

**Location:**

March 7, 2024

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Meeting No. 5 (Hybrid Format)

Hampton, SC

**Action Items:**

1. RBC members should select an alternate from the same water use interest category and inform the planning team.

**Major Decisions:**

1. The LSSRBC adopted 11 process metrics (December 2023)
2. Lower Savannah – Salkehatchie RBC Vision Statement (to be reviewed and potentially modified in every phase): Shared water resources are managed to sustainably meet the needs of all stakeholders in the LSS basins now and into the future. (December 2023)
3. LSSRBC Goals (from meeting #3):
  1. Develop water use strategies, policies, and legislative recommendations so that the LSS River Basins are resilient and:
    - a. Provide for an accurate accounting of current and future water availability
    - b. Promote stability of water allocations to support long-term planning
    - c. Maintain water availability to support public water supply, industrial, golf course, energy, food and fiber production and other legitimate needs
    - d. Allow for growth
    - e. Prevent saltwater intrusion and loss of freshwater resources
    - f. Maintain adequate flows to support instream needs of aquatic organisms and recreation.
  2. Enhance collaboration between all stakeholders and water interest groups, including Georgia and the Upper Savannah RBC.
  3. Educate and inform local governments on how land use decisions impact water availability.

**4. Develop and implement an education and communication plan to promote the strategies, policies, and recommendations developed for the LSS River Basins. (January 2024)**

**4. The LSSRBC elected Kari Foy as Chair and Ken Caldwell as Vice Chair (March 2024)**

**Meeting:**

- Review of Meeting Objectives
- Approval of Agenda
- Public Comment Period
- Agribusiness in the Lower Savannah and Salkehatchie River Basins
- Marine Resources
- Ecological Flow Relationships
- Select RBC Chair and Vice Chair
- Current Water Use and Demand Projection Methodology
- February Meeting Highlights and Discussion
- Future RBC Meetings Discussion

**Meeting Summary (March 7<sup>th</sup>)**

John Boyer, LSSRBC Facilitator, called the March 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Lower Savannah - Salkehatchie RBC to order at 10:00 AM. The fifth meeting of the Lower Savannah - Salkehatchie RBC was held in-person and virtually via the Zoom virtual meeting platform. Including the Lower Savannah - Salkehatchie RBC members and planning team, there were 43 people present at this RBC meeting in-person and online. The meeting began with John Boyer welcoming the RBC members to the meeting. John introduced the meeting structure and discussed the agenda items for the meeting. The Lower Savannah – Salkehatchie RBC approved the RBC meeting agenda. The RBC also approved the February meeting minutes and summary documents. A public comment period was held with no comments received. An agency comment period was held with no comments received.

Nathan Smith, Clemson, presented *Agribusiness in the Lower Savannah and Salkehatchie River Basins*. Nathan first presented an overview of South Carolina agriculture which included major crops by value of production, SC farm and livestock overview, and forestry. Nathan then covered Lower Savannah – Salkehatchie data which included: corn, cotton, peanut, soybean, wheat, peach, cattle, hog, and poultry. The total market value of products in the LSS is over \$600 million. Forestry 2022 stumpage was valued at around \$26 million in the LSS.

The next presentation was from Joey Ballenger, SCDNR, on *Aquatic Saltwater Resources of the Lower Savannah River and Salkehatchie River Basin*. Joey covered the Estuarine Finfish Research Section which included species monitoring and stock enhancement, Crustacean & Molluscan Research Section which included estuarine trawl survey and oyster demographics project, and Environmental Research Section which included SCECAP, watershed and coastal development studies, and tidal creek research.

Luke Bower, Clemson University, presented *Flow-Ecology Relationships* to the RBC. The purpose of the analysis is to provide insight on the potential response of organisms to the alternate water withdrawal scenarios produced by SWAM. Luke highlighted freshwater diversity in SC and the bio-assessment approach and the associated steps in the process. The study uses the ELOHA framework to build a hydrologic foundation of streamflow and biological data, classify natural river types, and model and select flow ecology relationships.

The LSSRBC held Chair and Vice Chair elections. Kari Foy was elected Chair and Ken Caldwell was elected Vice Chair.

Alexis Modzelesky, SCDNR, presented *Water Use in the Lower Savannah – Salkehatchie River Basin*. The presentation had the following takeaway, both surface water and groundwater are important resources in the basin. The top 3 categories for surface water use are thermoelectric, water supply, and industry. Consumptive use of thermoelectric power is 2.5% and there are no strong trends observed in reported withdrawals. For groundwater use the top 3 categories are water supply, irrigation, and industry. A slight increasing trend is observed in reported data for water supply and agricultural irrigation and decreasing trend in industry.

Laljeet Sangha, Clemson, presented *Lower Savannah – Salkehatchie Water-Demand Projections* to the LSSRBC members. Laljeet covered the history of the water demand methods and method development which included many rounds of stakeholder feedback. Laljeet presented draft results to the RBC which included discussion on: thermoelectric, golf, mining, and other demands. More attention was given to public supply, manufacturing, and agricultural irrigation. Laljeet concluded his presentation discussing possible research and posed discussion questions to the RBC.

Finally, John briefly discussed the joint meeting with the USRBC and the USACE in North Augusta. John then reviewed future meetings and field trip ideas. The LSSRBC meeting was adjourned. The next Lower Savannah – Salkehatchie RBC meeting will be held April 4<sup>th</sup> in Hampton, SC.

The meeting concluded at 2:07 PM.

Summary: Tom Walker

Approved: 4/4/24