

Upper Savannah River Basin Council

June 11, 2025 Meeting Minutes

RBC Members Present: Mark Warner, Jill Miller, Alan Stuart, Jon Batson, Cole Rogers, Dan Murph, Tonya Winbush, Daniel Milam, Harry Shelley, Mack Beaty, Cheryl Daniels, Katie Hottel, & John Hains

RBC Members Absent: Tonya Bonitatibus, Reagan Osbon, Billy Owens (Don Todd, alternate, present), Jeff Phillips, Melisa Ramey, Scott Willett, & Will Williams

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

Total Present: 26

1. Call the Meeting to Order (Jill Miller, RBC Chair) 10:00–10:10
 - a. Review of Meeting Objectives
 - b. Approval of Agenda
 - i. Agenda approved
 - ii. Mack Beaty – 1st and Mark Warner – 2nd
 - c. Approval of March 12th Minutes and Summary
 - i. Minutes approved
 - ii. Daniel Milam – 1st and Mark Warner – 2nd
 - d. Announcements and Newsworthy Items
 - i. 5/15 WaterSC Working Group Meeting
 1. Interbasin transfer and multistate water management considerations, Catawba-Wateree Water Management Group, Councils of Government panel discussion
 2. C: IBT spurred a lot of conversation/ education. CW plan proposed finish in November. WaterSC plans to have their plan in December, 2 basins won't have their plans done until then
 - ii. 6/19 meeting
 1. RBC panel discussions. Chairs and cochairs talking about the process
 2. Stone River, Columbia. 1 pm-4:30/5
 3. 121 Alexander Road in West Columbia
 - iii. Duke Energy proposed new natural gas plant south of Anderson
 1. On Duke's website: map of proposed facility and additional info

2. Looking to reduce need for large amounts of water
3. C: announcement just came out, not a whole lot of internal info. Happy to share any info with RBC
4. Q: is this a combined cycle plant? What's the design? A: believe it is combined cycle
5. Can submit questions or comments to Duke or to Alan
- iv. Donald Todd: spoke with chairman of McCormick County Council
 1. Expressed concern about boating on the lakes and lakes provide a lot of food for low-income people
 2. Don't know how much we have in Hartwell and other lakes, but when lake is low, people can't get to the lakes to fish.
 3. Is it worth considering/ mentioning? Maybe it goes on the next round. Concerned that people are deprived of food, not just entertainment
 4. C: most local fishermen don't fish off a boat, they fish off the shore. 95% of Lake Thurmond you can walk on the shoreline. If you get lower water, inlets are dry, hard to get to where you would fish
 5. Might be more of a shore issue than boating issue
 6. Tried to put numbers around lost capital use for the boats. Corps has reports about small businesses that are affected when they're low.
 7. Maybe too late to add to the report that we didn't look at it, maybe we should next time. A: don't think it's too late. Happy to add in a statement or recognition that fishing and sustenance has been recognized as important and can be impacted during drought if RBC thinks it's important to announce it
 8. Recommend that we do that unless someone has an objection
 9. Q: did the Councilman submit a formal comment? A: don't think he did, just a conversation. He wanted to make a comment but didn't
 10. Mark could have a conversation with Councilman Jennings and if he wants to, he can formulate a comment that he can send through Mark that can be sent from the group. In 4 years, Mark's never heard him make that comment
 11. Once we get a comment, we can add it to the comments and responses and can add a statement about it being another use of the lakes that could be impacted during droughts
 12. C: there is some fish advisory warnings for certain natural pollutants about how much fish you can eat
 13. C: if we're going to include a comment about low water conditions impacting people's ability to gather food, we should also reference any fish advisories from DNR or DES. A: reason I didn't bring that forth is because we're not considering quality right now, but it does spill over into fishing
- v. Jill question about recommendation on slide during presentation

1. SCSWWPPURA should allow for reasonable use criteria to be applied to all new surface water withdrawals like those that currently exist for groundwater withdrawals
2. Paused on new. Went back to report, recommendation seems to address agriculture only for surface water withdrawals. Seems that our recommendation is something already in existence with bullet number 2
3. C: we had a detailed conversation about whether new got included
4. C: maybe Scott Willett suggested the word new. A: he said if that's what that says, we need to correct it. Bullet 2 says must demonstrate that the requested withdrawal meets the need criteria for reasonable use
5. Agricultural registrations don't have to demonstrate for surface water withdrawals reasonable use
6. Scott said we're not suggesting it be applied to everyone that has an existing registration, just for these new registrations moving forward
7. Expand dialogue when we talk to Scott
8. Scott's at ACE conference, will be back end of the week or early next week
9. C: agriculture has a target on their back
10. Can John show the slide from the previous meeting? (showed plan)
11. 2nd bullet is for nonagricultural surface water withdrawals. 3rd one says agricultural withdrawals, with do require permit but do not need to satisfy reasonable use criteria. Intent of recommendation was to address the 3rd bullet and require reasonable use criteria for new agricultural surface water registrations
12. C: believe in equitability, what is applied to 1 should be applied to all, regardless of new or existing
13. C: at the final hour? Hadn't talked about subsistence fishing, had talked a lot about this. Have been reviewing this for 2 years. No need to replot the ground
14. Q: so, leave as is? A: yes, we reviewed all this.
15. C: won't be able to make a quick change to this, has to be a good sit-down meeting
16. C: can get captured under our recommendation later on
17. C: maybe covered in the next bullet saying improve the current laws. A: reasonable use recommendation is standalone, next bullet has more to do with grandfathering
18. If ag is good with it and her concern is captured in the next bullet, good with leaving it as is
19. C: WaterSC came in at the final hour, could do things that make our stuff moot

20. Intention is that what comes out of RBCs is how WaterSC is going to act. Working too long for WaterSC to take us in a different direction
21. Q: is our recommendations consistent with other RBCs' recommendations on this topic? A: it is, except for the word new. Other RBCs never got into a discussion about distinguishing between existing and new
22. Q: if all RBCs are not consistent in this recommendation, what are you going to take to WaterSC? A: intent is that statewide recommendations are more likely to make it into state plan, and those that are unique to a basin are more managed on the local level. Just a participant. Presume that if we have varying recommendations that are similar, we would review those recommendations and come up with a consistent recommendation. Can't say that's what's going to happen
23. C: get into semantics, everyone's not saying it the same but intent is the same
24. Q: will DES be willing to have different regs around surface water withdrawal permitting by river basin or would they want 1 statewide reg?

2. Public Comment (John Boyer)

10:10–10:15

- a. Public Comment Period
 - i. none
- b. Agency Comment Period
 - i. None

3. Review of Public Comments and Suggested Responses (John Boyer and Ashley Reid)
10:15–10:40

- a. Appendix D: public comments and responses
 - i. Received 1 set of comments from Terry Jackson of Lake Hartwell Association. Also submitted letter of support, which will likely be included in Appendix D
 1. LHA appreciates all of the work and they support the USBP
- b. Comments and responses
 - i. Distinction between US and LS reported demands.
 1. Tom addressed the comment
 - ii. Private lawn irrigation, significant impact?
 1. Drafted response
 2. C: does adequately address the comment. In Lake Thurmond, on the GA side, they are allowed to take irrigation water out of the lake. SC required to do it out of public water. There are people who are legally permitted to take irrigation water out of the lake
 3. C: comfortable as written

- iii. Evaporation, significant impact?
 - 1. Drafted response. 1939-2021 evaporation averages very significantly, averages to be about 157 mgd. Compared to average total withdrawal, only 29 mgd. Evaporation is significant compared to withdrawal
 - 2. C: evaporation based on temperature data and pan data. A: added to response
 - 3. C: years ago, Corps had data on evaporation for the total lake. 1500-1600 cubic feet per second on a hot day for Thurmond and Hartwell
- iv. Big activities downstream not addressed in the projected demands
 - 1. Drafted response. Hyundai not included in projected demand. Vogel has significant increase in demands. Added in statement about new natural gas plant in Anderson County. All potential changes should be evaluated as a part of RBC planning
 - 2. C: issues Duke has had with coal ash contamination, doubt they would ever bring a coal plan back online
 - 3. Q: what coal plants are there in US? A: not sure there are any anymore
 - 4. C: Not sure why they're asking this question. A: might be more general question from a nationwide thing. Don't think it impacts US at all
 - 5. C: Vogtle is in LS
 - 6. Q: have you known of a situation where political forces made a bad decision? A: how about nuclear plant in SC that everyone was getting rebates on for a while
 - 7. C: future of nuclear is small nuclear that doesn't have the water cooling issues. Will see more nuclear but not the big guys
- v. Have not made any adjustments to the plan itself because comments, only answered them here. If you think it's appropriate, could add notes to chapter 4 saying what is/ isn't included. Don't know if necessary but can add
 - 1. C: could take this comment to LS, have them address it. A: can do that
 - 2. C: not a big deal to update our plan but like the idea of keeping it in the appendix here and acknowledging it in demands chapter of LSS
 - 3. Q: modeling did account for growth of 95% over current scenario demand at Vogtle Power Plant for 2070. Don't recall having that assumption. Is that something GA included in water demand projections or something we added in? A: included in GA's water demand projections
- 4. Test of consensus on final plan
 - a. Draft plan everyone gave 1s and 2s.
 - b. Need to include whether you support/ don't support the final plan

- i. Assume since everyone endorsed the draft plan and there hasn't been substantial changes, then you support the final plan
 - c. Everyone supports the final plan
 - d. Included in chapter 10 and in appendix
5. Discussion of RBC Role and Activities Moving Forward (Jill Miller) 10:40–11:00
- a. As chair, feel responsible for how we're moving forward
 - b. Don't know future of facilitation
 - c. LHA wanted us to write a letter of support for a riparian buffer, has personal support and support in recommendation but don't have authority to write a letter and send it out
 - d. Riparian buffer already passed.
 - e. If we're going to exist moving forward and be visible, others would approach us for support, rec letters, or to partner
 - f. Recommendation was that RBCs are maintained
 - g. Divert to DES, trying to decide how things will work in the future and rely on WaterSC as well.
 - h. Contract- wrapping up the plan and we're done. 20th meeting. Little bit of budget left over that we could facilitate 1-2 meetings if you wanted to meet
 - i. Going into 2026, if you want a facilitator, you have to figure it out. Is there money to hire consultants, could you do it on your own, could DES handle it? Discussions that DES may be having later in the year and related to budget availability for water planning too.
 - j. Bit of an unknown. Have Santee basin to wrap up and to continue the meetings with WaterSC and draft SWP. Hope is to clarify some of these type of questions throughout the process and let SWP speak to what it looks like moving into next year and beyond
 - k. Not clear at this time. Some funding available. Will have more clarification towards the end of the year
 - l. Intent is because implementation happens at a local level. Some statewide recommendations in our RBP and others, but majority of the work is done through us managing partners on the ground, applying for grants.
 - m. Could be a regional basis between us, Saluda, and Broad since it's the Upstate. Proposed with 2 chairs of Broad and Saluda to come together as a larger group and have a discussion of the similarities of our recommendations and see what we can do as a larger entity in the fall. Could be outside of where others are involved. Could expand involvement to all RBC members of the 3 groups
 - n. Mark's going to follow up with McCormick County and if they want to formally submit a comment, we can add it to Appendix D and draft a response. If we get a comment, we'll circulate to the RBC, otherwise move forward to prepare final RBP, executive summary and 2-page summary sheet. All will get posted to DES website on USRB planning page

- o. Thank you for their 2-year contribution to this and appreciate everything y'all have done to make this successful
- p. Thank you for your participation. I've enjoyed building professional relationships and it makes my job worthwhile. Look forward to working with you all further. Job's not over, the job's just begun. Thanks in advance for moving out of the recommendation stage and into implementation stage. Proud of you all. Hoping we've got some great activities that move forward out of this

Meeting Adjourned: 10:52 AM

Minutes: Taylor Le Moal and Tom Walker

Approved: 12/3/2025

RBC Chat:

09:55:11 From Surface to Everyone:

Hello, just to clarify, I'm using a different computer so 'Surface' is actually John Hains.

09:55:33 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

Thanks John

09:56:05 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

i saw it was taking awhile for you to join the meeting. glad you were able to get in