

Upper Savannah River Basin Council

December 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes

RBC Members Present: Scott Willett, Daniel Milam, Mack Beaty, Harry Shelley, Jill Miller, Reagan Osbon, Katie Hottel, Dan Murph, Jeff Phillips, Cole Rogers, Tonya Winbush, Jon Batson, & Mark Warner

RBC Members Absent: Cheryl Daniels (Eddie Brown, alternate, present), Billy Owens (Don Todd, alternate, present), Tonya Bonitatibus, Chuck Connolly, John Hains, Tim Hall, Melisa Ramey, Alan Stuart, & Will Williams

Planning Team Present: John Boyer, Ashley Reid, Scott Harder, Tom Walker, Alexis Modzelesky, Kirk Westphal, Leigh Anne Monroe, Hannah Hartley, & Andy Wachob

Total Present: 25

1. Call the Meeting to Order (Jill Miller, RBC Chair) 10:00–
10:10
 - a. Review of Meeting Objectives
 - i. Approved
 - b. Approval of Agenda
 - i. Approved
 - ii. Harry Shelley – 1st and Daniel Milam – 2nd
 - c. Approval of November 13th Minutes and Summary
 - i. Approved
 - ii. Harry Shelley – 1st and Daniel Milam – 2nd
 - d. Announcements and Housekeeping Items
 - i. WaterSC
 1. 2 meetings, preliminary data info
 2. Next meeting is going to provide insight to how aggressively they are going to go
 3. 1st 2 meetings focused on encouraging us to engage with stakeholders
 4. Charged with writing a report by January
 5. SCETV is broadcasting live
 6. Get your input out there

2. Public Comment (Ashley Reid) 10:10–
10:15
 - a. Public Comment Period
 - i. none
 - b. Agency Comment Period
 - i. None

- ii. Chris Whitmire, SCDA, was in attendance to see the RBC process
- 3. November RBC Meeting Review (Ashley Reid and John Boyer) 10:15–10:20
 - a. Future sedimentation projections for USACE Reservoirs
 - i. Didn't see a lot of change
 - b. RBC adopted technical recommendations (green)
 - i. Fund all existing and future state agency recommended streamflow gage locations
 - ii. SC should request for and cost share in the completion of Phase 2 of the USACE comprehensive study and drought plan update
 - iii. Additional fish and invertebrate data should be collected to enable the development of flow ecology relationships in the Blue Ridge Province
 - c. RBC adopted policy, legislative, or regulatory recommendations
 - i. SC legislature authorizes recurring funding for state water planning activities including river basin planning
 - ii. Establish a grant program to help support the implementation of the actions and strategies identified in each RBC's RBP
 - iii. The SC Surface Water Withdrawal, Permitting, Use, and Reporting Act should allow for reasonable use criteria to be applied to all new surface water withdrawals, like those that currently exist for groundwater withdrawals
- 4. Overview of RBC Comments on Draft Chapters 5 and 6 and Introduction to Chapters 7 and 8 10:20–10:35
 - a. Extended deadline to Friday for chapters 5-6 comments
 - b. Behind on chapter 7
 - c. Chapters 5-6 comments
 - i. Generally addressed all comments and have an updated chapter
 - ii. Chapter 6 table 6-6
 - 1. Color coded- red is negative effects/ green is positive effects
 - 2. Subjectively categorized
 - 3. Socioeconomic effects- moderate negative impact on socioeconomics
 - 4. Likely has more of a negative effect, especially if there are a lot of infrastructure issues
 - 5. C: guidelines are making people think, not telling them to do exactly this
 - 6. Didn't have a lot of problems with shortages, more focused on efficiency
 - 7. C: be careful, recommended practices can turn into regulation
 - 8. Make it darker red. Can vary based on application
 - iii. McCormick's drought plan

1. Whether its references guide curve or 300 ft msl level
 2. Pool meant 330 feet elevation
 - iv. Education and outreach
 1. There are a lot of organizations that already do this
 - v. Send out complete plan in January
 - vi. Comments on 5 & 6 are due by December 13th
5. Finish Discussion and Development of Policy, Legislative, and Regulatory Recommendations (Ashley Reid and John Boyer) 10:35–11:05
- a. LSS recommendations
 - i. SCSWWA should allow for reasonable use criteria to be applied to surface water withdrawals, like those that currently exist for groundwater withdrawals
 - ii. Improve the current laws that allow for regulation of water use so they are effective and enforceable
 1. Grandfathering water permits
 - iii. Recognizing that SC is growing rapidly, the demand for water is increasing and water resources are finite, water planning at the river basin and state level should continue
 - iv. SC legislature should establish a grant program to help support the implementation of the actions and strategies identified in each RBC's RBP
 - v. The water withdrawal permitting process should specifically assess the permit application's alignment with the legislatively approved State Water Plan
 - vi. Need to get IRBC with LSS to go over recommendations
 - vii. C: I thought that executive order said the legislature would be approving the plans, I guess not. I don't know if the new legislature is serious about this. One legislature can kill what the previous one did.
 - viii. US recommends that the legislature approve and adopt the state water plan once complete (this assumes the RBPs are appendices to the state plan) (green)
 - ix. C: if a single basin has a great idea, then it should be included in the state water plan
 - x. C: The basin that goes last has the most options
 - b. Pee Dee's draft RBP
 - i. A joint compact or water management group should be established and funded that would focus on the Yadkin-Pee Dee River basin that spans NC and SC
 1. Applicable to Pee Dee
 2. Do you want something similar for Savannah- Ogeechee for GA/ SC?
 3. Savannah-Ogeechee Regional Council said there should be more collaboration
 4. Tonya B has talked about interstate collaboration

5. Can leave it alone and make no recommendation, can make a softer recommendation about continued collaboration or can make a stronger recommendation
 6. Had early conversations that pointed in the direction of increased communication
 7. C: the current governor is behind the previous governor. Some coordination is a good idea, a standing group is too far
 8. C: compact is a legal instrument
 9. Increase coordination and planning with GAEPD on Savannah River Water resources- green
 10. C: had joint resolution a few years ago
- ii. The state should support and fund RBC-led and statewide water education programs that include all sectors of water use and promote the types of water management strategies recommended in RBPs
1. C: teaching kids that water is important is important, don't understand teach adults
 2. C: going to take away funding from other things
 3. Q: is this overlap with seed grant? A: no, seed grant focuses on implementation
 4. Savannah-Ogeechee plan has examples of funding categories/ recommendations
 5. Q: why wouldn't statewide education programs like extension programs focus on managing water resources? A: extension program would have to get people to learn how to utilize it. It is part of the mission
 - a. C: (Water resource agent) we have some features already that are focused on water planning. Have press articles. Here to keep an eye on the pulse and see if there are opportunities that could fit with the existing workloads to help educate. Do presentations on water planning.
 - b. Need more agents and funding
 - c. There's an extension office in every county
 - d. Most of the water resource agents are funded through partnerships so they have specific tasks that need to be completed
 - e. Need specific suggestions
 6. C: be wary of asking more of extension without funding because agent turnover is very high
 7. C: difference between recognizing that there may be some additional costs as opposed to throwing money at something to develop a new set of plans
 8. C: establish what programs are already being offered and ways for RBC to show support
 9. The state should support and fund water education programs that include all sectors of water use and promote the types of water management strategies recommended in RBPs. Extension Service

and others already do education and outreach to varying levels.
The RBC can provide guidance on topics that are important (add additional language)- green

- iii. SCDES should provide guidance on how RBCs should interface with other organizations
 - 1. C: maybe concerns that RBCs weren't integrating dialogue with outside groups
 - 2. Removed
- iv. No other recommendations
 - 1. Last chance when reviewing the draft plan

Break

11:05–11:15

6. Develop Implementation Plan (Ashley Reid and John Boyer)
1:50

11:15–

- a. Look ahead
 - i. Objectives, strategies and actions
 - 1. Address water shortages or other identified issues
 - 2. Informed by the recommended water management strategies and other plan recommendations made by RBC
 - ii. Schedule
 - 1. Focuses on first 5 years following adoption of RBP
 - iii. Budget
 - 1. Budget needed to accomplish each objective
 - 2. Identifies potential funding sources
- b. Implementation plan proposed objectives
 - i. Improve water use efficiency to conserve water resources
 - ii. Communicate, coordinate, and promote findings and recommendations from RBP
 - iii. Improve technical understanding of water resources management issues
 - iv. Protect water resources
 - v. Improve drought management
 - vi. Promote engagement in water planning process
- c. Broad River implementation plan
- d. US implementation plan
 - i. Objective 1: Improve water use efficiency to conserve water resources
 - 1. Municipal conservation- all entities that provide water to the public
 - a. Strategy priorities
 - i. First priority: public education of water conservation
 - ii. Second priority: conservation pricing structures
 - iii. Toolbox: leak detection and water loss control program, reclaimed water program, residential water audits, landscape irrigation programs and

condes, water efficiency standards for new construction, time of day watering limit

- iv. Q: did we have regular updating and monitoring of the drought plans in this section or another? A: mentioned in chapter 8

b. 5-year actions

- i. Identify funding opportunities
- ii. Establish a baseline of residential per capita water use by system
 - 1. C: could seek funding to get a representative sample of smart meter data
 - 2. C: a lot of places have the data available but analyzing the data is another thing
 - 3. Q: how do smart meters know what you're using it for? A: use level and length of time
 - 4. Don't have the capacity or ability to access that data
 - 5. Could start small, with a survey of US water utilities to see who has smart meter capabilities
 - 6. Added survey to understand AMI/ AMR amongst utilities
 - 7. Added determine if study could be done to determine end use to better prioritize water conservation measures

2. Agriculture water BMPs

a. All best management practices

b. 5-year actions

- i. Identify funding opportunities
- ii. Implement outreach and education programs about recommended water management practices and funding opportunities
- iii. Individual water users to implement conservation practices
- iv. Develop survey of practices implemented, funding issues, and funding sources utilized
 - 1. C: last WaterSC meeting, someone said that Clemson Extension scores how efficient users are. Was a free service at one time
 - 2. C: for our region, we don't have a lot
 - 3. C: use the people and system we got
 - 4. C: no audit trail
 - 5. Q: do you want this to be educational or do you want it submitted to DES?
- v. Review and analyze water usage to improve understanding of water savings strategies

1. Do we need to look at that at some point down the road?
2. Don't try to survey because we're so small
3. Can remove 5 since ag water usage is a small component

With Break for Lunch at 12:00–12:20

7. Develop Implementation Plan (Ashley Reid and John Boyer) 11:15–1:50
 - a. Objective 2: communicate, coordinate, and promote findings and recommendations from the RBP
 - i. RBCs should develop and implement an engagement plan
 1. USRBC to meet quarterly as needed
 2. RBC to consider the formation of subcommittees
 3. Implement engagement plan
 - a. Q: do you talk about how the state drought mitigation works, or are you just communicating locally? A: if you think it's important to communicate. Going to talk about in drought recommendation section
 - b. Q: we talked about having interbasin meetings, did that fall off? A: Broad talked about it, potentially LSS in the spring
 - c. C: 3 basins at the top, Greenville/Spartanburg seems to be the media center. Let's get the 3 basins together and figure out communication
 - d. Recommendation we're going to get to later that we increase coordination between all RBCs and to emphasize the Upstate as one area to increase collaboration
 4. Approved
 - ii. Grant program should be established to help support the implementation of the actions and strategies identified in each RBC's RBP
 1. SCDES to identify funding needs and communicate with the legislature
 2. Could add action to continue lobbying
 - iii. RBCs should work with SCDES to identify the scope of future RBC activities and help develop funding needs and requests
 1. RBC to work with SCDES to identify scope
 2. SCDES to identify funding needs and communicate with legislature
 - iv. Use of RBP to highlight areas where water is more abundant and amenable to growth
 1. RBC to distill info in the RBP to identify areas where growth could be supported with sufficient water resources
 2. RBC to develop communication and outreach plans to local governments and economic development organizations

- a. C: most of the land is owned by the federal government
 - b. Not a goal of the RBP
 - c. Q: should we ask DES to include what we want in the budget proposal? How should we ask for the money? A: it is a legitimate way to go about things
 - 3. C: change it to highlight areas with potential pinch points and focus on conservation efforts
 - a. C: lower basin buys up land to preserve
 - 4. Changed to Use of RBP and other sources to highlight areas for conservation to protect water quantity and quality
 - a. Will modify actions
 - v. RBC recommends that as a part of the comprehensive planning process each local government consults the resilience plan, hazard mitigation plans, and RBP.
 - 1. RBC to develop outreach documents to municipalities with info about resilience plan and RBPs
 - a. McCormick just got through with their plan
 - b. Changed municipalities to local governments
 - 2. RBC conducts outreach to planning entities from each USRB municipality
 - vi. Priorities
 - 1. C: seem to be in logical order
 - 2. C: number them, not high/ medium/ low
 - 3. C: continued planning is most important
 - 4. Ordered 1, 3, 2, 4, 5
- b. Objective 3: improve technical understanding of water resource management issues
 - i. RBC recommends the understanding of potential impacts of private and community/ commercial wells
 - 1. RBC to work with SCDES and/or contractors to identify the location and number of wells in the basin and prepare a groundwater budget to help assess potential impact to surface water
 - a. C: during the last major drought of record, impact wasn't as expected
 - b. Might suggest you don't need to do any type of additional analysis
 - c. More resilient because of geology
 - d. Not sure why it exists in the implementation plan if it's not worth doing
 - e. Genesis was Saluda
 - 2. Removed
 - ii. Update models to consider future uncertainties
 - 1. RBC to identify uncertainties to assess and data sources for scenario development
 - a. C: what could be used for triggers

- b. C: don't be single source selections
 - c. C: because we're talking about something that's going to happen in future scenarios, it's redundant to say this is reoccurring. Future councils will have more info
 - 2. Contractor to perform analysis and present results to RBC
 - 3. RBC to assess results of analysis and incorporate findings into the next 5-year update
 - 4. This recommendation is inherent in the planning process
 - 5. Removed
 - iii. Future planning should include evaluation of surface water quality and trends
 - 1. Not talking about quality in this phase but could add to the scope for future planning phases
 - 2. RBC to first identify specific water quality and quantity issues and concerns in the basin
 - a. Added determine if there are data gaps and collect appropriate data to fill gaps
 - 3. RBC to develop approach to further address those water quality issues and concerns including the need for development of a watershed plan under SCDES Watershed Program
 - a. Focus on streamflows
 - iv. USRBC should evaluate the impact of future land use changes on water resources quantity and streamflow characteristics
 - 1. Invite RTI and/or others to educate the RBC on CWWMGs land conservation modeling or listen to recording from Broad implementation meeting
 - a. Broad felt it was one of the most important technical meetings they had
 - b. C: having her in person would be valuable
 - c. Can send out the link
 - 2. Consider performing similar land conservation modeling to identify how land use changes may impact water resources
 - v. Data usage and acquisition
 - 1. SCDES to identify funding and staffing to support the development of database
 - a. C: don't know if they need to develop a new database
 - b. removed
 - 2. SCDES to develop or coordinate development and online publication of water-related database
 - 3. SCDES, in coordination with RBCs and related agencies, to identify data gaps
 - 4. RBCs to use database in next 5-year update
 - a. Should we put this in DES's court or keep it general?
 - b. Talking about watershed atlas
 - c. C: conversation based on transparency issues and people not knowing what's out there

- d. C: example in Saluda is county-collected streamflow data
 - e. Private contractor would be used to figure out where the data resides
 - 5. Just removing from implementation plan
 - vi. Fund all existing and future state agency recommended streamflow data locations
 - 1. Develop communication strategy for speaking with USGS and other entities funding stream gages
 - 2. Outreach to USGS and current funding entities on the importance of streamflow data to the river basin planning process. RBC to support search for additional funding sources as needed
 - a. Q: is this with the assumption that the state agency knows where the recommended stream gages are? A: yes, DNR/DES does enough work and they best understand where they should be
 - vii. Support collection of additional fish and invertebrate data to enable development of flow ecology relationships in the Blue Ridge Province
 - 1. SCDES to identify funding and staff for data collection effort
 - 2. SCDES to coordinate collection of data and development of flow ecology relationships
 - 3. RBC to review data and consider making recommendations related to ecological flow standards in 5-year update
 - a. Saluda talking about this one in terms of their recommendations
 - b. Q: is it worth sharing data with NC? A: can include it
 - c. C: agreed to improve this one even though it didn't have much impact in our section, added to support Saluda
 - d. Saluda hasn't developed their 5-year plan
 - e. C: we're endorsing that methodology. A: general thinking is that this approach does add value and is interesting
 - 4. Will come back and tweak based on what Saluda comes up with
 - viii. Prioritize
 - 1. Kept C, D, F, G
 - 2. Priority: 1, 2, 3, 4
- c. Objective 4: protect water resources
 - i. RBC supports reducing sediment loading to reservoirs
 - 1. No actions
 - 2. C: crossing a various number of different municipalities or local governments
 - 3. Say that local governments need to do a better job with education and outreach.
 - 4. Added action: work with local governments and COGs to incorporate strategies into land use, planning, zoning, permitting process
 - 5. C: threaten local governments with Clean Water Act lawsuits
 - ii. Evaluate the impacts of changing land use

1. Combined with previous strategy
- iii. Identify the financial impacts of increased sedimentation on reservoirs and water resources
 1. C: modelling showed it was significant but didn't result in any shortages. At some point it will be significant because cost of dredging is expensive
 2. RBC to perform financial impact of increased sedimentation on reservoirs and water resources
 - a. Been done in Catawba, similar study done in Spartanburg
 - i. Q: what did you find in your study? A: Loss of storage was a significant cost and future cost of dredging
 - ii. Work with utilities to do the study
 - b. Soften first action
- iv. Amend the building permitting process to require developers to work with water utilities to ensure adequate water availability
 1. C: when you talk about impact fees, it's for infrastructure
 2. C: we're talking about development that's impacting water resources
 3. Not sure if this falls under this objective
 4. C: Want them to coordinate with wastewater utilities
 5. C: never seen a request for information on a development project without electrical load water use and wastewater discharge and profile.
 6. C: don't understand the need for it
 7. Similar back and forth in other RBCs where some say it has already been done and some say it hasn't
 8. Changed to encourage the building permitting process where applicable to require developers to work with water/wastewater utilities to ensure adequate water availability/ capacity
- d. Objective 5: improve drought management
 - i. RBC recommends that water utilities review and update their drought management plan every 5 years or more frequently
 1. C: disconnect I see with drought policy: we're doing the planning for water under DES, regulation for water under DES. Leave drought mitigation in a department with no regulatory authority that's not related. Only if we get to extreme drought can the governor take action. We should align SCO and put them in the same department - DES
 2. C: Drought Response Committee is still appointed by the government
 3. Tackle this in the beginning of the next meeting
 - ii. Develop materials and outreach strategy to public suppliers in the basin to implement the RBC's drought management recommendations
 1. Don't know if we need additional materials, it's in chapter 8 of the plan

- iii. State to request for and cost share in the completion of phase 2 of the USACE comprehensive study and drought plan update
 - 1. RBC to conduct outreach to state and USACE to communicate
 - 2. C: a lot of people moving in don't understand the river basin and don't understand the big picture
 - 3. Should develop an overall briefing, could be a video
 - 4. C: there's a lot of misinformation
 - 5. May fall on Harry and Tonya, should also be with LSS
- e. Objective 6: promote engagement in the water planning process
 - i. Continue drafting, make adjustments and put it in chapter 10
- 8. Upcoming Meeting and Draft Chapter Review Schedule (Ashley Reid and John Boyer) 1:50–2:00
 - a. Planning process schedule for completion
 - i. Still in line for schedule
 - ii. Government officials need to be educated
 - iii. On track to wrap up in April or May

Meeting adjourned: 2:04 PM

Minutes: Taylor Le Moal and Tom Walker

Approved: 1/8/25

RBC Chat:

11:11:28 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

break until 11:20

11:46:44 From Jeff Phillips to Everyone:

If we ever do decide to do a meter replacement program we will go to smart meters. It is not a priority at this time.

12:01:34 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

lunch break until 12:20ish

14:04:51 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

meeting adjourned