



Meeting Minutes

Santee River Basin Council Meeting No. 2 (Hybrid Format)

Date: January 28th, 2025
Time: 9:00 AM
Location: Old Santee Canal Park's Learning Center
(900 Stoney Landing Road, Moncks Corner, Sc 29461)
Prepared by: CDM Smith
RBC Members Present: Todd Biegger, W.E. Mickey Johnson, Jr., Sarah Wiggins, Mike Wooten, Michael Melchers, Brandon Stutts*, Riley Egger, John Grego*, Hixon Copp, Alicia Wilson, Guinn Wallover (Alternate for Allan Clum), Jason Thompson, Baker Stevens (Alternate for Jason Thompson)
RBC Members Absent: David Wielicki, Jeff Ruble
Planning Team Present: John Boyer, Kirk Westphal*, Amy Shaw*, Scott Harder, Brooke Czwartacki, Alexis Modzelesky, Andy Wachob, Joe Koon*, Leigh Anne Monroe, Hannah Hartley*, Megan Marini, Andrew Wachob*, Grace Houghton*
**Attended virtually*

1.0 Call To Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 9 am, with John Boyer welcoming the RBC members. John reviewed the meeting objectives: selection of chair and vice chair, identify process metrics and develop a vision and goals, learn about the climate of South Carolina and the Santee River basin, and learn about the South Carolina Drought Response Act.

2.0 Review of the Meeting Objectives and Approval of the Agenda

John Boyer stated the meeting objectives inviting the RBC members for approval of the previous minutes and the agenda. The previous meeting minutes were approved by Alicia Wilson with a second by Jason Thomson. The agenda was approved by Mike Wooten with a second by Todd Biegger.

3.0 Newsworthy Items - WaterSC and Surface Water Committee

John recapped the WaterSC Open House and Listening Session that was held on January 7th. SCDES displayed boards with information on water planning, water use, permitting, and regulation. Ten of the 11 speakers at the Listening Session serve on RBCs. John reported that during the January 23rd Surface Water Committee meeting, a joint resolution was adopted to extend the deadline for their work to March 2, 2026. They also expanded their scope to not only include surface water, but to also include groundwater. They requested that SCDES provide the Committee with quarterly updates on WaterSC.

4.0 Public and Agency Comments

Public comments: There were no public comments.

Agency comments: There were no Agency comments.

5.0 Selection of Chair and Vice Chair and Identifying Term Limits

John asked for nominations for chair and vice chair. Michael Melchers was nominated for chair and approved by Mike Wooten and second by Alicia Wilson. Alicia Wilson was nominated for vice chair and approved by Mike Wooten and second by Jason Thomson. The chair and vice chair will serve 2-year terms (through December 2026). John Boyer then had the remaining members pull their terms from a hat (2, 3, or 4 yr). After their initial term, RBC members may request to serve another 3 years, subject to SCDES approval, but members may not serve more than 3 consecutive terms. The RBC terms are noted below.

Name	Interest Group	Organization (Title)	Term (Yrs)
Todd Biegger	Agriculture, Forestry, Irrigation	Crowfield Golf Club (Superintendent)	4
W.E. Mickey Johnson, Jr.	Agriculture, Forestry, Irrigation	Four J Family Farms (Owner)	4
Sarah Wiggins	Agriculture, Forestry, Irrigation	State Farm (Sales - Business Insurance)	3
Mike Wooten	At-Large	Bolton and Menk, Inc. (Principal Engineer)	3
Michael Melchers	Electric Power Utilities	Santee Cooper (FERC Administrator)	(Chair) 2
Brandon Stutts	Electric Power Utilities	Dominion Energy (Environmental Consultant)	4
Riley Egger	Environmental Interests	Coastal Conservation League (Program Director)	2
John Grego	Environmental Interests	Friends of Congaree Swamp (President)	2
David Wielicki	Environmental Interests	South Carolina Waterfowl Association (CEO)	2
Hixon Copp	Industry and Economic Development	Williamsburg County (Director of Economic Development)	3
Jeff Ruble	Industry and Economic Development	Richland County (Director of Economic Development)	3
Alicia Wilson	Water and Sewer Utilities	Summerville Commissioners of Public Works (Deputy GM - Operations)	(Vice Chair) 2
Allan Clum	Water and Sewer Utilities	Mount Pleasant Waterworks (General Manager)	3
Jason Thompson	Water and Sewer Utilities	Charleston Water System (Source Water Manager)	4

6.0 Identification of Process Metrics

John reviewed the Water Planning Framework's definitions for process metrics and progress metrics and discussed their importance to the success of the RBC processes and actions. The process metrics recommended by the Planning Framework, and several additionally recommended metrics were reviewed. The 12 provided metrics that the RBC agreed to use include:

1. The process to select RBC members is well documented, transparent, and reflects broad-based outreach.
2. RBCs develop a River basin Plan in 10 months.

3. RBC meetings adhere to timelines with active participation from all groups.
4. River Basin Plans are actionable, logical, and address or prevent challenges with a level of detail to be cost-accountable where applicable.
5. Information used and generated during the planning process is shared openly, publicly, and is easily accessible.
6. RBC meeting agendas are focused and promote efficient and productive meetings.
7. RBC members can effectively consider, digest, and understand technical information through presentations, group learning, and self-study.
8. Decisions will be informed by best available data.
9. Information is presented in an unbiased manner.
10. RBC members are provided equal opportunity to be heard and express their interests, ideas, and concerns.
11. The embedded assumptions, use, and outcomes of models and other tools to assess water availability and evaluate strategies are appropriately documented.
12. The rationale behind RBC decisions is appropriately documented.

7.0 Vision and Goals Development

The vision statements of the other RBCs were reviewed. The Santee RBC developed the following vision statement: ***“A resilient and sustainably managed Santee River Basin that balances human and ecological needs now and in the future.”***

The goals developed by several other RBCs were reviewed. It was emphasized that the Santee basin is unique since it needs to account for the upstream basins Saluda, Broad, and Catawba. The South Carolina State Water Planning Table of Contents was utilized as an outline for framing the following goals:

1. ***Understand and evaluate existing history, hydrology, policies, and management of the basin.***
2. ***Identify information and management gaps and develop new policy and water management strategy recommendations, as may be required, to ensure that water resources are maintained to support stakeholder’s and ecological needs.***
3. ***Evaluate current surface water and groundwater demands and project future water demands and needs.***
4. ***Coordinate efforts and collaborate with the upstream and other impacted basins.***
5. ***Enhance the stakeholders’ understanding of regional water issues and the need for support of policies and behaviors to protect resources through public education and promotion.***

The goals were approved by Mike Wooten with a second by Mickey Johnson.

8.0 Climatology of South Carolina Presentation by Hope Mizzell

Hope Mizzell facilitated this session by briefly introducing the SC State Climatology Office Team, including Melissa Griffin and Frank Strait, noting that the position for state water resource climatologist is recently vacant. The state climatology office aims to “promote climate and weather awareness and knowledge through the development and delivery of science-based climate services and tools on a local and state level.” The climate office is responsible for the following: (a) coordinate and collect weather observations for the purpose of climate monitoring, (b) summarize and disseminate weather and climate information, (c) perform climate and weather impact assessments, (d), demonstrate the value of climate information in the decision-making process and (e) conduct applied climate research.

Hope reviewed a map and charts showing South Carolina's Monthly Average Temperature since 1895. She noted that there is less variation for the summer months and average temperature for June through August and more variation for the winter months December through March. SC has warmed one-degree Fahrenheit over the past 120 years, compared to the Earth as a whole, which has warmed nearly 2 degrees. If we fail to curb greenhouse gas emissions and they continue at the high-end of projections, most climate models suggest an increase of 8 to 12 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100. Under a lower emissions scenario, climate models suggest an increase of about 2 to 8 degrees Fahrenheit.

Rain data provided from the longest recording sites of Columbia and Charleston were reviewed. Charleston tends to have higher monthly average precipitation compared to Columbia. There is a significant decrease in rainfall during the summer identified across several stations in the northern half of the state. There has been a significant increase in 500-year rainfall events including in 2015, 2016, and 2018. The 2015 event impacted a large portion of the state. The four driest years statewide occurred between 2001-2024, and 6 of 10 driest years occurred between 1942-1978. While the most recent wettest year was 2015 for both Columbia and Charleston, the remaining wettest years occurred during 1958-1995.

Tornadoes in the state since 1950 have not increased but detections have increased, since the introduction of the doppler radar. In terms of hurricanes, SC state ranks number 5 for hurricane impacts. SC has an 86% chance of being impacted by a tropical system every year.

9.0 Drought Monitoring & Response in South Carolina Presented by Hope Mizzell

Hope started by discussing CoCoRaHS, an application for public volunteer weather observers, and the importance of this for getting better and more widespread data. She noted several areas in the state that are lacking observers and mentioned that they will give free rain gauges to people in areas where they need additional observers but ask that they record readings daily for at least a year. She then introduced the state's drought website www.scdrought.com.

The SC Drought Monitoring and Response Act (2000) and supporting regulations formally establish and describe the responsibilities of the South Carolina State Climatology Office and the South Carolina Drought Response Committee, the state's major drought decision-making entities. The South Carolina Drought Response program consists of legislation, regulations, and procedures that establish recommended and required responses. We have [drought-Drought](#) Monitoring and Response in SC to monitor, conserve, and manage the State's water resources in the best interest of all South Carolinians. The Drought Response Committee (DRC) consists of statewide members and local members (12 per Drought Management Area or DMA). The Santee River basin is in the Southern Drought Management area. The state uses multiple indicators and indices to monitor drought and determine drought severity

levels, including Percent of Normal rainfall, Crop Moisture Index (CMI), Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI), and the U.S. Drought Monitor for South Carolina.

Hope identified the **Incipient** drought phase, when conditions are drier than normal, soil moisture declines, and water demand increases; **Moderate**, when water levels decrease, crops and plants wither, and irrigation increases; **Severe** when water levels continue to drop, the number of wildfires increases, and poor grazing and agricultural conditions exist; and **Extreme**, when widespread impacts to agriculture, forestry, water utilities, and water-dependent businesses occur.

SCDNR, SCO, and the DRC monitor conditions, share information, and make recommendations to manage drought. Other state and federal agencies, water utilities, and reservoir managers also monitor conditions. As drought conditions and impacts become more severe, response actions increase accordingly. The State Emergency Response Team (SERT) is activated to lead the state-level response to a water shortage emergency. The SC Emergency Operation Plan identifies follow-on state-level actions to assist with and provide relief from severe or extreme drought conditions that have reached a level of disaster beyond the scope of the DRC. While the Drought Response Act requires local water systems to have a drought plan, there is no legal requirement to update the plan. Many plans in the state have not been updated since 2003. Hope requested that if any public water supply system has updated their plan, they please send it to drought@dnr.sc.gov.

Hope explained that a Drought Tabletop Exercise will be held at the Emergency Operations Center in West Columbia on March 5, 2025. The objectives of the Tabletop exercise are to improve awareness of local, state, and federal players in SC's drought response, identify key mission areas for each State Emergency Support Function, and identify and understand the breaking points in the SC Drought Response Act, Regulations, SC Emergency Response Drought Annex, and local drought plans and procedures. Some breaking points are plans and procedures, communications, education and awareness, and data information. Hope asked that every RBC try to send at least one to two representatives, preferably the Chair or Vice Chair, to this exercise.

10.0 Conclusions and Upcoming Schedule

John led discussion to identify future meeting dates and times. Future RBC Meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of each month. For February the meeting will be held on February 11th, 2025, at the same facility - Old Santee Canal Park's Learning Center. The agenda for next month's meeting may include a discussion of the water resources of the Santee Basin from Brooke Czwartacki, water demand projections from Scott Harder, and an overview of the modeling approach and SWAM model from John Boyer. There will be discussions of field trip destinations and John suggested a visit to Santee Cooper's Jefferies Hydroelectric Station for March. There are a variety of topics that will be provided as virtual webinars outside of the scheduled meetings due to the shorter timeframe for this RBC plan. These virtual webinars will be recorded for those who can't make it.