jeff Allen, Matt Lindburg, Pam Miller, Andy Wachob, & Chikezie Isiguzo.

Total Attendance: 32

1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

JD Solomon (PDRBC Facilitator) called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM and welcomed members. He highlighted the main items on the meeting agenda and the field trip after the meeting. He appreciated the hosts, Walt Beard at Sumter Water Treatment Plant #6. He informed the RBC that one of the members, Charlie Gray resigned from the RBC because of personal constraints. JD Solomon invited members to suggest qualified individuals that could replace him for consideration and invitation to apply.

2. REVIEW OF THE MEETING OBJECTIVES AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved. Michael Hemingway made a motion to approve minutes and summary documents which was seconded by Bob Perry and unanimously approved.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

4. GROUNDWATER RESOURCES OF THE PEE DEE BASIN – (Brooke Czwartacki)

Brooke Czwartacki (Hydrologist, SCDNR) presented an overview of the SC physiographic provinces from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain. She explained the differences in the physiographic provinces ranging from elevation to soil formation and composition. She noted that groundwater is a vital resource to the Coastal Plain, the province that encompasses nearly two-thirds of the state. Brooke explained the SC hydrogeologic framework along the dip and strike. She discussed the aquifers of the basin and focused on the primary water use aquifers in the basin – the Crouch Branch and the McQueen Branch.

QUESTION: Is there any relationship that we should know about or that is important going forward?

Brooke pointed the members to aquifer extents and recharge areas in the basin and the differences in transmissivity. She defined transmissivity as the ability of an aquifer to transmit water over its entire saturated thickness.

QUESTION: I need clarification about the term sediment and thousands of feet deep, was this underwater in this area, and where did the material come to get thousands of feet of sediment? Are our mountains worn down that much?

Brooke explained that sandy areas could have higher velocities than slow-moving clay areas.

QUESTION: The SC Museum in Charleston shows animals that used to live in SC, including buffalos that used to range in the Coastal Plain, and that's all underwater now. I wonder why the sediment didn't keep the land up as the water came up. How come the water is up that much when the land is up thousands of feet?

Brooke explained that the Continental Shelf is about 200 miles offshore, and now we are seeing a trend of a rising ocean. She further explained the groundwater monitoring network and data collection, models, and analyses in the basin.

QUESTION: A local newspaper article from Georgetown County says that the primary groundwater source is local aquifers, called local water. Between 1970 and 2001, the groundwater levels in the Crouch Branch aquifer at Well-GEO77 declined by approximately 1.9ft/year, and a total decline of approximately 100ft. Is this level lower than it was in 1970?

Brooke explained that GEO77 is a synoptic well used to collect data. She presented aquifer groundwater trend graphs to explain differences in various areas in the basin. She also presented a potentiometric map and discussed its usefulness in illustrating areas of decline. The potentiometric surface is the level in feet referenced to the land surface elevation to which the water rises as measured in tightly cased wells open to specific aquifers. Furthermore, long-term pumping of groundwater can lead to cones of depression. Brooke presented a map of significant cones of depression in SC, with a prominent depression in Georgetown. Comparing potentiometric surface data in 1992 and 2019, Brooke showed cone of depression recoveries in the McQueen Branch aquifer. She also explained the trends in the Crouch Branch aquifer from 1976 to 2022.

QUESTION: What is the predominant use in those areas for those aquifers?

Brooke responded that the predominant use is water supply and industrial. She emphasized the importance of potentiometric mapping to water management and planning by proactively identifying areas of potential depressions, thereby avoiding the severe cases currently experienced in some areas in the basin.

QUESTION: Some time ago, Georgetown City Hall collapsed into a sinkhole. Could that be related to the water level problem?

Brooke clarified that the collapse is a different problem, most likely related to the standard of the buildings.

5. SURFACE WATER LAW AND REGULATION (Joe Koon, Division of Water Monitoring, Assessment, and Protection SCDHEC)

Joe Koon presented an overview of SC water regulations and laws. He explained that the two primary program areas in water quantity permitting are the capacity use program, which deals with groundwater, and the surface water withdrawal program. While the capacity use program has been in place since the 1970s, the surface water program started in 2012. Also, there is a water use reporting requirement for all registered water users. He explained the different types of surface water users – existing surface water withdrawers, new surface water withdrawers, and agricultural withdrawers. He also explained the regulations guiding the new or expanding water withdrawer. The regulations are expected to ensure reasonableness, transparency, and administrative oversight.

QUESTION: What was the cut-off date between the existing user and the new user?

June 2011.

QUESTION: Our area, Georgetown County, is growing, and their need for water, will that be new or existing?

Joe clarified that if they were registered users before the cut-off date, they would qualify as existing users. However, if they require expansion, they will be subject to additional criteria for expanding water withdrawers. The new instream withdrawer process is subject to the most stringent criteria.

QUESTION: Are requests for new or expanding water user permits ever denied?

Joe noted that the process is designed through the evaluation process to disqualify unqualified applications.

QUESTION: What is the reasonableness criteria?

Joe explained that reasonableness criteria generally assess if the use is reasonable. He emphasized the importance of data in this regard and acknowledged, in some instances, the role of an administrative court interpretation to arrive at what is reasonable.

QUESTION: When looking at safe yield analysis, is there consideration of the cumulative impact of other recent permits?

Joe explained that the safe yield calculation is considered at the withdrawal point, considering other withdrawals, both upstream and downstream, at their permitted levels.

6. WATER USE IN THE PEE DEE BASIN (Priyanka More, SCDNR)

Priyanka reminded the members that water withdrawal reporting is a regulatory requirement in SC. She presented a water withdrawal map of all the river basins in SC, highlighting how Pee Dee groundwater and surface water withdrawals compared to other basins. The Pee Dee accounts for 40% of the groundwater use in the state and 15% of surface water use in the state. The state regulations require water users withdrawing more than three million gallons in any month to register and report their use.

She also presented the water use by categories of users in the Pee Dee basin. Thermoelectric is the surface water top user (mostly non-consumptive), while water supply is the groundwater top user. Finally, she informed the members that the reports were shared with them and invited their comments and feedback on the data presented in the report.

7. DISCUSSION ON THE ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF THE PEE DEE RBC (J. D. Solomon, Facilitator)

JD briefed the members on the responsibilities of the Chair and Vice Chair. He pointed out the peculiarities of the basin and the need for leadership ready to reach out to other stakeholders, such as those in North Carolina and other basins in SC.

COMMENTS:

From attending meetings in other RBCs, like Edisto, I don't think the RBC Chair and Vice Chair are onerous tasks. It involves a bit more work but aligns with what we are already doing, like reviewing documents.

I think the Chair is one of the most important jobs, being the spokesperson.

This process is sudden to me, and I think we should take some time to process our thoughts and do the nominations in the next meeting. This is because, to me, the Chair's responsibility is to build cohesion in the group and help facilitate the work toward consensus on decisions. So, I would suggest we back up a little bit and require every member to submit their nominations.

Decision: Motion to wait until the November meeting to elect Chair and Vice Chair positions and for Pee Dee RBC members to send in other nominations between meeting 5 and 6. Eric Krueger 1st and Hughes Page 2nd

Current nominees for Chair (and Vice Chair) are: (alphabetical) Bob Perry, Buddy Richardson, and Cara Schildtknecht.

8. UPCOMING MEETING AND SCHEDULE

JD Solomon noted that some members that could not make the field trip joined online and invited all members to attend upcoming meetings physically as this mode encouraged bonding. The next meeting will be held on November 15th, 2022, at Clemson Pee Dee REC, 2200 Pocket Road. Darlington, SC.

Minutes by: Chikezie Isiguzo and Tom Walker

Approved: 11/15/22

RBC Chat:

08:59:46 From Thomas Walker To Everyone:

going to get started here in a minute or so

10:30:33 From Matt Lindburg, Brown and Caldwell To Everyone:

Quick note on some of the discussion during the last presentation and litigation. New water uses are often the subject of litigation in other states if they are potentially speculative (i.e. application for new use that might not actually occur). The degree to which a water "can and will" utilize a new water use can be a much-scrutinized criteria for permitting the new use.

11:10:46 From Hughes Page - PDLT To Thomas Walker(Privately):

I agree w Eric to wait

11:21:06 From Thomas Walker To Everyone:

we're about to close the meeting. thanks all

11:21:32 From ekrueger To Everyone:

ok.. cheers

11:21:34 From Thomas Walker To Everyone:

thank you, ending now