

Pee Dee River Basin Council (RBC) Meeting #29 Minutes
October 22nd, 2024

RBC Members Present: Michael Hemingway, Buddy Richardson, Lindsay Privette, John Crutchfield, Mike Bankert, Jason Gamble, Hughes Page, Megan Hyman, Cliff Chamblee, Bob Perry, Eric Krueger, Doug Newton, John Rivers, Debra Buffkin, & Frances McClary

Absent: Tim Brown, Cynthia Walters (Ryan Gatlin, alternate, present), Snipe Allen, & Jeff Steinmetz

Planning Team Present: JD Solomon, Matt Lindburg, Scott Harder, Brooke Czwartacki, Andy Wachob, Alexis Modzelesky, Jeff Allen, Tom Walker, and Chikezie Isiguzo.

Total Attendance: 31

1. Call the Meeting to Order (J. D. Solomon - Facilitator)

a. Review of Meeting Objectives

J. D. Solomon (the Facilitator) called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM and welcomed the members to the 29th Pee Dee RBC meeting. He highlighted the meeting's objectives, including discussing policy recommendations, receiving Chapter Updates, discussing report finalization, and scheduling next steps. Finally, J. D. Solomon announced an adjustment to the agenda to include the election of a Vice Chair for the Pee Dee RBC.

b. Approval of October 22nd, 2024, meeting agenda and the September 24th, 2024, meeting minutes and summary

The members unanimously approved the October 22nd, 2024, Pee Dee RBC meeting agenda. Michael Hemingway moved, seconded by Megan Hyman, to adopt the September 24th, 2024, Pee Dee RBC meeting minutes and summary.

2. Public/Agency Comment (JD Solomon)

There was no public/agency comment.

3. Election of Vice Chair for the Pee Dee RBC

The members of the Pee Dee RBC unanimously elected Lindsay Privette to serve as the Vice Chair of the Pee Dee RBC

Motion – Michael Hemingway – 1st and John Crutchfield – 2nd

4. Plan Implementation Discussion and Breakout Groups

Matt Lindburg's discussion on plan implementation centered around Chapter 10 of the RBC's comprehensive planning document. This chapter outlined strategies for implementing water resource management objectives and provided a structured framework to guide short- and long-term activities. The session aimed to familiarize members of the Pee Dee RBC with the content, identify priority areas, and address potential challenges in executing the outlined strategies.

Key Components of Chapter 10

a. Implementation Objectives:

Five objectives were identified:

- Improve Water Use Efficiency: Focused on demand-side strategies like municipal and agricultural water conservation (detailed in Chapter 7).
- Adopt One Water Approaches: Aimed at optimizing supply-side resources, such as conjunctive water management.
- Enhance Drought Management: Recommendations from Chapter 8 emphasize updating drought plans and encouraging industry participation.
- Advance Technical Understanding: Address knowledge gaps in river basin data to support informed decisions.
- Effectively Communicate Findings: Ensure members of the Pee Dee RBC are well-informed and actively engaged in the implementation process.

b. Short-Term Actions:

- Tables detailing actions over the next five years were discussed. These included identifying funding opportunities, establishing baseline water use metrics, and launching outreach programs to foster stakeholder buy-in.

c. Metrics and Long-Term Vision:

- Metrics for progress measurement were integrated into each objective. These include reductions in per capita water use and increased adoption of drought management plans.
- Long-term goals build on short-term actions, ensuring continuity and addressing evolving basin needs.

Some challenges to effective implementation include:

- Funding Limitations: Securing financial resources is critical for success.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Broad acceptance is necessary to drive meaningful action.
- Governance and Structure: Ambiguity regarding the RBC's authority and its role in overseeing implementation raised concerns.
- Data Gaps: Lack of comprehensive groundwater models and inconsistent data collection methods were identified as significant weaknesses.
- Coordination with State Entities: A unified approach across basins is needed to prevent conflicting strategies.

Discussion:

Q: Whose call is that?

A: Agency call

Q: For those of us not in government, can someone explain WaterSC called by the Governor?

A: Old PPAC went away. WaterSC is the new task force to provide guidance

Q: Any changes?

A: Some people have changed, and some stayed the same

C: New DES with guidance from WaterSC will work through these issues

C: The Broad RBC has met to start implementation

C: The governance process will be worked out

C: I do have some reservations with not having the groundwater model. How to go forward without data? I've seen the data collection state is poor. Not having the model and not being able to draw the line in the sand we're kind of shooting in the dark. Push data collection and the modeling.

A: We can get the plan done and specify we need the model. Working through plan b without the groundwater model.

C: Data gap identification – could guide how data is collected

5. Breakout Group Reports

Group 1: Demand and Supply Strategies

The group confirmed preferred alternatives and emphasized promoting responsible rate-setting among utilities. They discussed missing data, including groundwater studies and local water usage, and considered strategies for new community wells with a focus on sustainable development. Participants highlighted the importance of tailoring strategies to local challenges, constraints, and regulations. They addressed growth projections, noting rapid residential and industrial increases in some areas and their implications for water supply.

Group 2: Drought Management

Participants suggested replacing the term "drought management plans" with "draught management practices" to make the concept more acceptable to industries. They recommended developing a support system for smaller utilities to ensure efficient operations and accurate data management. The group also proposed requiring the submission of drought management plans to relevant state offices for accountability and preparedness.

Group 3: Implementation and Cross-State Collaboration

The group proposed completing the groundwater model and forming an ad-hoc RBC team to drive progress and provide recommendations. They emphasized the need for improved communication between South Carolina and North Carolina water management groups, especially during droughts. They advocated for implementing plans through existing state programs like DES or SCOR, rather than forming new nonprofits, to leverage better funding and support mechanisms.

General Notes

Participants discussed the challenges of setting meaningful metrics that avoid unintended consequences, suggesting a focus on system responses rather than merely counting plans or reports. They highlighted the impact of industrial and residential growth on water supply infrastructure, particularly in high-growth areas. The group encouraged addressing data gaps and ensuring strategies adapt to emerging challenges.

6. Chapter Status Discussion (Matt Lindburg)

Matt Lindburg provided a detailed update on the progress, key modifications, and remaining tasks related to the development of a comprehensive report. The focus has been on refining the chapters, addressing data limitations, and ensuring a cohesive narrative. Significant efforts have been made to adapt to challenges, such as the absence of a groundwater model, while advancing the work on surface and groundwater resources.

Chapter 3 centers on the discussion of surface and groundwater resources. The modifications to this chapter include a shift in focus towards groundwater monitoring data and "hot maps" to address current and potential issues due to the absence of a groundwater model. The section on groundwater resources retains discussions on aquifers, with hydrograph data reorganized into a separate section. Expanded discussions on capacity use areas and groundwater assessment tools have been introduced to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Updates on future groundwater development are still pending, with plans to include new information on emerging concerns.

Chapter 4 is nearing completion. Most of the work for this chapter has been finalized, with only a small amount of data pending. The chapter is expected to be included in the next draft of the report for broader review and feedback.

Chapter 5 evaluates water resources with a focus on both surface and groundwater. The groundwater analysis relies on historical baseline data and potentiometric water levels to assess trends and areas of concern. The chapter identifies recharge dynamics near the fall line, with examples such as Sumter and Lee counties showing recovery due to available recharge. In contrast, long-term declines are observed in deeper aquifer systems and coastal regions, where centralized pumping has significant impacts. Despite the absence of a groundwater model, this chapter aims to project future demands and develop preliminary management strategies, setting the stage for eventual model integration.

Chapter 6 explores water management strategies, addressing both demand and supply-side approaches for surface and groundwater. Groundwater strategies have been expanded using available data, including monitoring networks and withdrawal records. Florence County serves as a case study, showcasing effective conjunctive water management. The chapter also evaluates the feasibility, costs, and benefits of various groundwater strategies. Although limited by the absence of a groundwater model, it makes effective use of current data to highlight challenges and opportunities.

Chapter 7 focuses on prioritizing strategies. Feedback from the RBC has been positive, with

only minor corrections needed. The chapter will incorporate insights from recent discussions, particularly regarding groundwater strategies, to enhance its recommendations.

Chapters 8 and 9 require minimal changes. Chapter 8 has been finalized for a long time and does not need significant updates, while Chapter 9 has received some feedback on typographical corrections but no substantive edits.

Chapter 10 will incorporate feedback from recent discussions to refine its content. This chapter is designed to integrate insights from the preceding chapters and lay the groundwork for the executive summary.

The executive summary is near completion and pending input from the latest discussions. It will initially be presented in a draft format like the other chapters, with plans for graphic enhancements later. Feedback will focus on ensuring the content aligns with the overall goals of the report.

In addition to textual updates, the team is gathering fresh images and visuals to enhance the presentation quality of the report. Drone imagery and other visual elements will complement the written content, creating a polished and professional final document. Please send in any basin pictures to Matt.

In conclusion, significant progress has been made on the report despite challenges such as the absence of a groundwater model. The chapters reflect a strong reliance on available data, strategic planning, and an emphasis on integrating feedback. The remaining tasks focus on refining the content, incorporating new data, and enhancing visuals to deliver a comprehensive and cohesive final draft.

Discussion:

Q: Groundwater model, where is that?

A: 1 year or 2 most likely

Q: Where does that fit into us being done?

A: The further actions, groundwater model, implementation ongoing. The plan will be done

7. Plan Finalization, Next Steps, and Schedules (Matt Lindburg/ JD Solomon)

J. D. Solomon discussed plan finalization, next steps, and schedules.

Plan Finalization:

The team is in the final stages of completing all chapters of the report, with an internal deadline set for October 31st. Once all chapters are finalized and internally reviewed for consistency and completeness, the compiled draft will be sent out to members of the Pee Dee RBC by November 5th. This will initiate a two-week review period, during which members of the Pee Dee RBC are expected to provide their comments by November 19th.

The feedback received will be used to refine the draft, and an updated version of the plan will be prepared in time for the next RBC (River Basin Council) meeting scheduled for December 3rd. This meeting will allow for a consensus vote on the draft plan's status and readiness for public review.

Next Steps

Following the December 3rd RBC meeting, assuming consensus is achieved, the draft plan will be publicly posted around December 10th. This will precede the first public meeting, tentatively scheduled for mid-January, during which the draft plan will be presented to the public. This presentation will mark the start of a 30-day public comment period, closing on February 13th.

After the public comment period, there will be an additional 30 days allocated to review and respond to the feedback. This timeline extends to March 15th, at which point a revised version of the plan will be shared with members of the Pee Dee RBC. Final approval voting is planned for March 25th during another RBC meeting.

The second public meeting, where the final plan and responses to public comments will be presented, is tentatively scheduled for March 27th. A mandatory 30-day notice period for this meeting ensures sufficient time for public participation. Once this second meeting concludes, the finalization process for the plan will be complete.

Key Milestones and Schedules

- October 31, 2024: Completion of all report chapters.
- November 5, 2024: Circulation of the draft report to members of the Pee Dee RBC.
- November 19, 2024: Deadline for stakeholder comments on the draft.
- December 3, 2024: RBC meeting for consensus vote on the draft.
- December 10, 2024: Public posting of the draft plan.
- Mid-January 2025: First public meeting to present the draft.
- February 13, 2025: End of public comment period.
- March 15, 2025: Completion of responses to public feedback.
- March 25, 2025: Final approval vote during the RBC meeting.
- March 27, 2025: Second public meeting to present the finalized plan.

Long-Term Considerations:

While the immediate goal is the finalization of the current plan, future efforts will focus on integrating developments such as the groundwater model and inter-basin water management strategies. These indicated that the goal is to have all chapters, including Chapter 10, fully drafted by October. The RBC will then review and finalize the draft, with the

hope of reaching a consensus by November.

Once a consensus is reached within the RBC, the plan will go through a public review process, anticipated to begin in December. The RBC will ensure that any concerns or significant changes raised during the public review are addressed before finalizing the plan for implementation.

8. Closing Comments and Upcoming Topics (Buddy Richardson/JD Solomon)

J. D. Solomon encouraged the members of Pee Dee RBC to remain engaged throughout the process, providing feedback during review periods and participating in discussions during public and RBC meetings. He appreciated Lindsay Privette for accepting the role of Vice Chair. He noted that the plan is on track with continued effort and collaboration to meet its objectives and contribute effectively to comprehensive water management in the Pee Dee basin.

The next meeting of the Pee Dee RBC will be held on December 3rd, 2024.

The meeting concluded at 11:45 AM

Minutes: Chikezie Isiguzo and Tom Walker

Approved: 12/3/24

RBC Chat:

09:00:43 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

we're going to get started at 9:05ish

09:06:57 From Eric Krueger to Everyone:

Good with me..

09:41:52 From Winyah Rivers to Everyone:

I agree completely!

09:42:06 From Winyah Rivers to Everyone:

The data is extremely important

09:44:36 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

online group working through these implementation considerations being shown

09:52:54 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

breakouts until 10:20. we'll mute and pause until we reconvene

10:03:13 From BobPerry to Everyone:

Sorry, I had to step away just before the breakouts started. I am good with all the discussion thus far. I will rejoin at 10:20 - trying to put out a fire.

10:06:32 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

ok, thanks Bob

10:24:41 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

working until 10:30 in breakouts

11:09:24 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

10 min break

11:45:48 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:
meeting adjourned