## Georgia Department of Natural Resources

2 Martin Luther King Jr., Drive, Suite 1152 East, Atlanta, Georgia 30334 Chris Clark, Commissioner Carol A. Couch, Ph.D., Director Environmental Protection Division (404) 656-4713

August 20, 2009

## Memorandum

To: Council Chairs and Vice Chairs

From: Carol A. Couch

**RE:** Meeting Summary

Regional Water Planning Council Leadership Conference Call

August 20, 2009

Carol Couch, Director of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD), welcomed the participants and provided a short overview of the Regional Water Plan Guidance. The Guidance is split into eight sections and details the steps through which regional water plans will be developed. Carol Couch confirmed that the Regional Councils are aware of their leadership role in that process as well as the roles of EPD and partner agencies. Finally, she confirmed that Councils either have or are currently finalizing their individual Memorandum of Agreement.

Several of the participants noted that the Regional Water Plan Guidance is very long and detailed. Some Chairs also expressed concern that they may not have had enough time to properly review the document. In response to these concerns, Elmo Richardson suggested that all Councils meet with EPD representatives to discuss the finer details.

Carol Couch noted that EPD and the Councils' Planning Contractors (PCs) are always more than happy to field questions and will gladly provide any explanations or information Council Members may need.

Dick Morrow noted that the recent judge's ruling in the use of Lake Lanier has caused several Council Members to question the significance of regional water planning and how their roles may change in the future. In response, Carol Couch noted that she is preparing a memo describing the July 17<sup>th</sup> ruling and implications. The memo will discuss what the ruling means for the Councils and the work they are currently doing.

Carol Couch noted that Governor Perdue has expressed his view that the Regional Councils' work will actually be more important as a result of the ruling, since the work the Councils are currently doing will provide information on demands and practices to

meet economic and environmental need. This information will be an important factor in discussions with neighboring states.

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Baseline Assessment – Ron Cross asked whether the assessment of baseline resource capacity assessment is set by EPD or if the Councils will be able to review or test the data. In response to this concern, Carol Couch explained that the baseline assessment, which will be available in January, is developed by using current hydrologic and storage numbers and is therefore not a judgment call but a scientific assessment of the quantity of available water and of surface water quality. The assessments incorporate data on water usage, wastewater discharge, conservation storage in reservoirs, and water levels in aquifers. For surface water availability, the assessment considers whole river basins, looking at water use and availability progressively along each basin. EPD will gladly review any questions or concerns regarding the assessment data.

Population & Employment – Dick Morrow repeated concerns about the validity of the population and employment projections. Carol Couch explained that the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) is currently reviewing revisions that respond to concerns raised to date and will release the new population estimates for the state. Since the Councils' work is about planning for the future and future needs, EPD encourages Council Members to identify alternative population scenarios based on some credible methodology. These alternate scenarios will be used for water and wastewater forecasting along with the estimates that OPB selects as the most likely. Daytime and transient populations will also be incorporated in the forecasts of water and wastewater demand.

Wastewater and Demand Forecasts — Carol Couch noted that CDM is currently preparing water and wastewater demand forecasts. If on the agendas that the Chairs and Vice Chairs set, that work can be discussed at the November council meetings. David Bennett requested that EPD provide draft presentations during pre-meetings between the Chairs, Vice Chairs, Planning Contractors and EPD's Assistant Branch Chiefs. Gail Cowie of EPD explained that EPD staff are working to improve the timing and expects to meet that request more effectively in the future.

Other Questions and Concerns – In response to a query regarding an upcoming meeting called by Representative McCall and Senator John Bulloch, Carol Couch noted that this meeting is not officially tied to the work by EPD and the Councils, yet may be helpful for Council Members with agricultural backgrounds.

Carol Couch also noted that EPD will provide Chairs and Vice Chairs with a glossary of terms to help them explain concepts to other Council Members. Carol Couch likewise suggested that Chairs and Vice Chairs speak with their corresponding Assistant Branch Chiefs and Planning Contractors about the best way to present complex or technical material.

In closing, Carol Couch reminded the Chairs and Vice Chairs that she will continue to be available to them as regional planning progresses. She suggested that questions or concerns about the contents of the Regional Water Plan Guidance, specifically, be directed to Gail Cowie at (404) 657-5739 or gail\_cowie@dnr.state.ga.us.

## Meeting Attendees

Tomas Ratcliffe, Vice Chair, Coastal North Georgia
John Bennett, Chair, Coosa North Georgia
Richard Royal, Chair, Lower Flint-Ochlockonee
Hal Haddock, Vice Chair, Lower Flint-Ochlockonee
Harry Lange, Vice Chair, Middle Chattahoochee
Elmo Richardson, Chair, Middle Ocmulgee
Ben Copeland, Vice Chair, Middle Ocmulgee
Dick Morrow, Vice Chair, Upper Flint-Ochlockonee
Ron Cross, Chair, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee
David Bennett, Chair, Upper Oconee
Richard McSpadden, Vice Chair Upper Oconee