

Upper Savannah River Basin Council

February 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes

RBC Members Present: Daniel Milam, Alan Stuart, Harry Shelley, Katie Hottel, Scott Willett, John Hains, Melisa Ramey, Dan Murph, Jill Miller, Tonya Winbush, Will Williams, Tonya Bonitatibus, & Jon Batson

RBC Members Absent: Mack Beaty, Chuck Connolly, Cheryl Daniels (Eddie Brown, alternate, present), Billy Owens (Don Todd, alternate, present), Tim Hall, Reagan Osbon, Jeff Phillips, Cole Rogers, & Mark Warner

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

Total Present: 32

1. Call the Meeting to Order (Jill Miller, RBC Chair)
 - a. Review of Meeting Objectives
 - b. Approval of Agenda
 - i. Agenda approved
 - ii. Scott Willett – 1st
 - iii. Daniel Milam – 2nd
 - c. Approval of January 8th Minutes and Summary
 - i. Minutes and summary approved
 - ii. Alan Stuart – 1st
 - iii. Harry Shelley – 2nd
 - d. Announcements and Newsworthy Items
 - i. Want to make sure people who are voting on the plan are active members
 1. Inactive members
 - a. Chuck Connolly has missed last 6 or so meetings
 - i. Reach out to see if he's interested in staying on, vote him out, or keep him and list him as an inactive member
 - b. Tim Hall has missed last 6 or so meetings
 2. Q: what have other basins done? A: some instances, they voted members off. Broad noted in the plan that they weren't active members at the time the plan was published
 3. Bylaws are stricter than the councils have been. Bylaws state that if you miss 2 consecutive meetings you could be removed at the recommendation of the RBC and final approval from DES. If we go

by the bylaws, we would recommend DES officially remove them from the council

4. C: concern is that I would hate to have someone vote who wasn't a participant. Don't want them to tank a plan by not participating
 5. Q: do we have anyone else who represents the golf/ grass industry? A: not specifically golf or grass, but they are part of the forestry, golf, ag, irrigation category
 6. Q: would we harm ourselves by removing them where someone could say we didn't give them the opportunity to provide feedback?
 7. C: Chuck moved from one basin to another. Some instances, we have removed RBC members when they left a job in a basin and went to another even though they wanted to stay on
 8. C: if you're not involved in making the final report, don't see why you would list them as contributing
 9. Most of the recommendations have been made in the last 6 months
 10. C: membership should be active and engaged. The implementation stage is just as important; it needs to be active when you launch. Can free up the position for someone who will participate
 11. C: Recommend DES replace them. Goal is to keep committees fully staffed
 12. Q: have these people been involved? Have they communicated with anyone? A: fell off. Didn't realize Chuck had left until his email started kicking back
 13. C: doesn't take much to say you can't make it but you're still interested
 14. Recommend everyone get an alternate
 15. Recommend reaching out to them 1 more time. If you don't get a response, then go to DES
 16. Q: how quickly could DES get a replacement? Are we going to have enough members to keep moving? A: filling their position would take a while, doesn't make sense to fill the positions before voting because they would have to catch up
 17. Will reach out again and if they don't respond, make a motion to replace them
 18. C: too late to vote on the plan, but the sooner they get engaged, the more likely they are to be successful participants
 19. At least 2 or 3 in every RBC have had to drop out
- ii. Drought tabletop exercise
 1. 3/5
 - iii. WaterSC meets next week
 - iv. Surface Water group met

2. Public Comment (Ashley Reid)

- a. Public Comment Period
 - i. none
 - b. Agency Comment Period
 - i. None
3. January RBC Meeting Review (Ashley Reid and John Boyer)
- a. Finished development of the implementation plan
 - b. Agreed on progress metrics
 - c. Draft plan, comment log, and draft executive summary circulated 2/7
4. Review Comments on Draft Chapters, Focusing on 1, 7, 8, 9, and 10 (Ashley Reid and John Boyer)
- a. Chapter 9: Surface Water Withdrawal Recommendations
 - i. Clarification on who it belongs to
 - 1. A: have to read it again, but think new permittees
 - 2. Q: how does that differ from what's in place now? A: SCWWPURA allows for the reasonable use criteria to apply to all new surface water withdrawals. Recommendation was trying to get rid of the loophole where new ag doesn't need to show reasonable use
 - b. C: discussion about the possibility of groundwater supply and possibility of running out of water. Don't know whether final report is going to alert to the possibility. As a group, we have an ethical obligation to highlight the possibility of something bad happening. A: there is an executive summary. Plan and recommendations do address that. US doesn't look too dire, not as overallocated as others
 - i. Q: is that the right way to do business? Language softens the overallocation. If there is overallocation, how does that affect the ability for any other area of the watershed to grow in the future with future permitting? A: can try to strengthen the explanation. High demand scenario suggests there's plenty of water
 - ii. C: increase in AI data centers which are very water consumptive. If something negative does happen and we run out of water, 1st thing people will want to see is who are the elected officials and organizations responsible to see that this didn't happen and ask how did it happen. A: one thing we could do is highlight the fact that when we've done growth scenarios, they're based on existing users. None of the basins, including US, have we looked at a scenario with a large intensive user and pick a specific location. Limitation of this type of planning is that we're not trying to pick and choose where future development could go. Hopefully DES uses whatever tools they have in place to make these decisions
 - iii. C: want to think where we could not measure up and cut that off
 - iv. C: believe the regulation requires us to go back and assume everyone is fully watered before additional water is available. We realize that paper water numbers that are grandfathered in are significantly greater forecasted high demand numbers. That's one of the things that is wrong with the surface water permitting act, we have chosen a very

conservative approach. Paper numbers are going to determine whether the permit is issued, not reality

- c. Data centers
 - i. Q: define how much water data centers use. Do data centers use water or borrow it for cooling? A: depends on how the data center is configured. If they are lakeside, they could do what Duke does. Most want water that would be evaporatively lost or transferred back into wastewater system
 - ii. Discussions in the Santee about the Google data center and how much it's using. Some use from emergency well and also purchased water
 - 1. Google permit is not emergent. Most they have historically used is 150 million gallons in 1 year. Not using close to their permitted volume (549 mgy)
 - 2. Metadata center under construction, uses 30000 gallons a day of water
 - iii. Very site/ facility specific how much water the data centers use and whether they return it. They have adapted to better practices
 - 1. C: Microsoft investing in tech to be able to start reusing water. Capacity they were asking for was astronomical and would not grow the community
 - iv. C: Data centers have a much larger demand for electricity than they do for water. Microsoft just bought 3 Mile Island plant to power it
 - v. Google water use: 2019= 154.8 mgy, 2018= 35.5 mgy, 2024= 15.26 mgy. Every other year, less than 3 mgy. Plus purchased water
 - vi. Be clear in executive summary about what the analysis does and doesn't include
 - vii. Overallocation of water denies future users
 - d. Q: is this the case in every basin that when you run the fully permitted use that all of the basins are overallocated?
 - i. A: yes, other basins more than this one
 - ii. C: many of the shortages were on the upper reaches of tributaries. Some shortages because of poorly chosen locations
 - e. Wanted to give Ashley credits in the acknowledgements
 - f. Followed structure of other plans, but don't have to
 - i. Executive summary within the executive summary
 - ii. Can do a 2-page summary sheet
 - 1. Q: would this be available at the public meetings? A: yes, easy to digest if doing a presentation for a board
 - 2. Follow the Broad's example
 - 3. Edisto was opposed to 2-page summary because they felt it was hard to condense everything
 - 4. C: no website links. Could add a QR code
5. Review and Discuss Executive Summary and Possible Fact Sheet (Ashley Reid and John Boyer)
- a. Deadline to read the draft plan: next Thursday

- b. Calendar
 - i. Final comments 2/20
 - ii. Draft plan for voting 3/3
 - iii. Vote on plan 3/12
 - iv. Release plan to public 3/14
 - v. Q: is there a date for the public meeting? A: not yet. Have to have 30 days before we have a public meeting, so first public meeting would be last 2 days of April
 - vi. First public meeting 4/12-25
 - vii. Finalize plan and 2nd public meeting May
 - c. Decision making RBP approval process
 - i. Step 1: testing for consensus of draft plan: 1-5, full endorsement to withdrawal
 - 1. Don't expect to see 4/5s
 - ii. Step 2: support or disagree with final plan.
 - iii. Q: will the draft plan be publicly available? A: yes
6. Discuss Public Meeting Presentation (Ashley Reid and John Boyer)
- a. Example public meeting agenda (Broad RBC)
 - i. 50 minutes
 - ii. Like to have RBC present it themselves
 - iii. Q: has this been done with visual aids? A: PowerPoint slides
 - b. Broad RBC slides
 - c. Q: what's the attendance? A: handful of people, mostly RBC members
 - d. Q: do you ever get public comments that you would have to incorporate changes? A: 3 or so comments from Edisto, Pee Dee had a lot of comments from 1 person, Broad had 2 or 3 comments. Maybe made 1 edit based on comments
 - e. Q: is there a need for the group to put together a list of people that we think would be interested in reviewing this to send it out to them? Is this advertised enough? A: any outreach that the RBC can do to get the word out would be helpful.
 - f. C: DES does have a distribution list. DES does a press release
 - g. C: had recent success with Reddit and the NextDoor app. Better than Facebook at reaching people
 - i. NextDoor app sometimes gets extreme
 - h. C: certain slides are what people are really passionate about, they should present on it
 - i. Always done a couple of slides about the stream flow ecology work but there's limited application in this basin. Tanya will present on it
 - j. Jill is the opener, Tanya flow ecology relationships
 - k. Chair will do any role the previous chair did, can also volunteer vice chair
 - l. John for water demands and surface water availability
 - m. Frank was chosen for water management strategies because he was proposing to build a large regional reservoir
 - n. Put Jeff for water management strategies

- i. Need to stress that although we don't necessarily have a problem, we don't want to get one
 - ii. People think that we have plenty of surface water availability, but people tend to think of how many feet down is the full pool? Recognition of availability of water for human consumption/ recreation. We'll hear about it during the public comment section
- o. Can delegate speaking role to those whom it would fit best
- p. Will circulate draft slides prior to next meeting
- q. Next meeting likely virtual unless you really want to; going to be short
- r. Show scenarios to show impact on ramps and docks
- s. C: 4/20 is Easter, people might travel. A: could push first public meeting to May
- t. Public meeting location
 - i. Maybe Anderson University?
 - ii. We'll identify some locations and dates
 - iii. Better to have a more urban location
- u. Q: do we need to address how we're working with LSS? A: will put up a map and explain
- v. Have not officially had any IRBC meetings yet
 - i. Handed US recommendations to LSS to review
 - ii. Good timing to meet.
 - iii. Virtual meeting to review your recommendations and their recommendations to see if they are consistent
 - iv. Make recommendations before we make this plan final
 - v. C: also have great influence from GA side
 - vi. Talked about planning process with LSS and they also wanted to increase collaboration with GA and their coastal councils and regional councils
- w. The opening slide of the presentation could be a drone shot. Attention getter
- x. If you have other pictures of the basin, send them to Scott
- y. Video from headwaters all the way down
- z. Other meeting spots- Anderson Courthouse, Savannah Lakes Village, McCormick courthouse
 - i. New facility in McCormick, McCormick High
 - ii. If you have it in an urban area, more people might show up
- aa. Water Center with Extension Sea Grant as a part of the Water Chat series is launching an art exhibit in Greenville
 - i. Opens this Saturday and runs through the end of March every Saturday
 - ii. Beyond the Surface
 - iii. This Saturday: 6:15 welcome awards, runs from 6-8
 - iv. Tiger Strikes Asteroid Greenville: 201 Smythe St Greenville, SC
 - v. Related to water challenges in SC
- bb. Q: What happens after we vote on the water plan? Where does it go?
 - i. After you vote on it and do public meetings, it goes into implementation phase
 - ii. Broad has done a couple of meetings to work on implementation, had presentations about how the Catawba Basin has modeled changes in land

use and how that could be applied to the Broad and Spartanburg water sedimentation studies

- iii. Edisto has not met, may start meeting later this year
- iv. Up to the council whether you want to start meeting right away
- v. Planning framework suggests you meet twice a year
- vi. Q: how long do we have facilitators/ CDM? A: Scott/ Tom's contract ends with the planning phase. Broad had a little bit of leftover money so they had 2 extra meetings. We might be able to have another meeting if you want to start working on implementation. Up to you all to ask DES for planning money
- vii. C: for consistency's sake, it should be taken over with some agency
- viii. C: we're going to be in a state of suspended animation, waiting for someone to call us or someone to take initiative
- ix. Q: do the regional councils continue to meet? A: quarterly
- x. Take initiative and start thinking about what in your implementation plan you want to start working on
- xi. C: think about what has the highest likelihood of having available resources to move something
- xii. C: talked about meeting with the other 2 Upstate basins. Let's pick a time in September to see if we can get the 3 basins together
 - 1. Encourage everyone from all 3 councils to show up
 - 2. Saluda is a month behind
 - 3. C: Line the 3 plans up and point out commonalities. A: The State Water Plan has a chapter where they summarize the RBC's recommendations and find commonalities
 - 4. If 3 basins were unified in their recommendations, would be hard to say those don't belong in the plan
 - 5. Q: will a draft form of the state water plan be completed by September? A: majority of State Water Plan chapters will be drafted by September

7. Upcoming Meeting Schedule (Ashley Reid and John Boyer)

Meeting Adjourned: 11:38 AM

Minutes: Taylor Le Moal and Tom Walker

Approved: 3/12/25

RBC Chat:

10:00:15 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

will get started in a few

10:27:19 From Tonya's iPhone to Everyone:

Or Atl figures out how to get a straw in

10:27:49 From Will Williams to Everyone:

Please define how much water data centers use

10:28:42 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

will ask in a minute will

10:31:10 From Donald Todd-SC to Everyone:

Do data centers use water or borrow it for cooling, similar to Duke cooling requirements.

10:31:41 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

i'll ask both next

10:35:32 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

thanks will

10:36:33 From Leigh Anne Monroe - SC DES to Everyone:

Clarification on Google water use: in 2019, they withdrew 154.8 MGY, in 2018 they withdrew 35.5 MGY, and in 2024 they used 15.26 MGY. Every other year they have reported less than 3 MGY from their well.

10:36:45 From Tonya's iPhone to Everyone:

Energy production always requires a lot of water as well.

10:48:40 From Tonya's iPhone to Everyone:

Yes more time

11:06:01 From Tonya Winbush to Everyone:

I don't mind doing overview

11:06:12 From Tonya Winbush to Everyone:

Vision & goals

11:06:39 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

thank you

11:10:50 From Donald Todd-SC to Everyone:

We ran several model cases to assess recreational impacts for boat launches and swimming. I recall the impacts to be seldom and mild. Nonetheless, I think it is worth a comment in the report.

11:13:32 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

community college in Anderson is possibly the first location

11:17:00 From Tonya Winbush to Everyone:

I may have I don't remember

11:17:21 From Tonya Winbush to Everyone:

I am open to help anyway I can

11:17:32 From Lawrie to Everyone:

How about opening slide being a beautiful drone video of the River - audience captivating and sexy !

11:19:42 From Tonya's iPhone to Everyone:

Possible meeting spots- Anderson Courthouse

Savannah Lakes Village

McCormick courthouse

11:25:40 From Jeffery Allen to Everyone:

The art show is very modern pieces focused on water issues (pollution impacts, etc.).
Not classic paintings of water scenes

11:26:00 From Jeffery Allen to Everyone:

But will be pretty cool!

11:38:09 From Tonya Winbush to Everyone:

Thanks

11:38:09 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

meeting adjourned