

Draft Summary
Water Council Meeting – October 16, 2006

Dr. Couch opened the meeting with an update on the progress to date: the work of the State Water Plan is 2/3rds of the way complete.

I. Town Hall Meetings Summary

Leigh Askew summarized the comments by providing the "biggest concerns expressed" in the town hall meetings. [Since the meetings were overwhelmingly attended by environmental groups, not surprisingly, the comments provided were either direct quotes or on all fours with the Georgia Water Coalition.]

- Town hall meetings had over 400 attendees for 4 meetings. [?]
- Most comments were very positive about the CUB proposal.
 - "Brings an equitable distribution of water, and does not favor one area of the state over another."
- Concerns that were raised:
 - That inter-basin transfers will become the "default mechanism" instead of aggressive water conservation and reuse. CUBs won't matter.
 - Equitable distribution of water around the State (i.e., Atlanta v. the rest of GA)
 - Coastal region: Aquifer storage and recovery should not be pursued. Not enough scientific data, much more research and modeling are needed.
 - Funding: EPD needs funding to implement the plans, educate, and do the scientific and data collection needed.
- There is a need for more town hall meetings
 - People want to travel a shorter distance
 - Should provide opportunity for folks to attend weekend meetings

Rep. Lynn Smith

- Despite the charge of the legislation, it seems like water resources to support Georgia's economy is taking a back seat (i.e., "How are we (Water Council) making sure that economic vitality is stressed as equally as important as equal distribution and protection of human health and the wildlife.")
- We need an allocation of water for "business development."

Dr Couch agreed that the town hall meetings were mostly reflective of the environmental perspective, not a good balance of industry and municipal interests, although the Tifton meeting had agriculture sector attendees. "Supporting the state's economy is foundational to the development of this plan"; but must balance fish and wildlife, recreational needs, etc.

II. Additional Public Meetings and Communication

Next round of town hall meetings will start in January, and another set again in May. There will be more than four meetings, likely in eight places. At that time, the content of the meetings will be detailed recommendations regarding the Consumptive Use Budget proposal, as well as policy recommendations for water quality.

Legislative meetings

In addition to more town hall meetings, Rep. Smith and Sen. Tolleson also proposed local public meetings be convened by local legislators to receive input on water. Legislators will be challenged when we bring a state water plan recommendation to them

unless they are involved earlier. [It was unclear whether EPD would have a role in these meetings, what the format would be, whether any facts would be presented, if they would just be an opportunity for the public to sound off with their legislator present, etc.]

Publications

EPD will provide content for organizations to put in their member newsletters regarding the State Water plan process.

Speaking engagements

Dr. Couch said that she is making every effort to do public speaking on the plan, and mentioned an upcoming presentation in Forsyth for their combined Rotary Clubs (also with Jim Stokes and Kevin Green). Said she welcomed other opportunities to get to community leaders.

III. Consumptive Use Budgets

Nap Caldwell (EPD) gave a presentation on Consumptive Use Budgets, which was basically identical to the presentation done in June and July at the Town Hall meetings. Nap said EPD had been thinking more about them and revising the concept, but few additional details were provided.

Nap said that **Aris Georgakakos** (Ga Tech) has been retained to "develop the planning tool, the mathematical modeling tool, and the training module to show these sub-basins how to use it." At the next State Advisory Committee meeting (Nov 6), Dr. Georgakakos would be walking through specific examples of a CUB for the Chattahoochee River Basin.

Ken Stewart (GA Forestry Commission Director) asked if there are other areas of the US that have implemented some form of the CUB framework?

Nap responded "No". Those that have come closest are Massachusetts and, to a lesser extent, Florida. But they are in the early steps, and neither is far enough along to really make any judgment if it is working. South Carolina has proposed that this approach be used in the Savannah River. **Gail Cowie (EPD)**: "There are methodologies for us to learn from in terms of determining minimum flow needs" but the overall CUB framework has not been tested long enough elsewhere.

The major benefit of CUBs is that it provides the framework in which there can be a discussion of how you might use the available CUB in a given watershed. In a given area of the state, a watershed can only provide so much water. For those areas, you can look for ways to supplement through inter-basin transfers and reservoirs. But only after aggressive emphasis on water conservation and reuse." There is a cost to everything.

[CUB discussion continued.]

What are the factors in which you can consider an inter-basin transfer? When does it become OK to move water from this area to that area? Prove to us that you have

maximized your opportunity to re-use and conserve what you have. CUBs are a framework to examine trade-offs.

Through CUBs you are managing uses in a watershed. So it is very important to come up with a methodology for where to divide the basins. Upstream areas are also required to provide a pro-rata share of water for downstream. In that regard, there is a "total CUB" and a "residual CUB." A residual CUB is what is left beyond what you already use today. The sub-basins are responsible for determining how to use the water within these sub-basins.

Flow will be managed at two points: at various intake points and at various downstream points

We ought to be managing consumptive use of water, rather than withdrawals and discharges. A CUB will not be the same across the State since there are areas with different amounts of water and different demands.

Lynn Smith: There can't be a region in the state that seeks more water unless it proves that it is conserving and reusing water per best practices. Does the CUB basically set a statewide minimum standard?

Dr. Couch: There is a cost to everything. Under this proposal, metro Atlanta will need to have a higher level of conservation/reuse than Valdosta, for example.

Ken Stewart: "If you tried to do a statewide CUB (and not work within river basins) it would assume a lot of inter-basin transfers and so this approach is good."

IV. Water Quality

Linda MacGregor (EPD) walked through a basin presentation on water quality, including water quality standards, statewide monitoring, water quality protection through point and non-point controls, etc.

- o Water quality monitoring: GA monitors about 20% of its streams every 5 years.
- o Trading: There is a lot of interest in trading between point sources, and between point and non-point sources. Other areas of the US are doing trading programs. Challenge: How do you ensure that the trade actions happen, and that non-point-source controls last forever?
- o Wasteload allocations and permitting: There would be a change from current practices in that EPD is currently reactive to permittees and serves on a first-come, first-serve basis. EPD would rather like to calculate wasteload allocations using a basin-wide or watershed approach. (i.e., give permits on a watershed basis all at one time) To meet watershed limits, we need a trading mechanism that does not currently exist.
- o Revising water quality standards/reclassification: There has been some discussion of developing higher standards for environmentally sensitive waters (Georgia currently has none) and revising standards for urban waters where we have unrealistic expectations of what water quality these streams can achieve.

V. Public Comments: 2 representatives addressed the Water Council

Georgia Water Coalition (Alex Adams): Represents 139 organizations, etc.

- o Increased monitoring / Increased funding / Wasteload allocation by watershed: Supports establishing a watershed approach to wasteload allocations "that also accounts for future growth" but this must be linked to water quality monitoring and substantial additional funding.
- o Reclassification of waters: Supports higher standards for environmentally outstanding or sensitive waters and is significantly opposed to "rollback" of standards for urban streams. This also creates problems with environmental "equity" as more citizens come in contact with these streams (specifically mentioned concern with urban waters).
- o Pollutant Trading Programs: Object - creates serious water quality problems, not practical, creates pollution "hot spots" that defeat the purpose, would require tone of water quality modeling before you even think about it.

Coosa River Basin Initiative (Joe Cook): Also a member of the GA Water Coalition. "I like to think that I speak for the 300,000 people that live in the Etowah River basin in Georgia and Alabama."

He says he is encouraged to hear the discussion earlier about restricting inter-basin transfers. The Etowah basin is the "poster child" for inter-basin transfers as water is taken from the Etowah basin to the Chattahoochee. The largest water user in the Etowah basin is outside the Etowah basin.

Previous iterations of the state water plan had inter-basin transfers from the Coosa at 100MGD. The District's plan had it at 70MGD. At least mirror the metro District plan.

He says he's not against inter-basin transfers, but is against consumptive use of that water. Water taken from any basin should be returned to that basin. "This would cost considerable money and would substantially increase the cost of living in metro Atlanta. When costs get so great, this will move that growth to other areas that have the water, like Rome, Albany, Augusta, etc.") He also said that metro Atlanta should implement more water conservation whatever the cost so that when it becomes too expensive to live in Atlanta, the development will go to places like Rome, which has a lot more access to water. [If he's suggesting that Rome hasn't developed because of metro-Atlanta's water demand, he would be wrong.]

Joe closed his comments with a question about the ACT mediation sessions, which are closed to the public by court order: What will the impact of any interstate agreement have on the statewide water plan?