

**The Catawba-Wateree River Basin Advisory Commission (CWRBAC)
Meeting Notes – June 12, 2015**

Commission Members Present: Representative Ralph Norman, Senator Robert “Wes” Hayes, Barry Gullet, Susie Hamrick Jones, Rick Lee, Jeff Lineberger, Tim Mead

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Norman.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the November meeting were approved.

3. NC Water Quality and Quantity Planning - Tom Fransen, Water Planning Section Chief, NC DENR

A brief overview of some personnel changes was presented as noted below:

DENR

- Don van der Vaart – Secretary
- John Evans – Chief Deputy Secretary
- Tom Reeder – Ass. Secretary of the Env.

DWR

- Jay Zimmerman – Director

4. NC Hydrologic Basin Models

- Tar-Pamlico is the first completed quality/quantity integrated plan
- Next basin model information release is Cape Fear
- An update on each basin’s modeling effort was presented, and it was noted that the statewide effort is nearing completion

North Carolina is conducting modeling of the basins first and then will evaluate any surface water related laws. South Carolina is conducting its modeling effort now and has passed a surface water permitting law.

5. SC Surface Water Availability Assessments – David Baize, Assistant Bureau Chief, SC DHEC

- 1.5 million dollars allocated to conduct surface water assessments that will provide information on availability of water supplies and future demands. The assessments will complement SC DHEC’s surface water permitting program and SC DNR’s update of the State Water Plan
- CDM Smith, Inc. contracted to develop the models using the Simplified Water Allocation Model (SWAM) modeling tool
- Clemson University will facilitate the stakeholder engagement process

- Models will be developed by watershed basins
- Two meetings per basin offered during model development
- Saluda Basin Meeting #1 – completed in April
- Edisto Basin Meeting #1 – June 18th, Blackville
- Training to interested parties will be provided after all models are completed
- Website - www.scwatermodles.com

The use of water from larger farms was discussed as it relates to South Carolina's Surface Water Law. There has been discussion about this issue in a legislative subcommittee. The issue may be discussed further after the basin models are completed.

It was noted that Clemson University is coordinating the stakeholder effort. Also, the water models do not include sediment reduction, but sediment studies are being conducted by the Water Management Group. Reduction in sediment has potential to reduce needs for future reservoirs.

6. Catawba-Wateree Clean Water Initiative - Bill Holman, NC State Director of The Conservation Fund & Andrew Kota, Stewardship Director of the Foothills Conservancy

This effort is a collaboration of Foothills Conservancy, Catawba Lands Conservancy, and The Conservation Fund to protect the Catawba-Wateree River Basin and assure a clean, adequate, affordable, reliable water supply.

- Objective is to establish sustainable funding to invest in the protection of significant watershed lands and encourage watershed conservation activities that protect source water resources for all users
- A reliable supply of clean water is fundamental to public health, communities, agriculture, business, power generation, and economic vitality
- Benefits are maintain/reduce drinking water treatment costs, preserve reservoir capacity by reducing sedimentation, & meet/exceed future gov't regulations
- Multiple private and public partners, stakeholders from private organizations to government entities
- Greater Forest Cover, Lower Water Treatment Costs
- The Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative (UNCWI) is working to prioritize and protect those lands most critical for the long-term health of all drinking water supplies within a 770 square mile drainage basin that comprises the Upper Neuse River Basin, near Raleigh, NC
- Long-term goals include protecting more than 23,000 acres of riparian habitat

Research In Progress/Complete:

- UNC Environmental Finance Center: Revenue-shed Analysis
- NC Basinwide Conservation Prioritization Index
- InVEST Sediment Retention Model
- USDA Forest Service – Forests to Faucets

Possible Research:

- Land-Use Change Impacts on Catawba Water Supply
- Refined Watershed Conservation Priorities with input from Catawba-Water Management Group

Exploring the Catawba Revenue-shed

- Identify and quantify the current financial framework underlying water quality protection in the Catawba River basin
- Model the potential to combine & leverage individual contributions for basinwide benefits of Catawba River Watershed Conservation Priority Index
- GIS data from multiple sources (e.g., land use, slope, soils etc.)

Relevance to CWWMG Planning/Avoided dredging

- Protect investment of intake lowering
- More volume during drought cycles south of the up
- Improve water quality for recreation and treatment
- Hedge against future variables of increased water demand or increased sedimentation from land use change and/or increased rainfall

It is noted by a Commission Member that some priority areas may be on federal lands. There was discussion concerning having a steady funding source, as well as noting potential funding sources such as Duke Energy grants. It was also noted that building potential may be picking up in the Catawba basin as the economy improves.

There was a question about whether or not the South Carolina model would include sediment loading, and it was noted that it did not. However, the Catawba Water Management Group is using funding to conduct some sediment studies.

7. Savannah River Clean Water Fund - Eric Krueger, Director of Science and Stewardship, The Nature Conservancy

- Program seeks to protect forested watersheds in the Savannah River Basin and create a recurring funding stream to pay for protection areas
- Protecting areas within the watershed could lead to significant decrease in drinking water treatment costs overall
- As of 2011, sixty seven (67) similar active programs are in the U.S., with eighteen (18) more in development
- Land areas were prioritized utilizing GIS technology
- Areas prioritized in accordance with their ability to affect water-quality in the Savannah River
- Selection of best management practices in land areas is also part of this program
- Multiple partners are participating in this effort (e.g., nonprofit organizations, state government, federal government, and drinking water utilities) within the basin

It was noted that the South Carolina Land Conservation Bank is involved with the overall effort. Also, per inquiry from a Commission Member about salt water intrusion, it was noted that the City of Savannah has been cutting back on groundwater and focusing on surface water. The Savannah River Basin also has an advisory council, but it is not required by law. Georgia has been included although it is a South Carolina-based council.

8. Catawba-Wateree Relicensing – Mark Oakley, Duke Energy

Process started in 2006 and license should be issued in the summer of 2015

Some commitments in the process:

- Upper Catawba Public Access, Open Space and Trails Agreement (April 2008)
- Santee River Basin Accord for Diadromous Fish Protection, Restoration and Enhancement (Accord, May 2008)
- North Carolina Water Quality Certification (November 2008)
- SC Water Quality Certification Settlement Agreement (May 2010)
- Settlement Agreement for the *SC v NC* US Supreme Court Case No 138, Orig. (December 2010)
- National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion (July 2013)
- Settlement Agreement Regarding the South Carolina Water Quality Certification (July 2014)
- South Carolina Water Quality Certification (February 2015)

CRA Benefits:

- New seasonal Normal Operating Ranges for each reservoir
- Continuous minimum flow releases into the Catawba River Bypassed Reach (James), the Great Falls Long Bypassed Reach, and the Great Falls Short Bypassed Reach
- Higher continuous minimum flow releases at Bridgewater (James), Oxford (Hickory), and Lookout Shoals
- Recreation flow releases
- Low Inflow Protocol (LIP), including forming the Drought Management Advisory Group (CWD MAG)
- Increase aeration capabilities at Bridgewater (James), Rhodhiss, Oxford (Hickory), and Lookout Shoals
- New aerating hydro units at Wylie and Wateree (DO and continuous minimum flows)
- \$13.1M in funding and price reductions for purchase/protection of 5,371 acres in NC and SC
- \$3M and 2,455 acres (conveyed or under easements) to state agencies for recreation and land conservation
- 2,590 acres for upper Catawba public access, open space, and trails (purchased and being held by Duke Energy for sale to NC)
- Over \$4 million for others (primarily local governments) to develop public recreational amenities

- 89 new/enhanced public recreation areas (conceptual designs in progress; only two land acquisitions remain)
- Over \$600,000 for cultural resources protection and enhancement
- Public information enhancements
- Modify the Wateree spillway
- An additional \$3 million and 274 acres available to state agencies

Adjourn

DRAFT