



Meeting Summary

Santee River Basin Council Meeting No. 5 (Hybrid Format)

Date: April 8th, 2025
Time: 9:00 AM
Location: Old Santee Canal Park
(900 Stoney Landing Rd, Moncks Corner, SC 29461)
Prepared by: CDM Smith
RBC Members Present: Todd Biegger, Sarah Wiggins, Mike Wooten, Alicia Wilson, Michael Melchers, Brooke Blosser (alternate for Riley Egger), John Grego*, Hixon Copp*, Jason Thompson, Hunter James (alternate for David Wielicki), Tony Hill (alternate for Allan Clum)
RBC Members Absent: Jeff Ruble, W.E. Mickey Johnson, Jr., Brandon Stutts
Planning Team Present: John Boyer, Kirk Westphal*, Scott Harder, Brooke Czwartacki, Leigh Anne Monroe*, Hannah Hartley*, Andrew Wachob*, Joseph Koon*, Sam Quinney, Melissa Griffin, Amy Shaw*, Megan Marini
**Attended virtually*

Action Items (New or Reminders)

1. (Reminder) RBC members should consider identifying an alternate who can fill in for them in they need to miss a meeting and should provide the alternates name and contact information to John Boyer.

Decisions

The RBC reached consensus on several recommendations related to drought response and drought planning (see meeting minutes).

Meeting Agenda

The following items were on the agenda, which was approved by RBC motion:

- Review of meeting objectives and approval of the agenda
- Public Comments
- Surface Water and Groundwater Demand Projections
- Capacity Use Areas and Groundwater Management Plans
- Groundwater Demand and Projected Use
- Discussion and Selection of Drought Management Recommendations

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order at 9 am, with Michael Melchers welcoming the RBC members. Michael stated the meeting objectives and invited the RBC members for approval of the previous minutes and the agenda. Minor changes and additions were requested to the prior draft minutes and meeting summary by Michael Melchers. The previous meeting minutes were approved by Sarah Wiggins with a second by Todd Biegger. The agenda was also approved by RBC motion.

John Boyer informed the team that recordings of the three recent webinars are now available on the basins planning website, along with other meeting materials. He noted the Water SC listening sessions coming up and encouraged RBC members to attend these sessions, noting that several members from each council would try to attend. John reviewed the March meeting, offering a quiz to recap the presentations given on water demand projection methodologies, Charleston Water System, and Santee Cooper operations.

Scott Harder summarized demand projection methodologies, explaining the difference between forecasts and projections, and the various scenarios used for baseline demand and growth rates. He detailed the three projection scenarios: moderate, high demand, and high growth, each based on different combinations of baseline demand and growth rate assumptions. He discussed each of the projections through the 2070 planning horizon.

Ashley Pritchett provided an overview of the capacity use program (CUA), which aims to manage and protect groundwater resources in areas where excessive withdrawals could have adverse effects. The areas covered by the CUA program, include the Waccamaw, Lowcountry, Trident, PeeDee, Western, and Santee-Lynches regions. The Santee basin overlaps five out of six of the capacity use areas. Most of the Santee River planning basin falls within the Trident CUA. Withdrawal limitations for the Trident CUA that have remained in place since 2018.

Brooke Czwartacki presented groundwater use data over the last 20 years showing a consistent use pattern of higher surface water use than groundwater. She reiterated the recommended strategies for capacity use areas such as pumping reductions, no new increases in specific aquifers, drilling to deeper aquifers, and increased monitoring. She presented maps of the Santee River basin showing the location of the largest groundwater withdrawals and the corresponding aquifers. Brooke presented data from the Crouch Branch and McQueen Branch aquifers to show the agricultural influence on the aquifer levels and how the water level falls during the growing season and recovers during the non-growing season.

John Boyer led a discussion of drought management and provided some articles as reference materials for consideration. Per the planning framework, the specific obligations of the RBC are collecting and evaluating hydrologic information for drought assessment, providing local drought information and recommendations to the DRC, communication drought conditions and declarations to the rest of the RBC, stakeholders, and public, advocating for coordinated basin-wide responses by entities, and coordinating with other drought management groups in the basin.

John explained that drought response initiatives developed by the RBC need to be summarized and recommendations on drought management strategies need to be included in chapter 9 of the RBC's River Basin Plan. One of the drought response recommendations that the RBC agreed to is that the RBC recommends that water utilities review and update their drought management plan and response every 5 years or more frequently if conditions change. The RBC recommends that the water utilities coordinate their drought response messaging, to the extent that is practical.

The next meeting will be held on May 13th. The agenda for next month's meeting will include finishing the drought management discussion, preliminary surface water model results (if available) and/or review of water law and regulation, and discussion of policy, regulative, and legislative recommendations. We will also determine if there is the opportunity for another field trip sometime in the future.