

# **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

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Chris Clark, Commissioner

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Environmental Protection Division  
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July 21, 2009

## **Memorandum**

**To:** Council Chairs and Vice Chairs

**From:** Carol A. Couch 

**RE:** Meeting Summary  
Regional Water Planning Council Leadership Forum  
July 13, 2009  
Georgia Forestry Commission Macon, Georgia

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Robert Farris, Commissioner of the Georgia Forestry Commission, gave a welcome to the meeting and briefly described key water activities that the Forestry Commission is involved with. The current Farm Bill requires state forest agencies that receive Cooperative Forestry funding to conduct a State Forest Assessment and Resource Strategy to provide a comprehensive analyses of forest related conditions, trends, threats and opportunities and to identify priority rural and urban forest landscapes. The Georgia Forestry Commission has a survey to indicate priority issues. Stakeholders and the public are encouraged to indicate their input by completing the survey at [www.gatrees.org](http://www.gatrees.org).

Carol Couch, Director of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD), gave introductory remarks regarding the important work of the councils, the key role of the Chair and Vice Chair, and the regional planning work outlined in the State Water Plan. The participants did self-introductions, see attached attendees list. The Chairs and Vice Chairs developed the attached topics for discussion. Below is a summary of the key points and action items.

**Population and Employment Forecasts** – Many participants inquired about the population and employment forecasts, especially regarding needed revisions and use in the water plan. The following points were clarified: The forecasts released in May are draft. The comment period has been extended to July 17, 2009 in order to allow more time for more parties to provide input. All comments will be addressed. The final population forecasts are the responsibility of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB). Once population forecasts are finalized, further adjustments will be made to determine the forecasted water needs for each region. The adjustments will include recognition of transient populations, military, and other factors that

influence water use. The Councils have an important role in providing comments for consideration by the OPB and then making the further adjustments in estimated water use. It is expected that OPB will issue final population forecasts in late August 2009.

**Regional Water Planning Process** – The Councils have the responsibility to develop the draft regional water plans. The Chairs and Vice Chairs are responsible for leading the Council and its efforts. The planning consultants are provided to assist with logistical, technical, and writing tasks at the direction of the Chair. The planning consultants are under contract to EPD. Any performance or coordination issues that cannot be resolved should be reported to Carol Couch.

Within the framework of the overall process, the Council activities, including meeting agendas, are to be set by the Chair with the assistance of the planning consultant. Prior to Council Leadership being established, the planning consultants and EPD took a much larger role in the first and second meetings than will be the case in the remainder of the meetings. The Councils, led by the Chair and Vice Chair, have the flexibility to organize the discussion to address appropriate regional issues and preferences of the group.

EPD will provide a public involvement plan template with the basic requirements. Councils may add items desired to develop the regional plan. State agencies (such as the Department of Community Affairs, the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and others) are sending representatives to the Council meetings. These state agency staff associates are a resource to the Council. The Council may also arrange for other guest speakers as determined by the Council.

In accordance with the State Water Plan, EPD is preparing guidance for regional planning. A summary was distributed at the meeting. The delivery of the full guidance is expected in 7 to ten days. It was delayed in order to consolidate a larger draft into a readable 30 pages containing the necessary information. There will be a conference call with Chairs and Vice Chairs to discuss the regional planning guidance approximately 2 weeks after it is issued.

**Council Interactions** – Carol Couch explained that the water resource assessments are being conducted on a watershed/aquifer basis. The same information will be available to multiple councils sharing a water resource. Several participants suggested that joint meetings be held to receive this information. This idea will be further refined and discussed with each Chair/Vice Chair.

**Websites for Regional Councils** – The statewide water planning website has been updated, but the launch was delayed due to technical difficulties. The regional sites, one for each council, will be launched by the end of this week. Chairs and Vice Chairs, with the assistance of the planning consultant, will be able to post relevant material or links to the Council site.

**Metro District** – The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (Metro District) was formed in 2001 by specific legislation in advance of the formation of regional planning councils. The District prepared water plans in 2003 and an update was approved by EPD in early 2009.

Future updates of the Metro District Plans will follow the regional planning guidance and coordination will be necessary between the Metro District and neighboring councils.

**Interstate Issues** – Chairs and Vice Chairs inquired about the opportunity to include participation from neighboring states. It is important to note that the Water Plan is not a response to litigation with neighboring states, but an effort started after the last drought in Georgia. EPD is already coordinating with neighboring states and individual water users in other states on data compilation. It is appropriate to include representatives from neighboring communities in the regional planning process. Where we are in litigation with those neighbors, Council Chairs and Vice Chairs should work with Carol Couch on the options for participation.

**Future Leadership Forums** – There was some discussion about periodic meetings of this Leadership Forum to share ideas and progress with each other and to seek clarification on certain matters from EPD. Meetings may be in person or by teleconference.

**Action Items** – The following specific follow-up actions were discussed:

1. Every comment on the population forecasts will be specifically addressed.
2. Other factors (such as transient populations and military) will be included in the water use.
3. Carol Couch will inform OPB of the Council's interest to review population projections prior to finalization.
4. EPD will provide information to the Chairs and Vice Chairs about the scope of work and budget for the planning consultants.
5. Regional planning guidance will be issued in 7 to 10 days.
6. Chairs and Vice Chairs will review meeting summaries before posting.
7. Carol Couch will host a teleconference with Chairs and Vice Chairs regarding the regional planning guidance 10 to 14 days after release (release during week of July 20, teleconference in during first week of August).
8. Carol Couch will provide a briefing of ACT/ACF issues for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Coosa and Middle Chattahoochee Councils.
9. Periodic meetings and/or teleconferences of this Leadership group will be conducted.
10. Additional information will be developed regarding joint meetings and finalized with the Chairs and Vice Chairs.

## Meeting Attendees

### Council Chairs and Vice Chairs

Brinson Lanier, Chair, Altamaha  
Michael Polski, Vice Chair, Altamaha  
Benjamin Thompson, Chair, Coastal Georgia  
Thomas Ratcliffe, Vice Chair, Coastal Georgia  
David Ashburn, Vice Chair, Coosa- North Georgia  
Richard Royal, Chair, Lower Flint-Ochlockonee  
W.H. Haddock, Vice Chair, Lower Flint-Ochlockonee  
Matt Windom, Chair, Middle Chattahoochee  
Harry Lange, Vice Chair, Middle Chattahoochee  
Elmo Richardson, Chair, Middle Ocmulgee  
Ben Copeland, Jr., Vice Chair, Middle Ocmulgee  
Ron Cross, Chair, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee  
Charles Newton, Vice Chair, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee  
Darvin Eason, Chair, Suwannee-Satilla  
Grady Thompson, Vice Chair, Suwannee-Satilla  
William David Bennett, Chair, Upper Oconee  
Richard McSpadden, Vice Chair, Upper Oconee  
Jim Scarbrough, Metro North Georgia Water Planning District  
Birdel Jackson, Metro North Georgia Water Planning District

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### **Council Chairs and Vice Chairs Not able to attend:**

John Bennett, Chair, Coosa-North Georgia  
Donald Chase, Chair, Upper Flint  
Dick Morrow, Vice Chair, Upper Flint

# **Regional Water Council Leadership Forum**

**July 13, 2009**

**10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

**Georgia Forestry Commission**

## **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**Populations and Employment Projections**

**Process Discussion**

- 1) Flexibility**
- 2) Agenda and Leadership Role**
- 3) EPD Guidance**
- 4) Contractor Role/EPD staff role**

**Council Interaction**

**Website Update**

**Metro District**

**Private Property Rights**

**Interstate Issues**

**Technology/Topic Updates**