

Section 10: FUTURE PLAN EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

The Watershed Management Plan was updated in compliance with the minimum planning elements identified in O.C.G.A. §12-5-571. The legislation identifies the need to periodically assess regional progress towards implementation of the specific actions identified in the Watershed Management Plan and towards meeting the long-term goal of healthy watersheds.

The O.C.G.A. specifically states the following Plan requirements:

“[E]stablishment of short-term and long-term goals to be accomplished by the plan and measures for the assessment of progress in accomplishing such goals and plan.”

“The District shall review ...management plan(s) and (their) implementation annually to determine whether there is a need to update such plan(s) and shall report to the director the progress of implementation of its goals...”

“...the District shall prepare updated ...management plan(s) no less frequently than every five years...”

The short and long-term watershed management goals are summarized in Section 9 in the implementation schedule, with greater detail provided in the mandatory local management measures in Section 5. The mandatory local management measures provide the framework for evaluating implementation of this Watershed Management Plan. This section provides an overview of the required plan reviews and plan updates as well as provides a summary of regional progress to date.

PLAN REVIEWS AND UPDATES

There are two types of plan reviews and updates: annual reviews and plan updates that occur every five years. The reviews and updates are an important component of the adaptive management approach for all three of the Metro Water District’s long-term management Plans (water supply and conservation, wastewater, and watershed).

Adaptive management is a type of natural resource management in which decisions are made as part of an ongoing science-based process. Adaptive management involves testing, monitoring, and evaluating applied strategies, and incorporating new knowledge into management approaches that are based on scientific findings and the needs of society. Results are used to modify management policy, strategies, and practices. (USGS)

This adaptive management approach recognizes the limitations of current knowledge regarding future situations, and the inevitability of change. These Plans provide a big-picture context for specific actions based on best available data, and will need to be adjusted as better information or new conditions arise. By design, the short-term management measures are outlined in greater detail than the long-term

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management measures. Recommendations for the first 5 years are reasonably firm, whereas those beyond 20 years are expected to be refined several times before they are implemented.

ANNUAL REVIEWS

The purpose of the annual plan review is to identify and discuss implementation challenges to determine if there is a need for plan amendments. The evaluation process provides stakeholders an opportunity to discuss concerns about a particular element of the Watershed Management Plan. The annual reviews are a reminder that the Plans are adaptable, dynamic and flexible.

PLAN UPDATES

Plan updates occur at least every 5 years and take a more holistic look at changed conditions and implementation actions since the last Plan Update. Evaluations of changed conditions for Plan Updates may include:

- Population forecasts and trends;
- Water quality trends using the 303(d) list and available watershed assessment data;
- Additional funding sources; and
- Water quality modeling for future land use projections (this is recommended every 10 years).

Undoubtedly, other issues will emerge that merit in-depth consideration in the future. As with existing efforts, future planning work should be open and inclusive, involving all Metro Water District members and stakeholders.

RECOMMENDED ANNUAL REVIEWS AND UPDATES

Table 10-1 displays key items for the Metro Water District to consider in its annual reviews and 5-year updates. It is essential that an updated Plan be prepared no less frequently than every 5 years in order to allow for appropriate adjustments.

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TABLE 10-1

Summary of Plan Elements to be Reviewed and Updated Regularly by the Metro Water District

Key to Actions: ● = Required ● = Recommended ○ = Desirable * = Automatic Plan Review Trigger

Plan Elements	Annual Reviews		Five-Year Update	
	Review	Update	Review	Update
Metro Water District Plan recommendations	●	○	●	●
Education & Public Awareness Programs	●	●	●	●
Watershed mandatory local management measures	●	●	●	●
Local conservation pricing	●		●	
Local water conservation programs	●	●	●	●
Recommended Metro Water District actions	●	●	●	●
Recommended actions for state agencies	○		●	
Related MNGWPD and State Plans (Water Supply/ Long-term Wastewater/ Watershed, etc)	○		●	●
Local septic system programs	○		●	●
Local sewer system operation and maintenance programs	○		●	
New population and demand forecasts			●	●
Funding trends	●		●	
Special Triggers for Plan Reviews				
<i>Note: Any of these actions should trigger an automatic review of their implications for Metro Water District Plans, and needed Plan modifications. Additionally, the status of any of these pending actions should be monitored routinely.</i>				
State-wide Comprehensive Water Management Plan resource assessments or guidance	*	○	●	●
Georgia EPD policy or permit requirement changes	*	○	●	●
Georgia EPD guidance on ACF and ACT basins modified	*	○	●	●
Georgia EPD permit action on water withdrawal, reservoir or discharge (issued/denied/modified)	*	○	●	●
Court rulings on general standards or district-specific cases (e.g. discharges to Lake Lanier)	*	○	●	●
Legislative action relevant to Plans	*	●	●	●
Major policy action by Metro Water District Board	*	○	●	●
New reservoir permit actions	*	○	●	●
Major change in Georgia DHR regulations on septic systems	*	●	●	●
Major change in Georgia EPD policies or regulations	*	●	●	●
Major change in GEFA or federal funding levels or policies	*	○	●	●

PLAN ACCOUNTABILITY

Municipalities have a high level of accountability for implementing the Watershed Management Plan's mandatory management measures through the Georgia EPD audit process. Georgia EPD auditors conduct a thorough review of the local programs and procedures to determine consistency with the Metro Water District Watershed Management Plan. Communities must substantially comply with the Metro Water District plan provisions in order to modify or obtain new water withdrawal permits, wasteload allocations, GEFA loan funding, or the renewal of MS4 stormwater permits. Overall, this system has worked well to ensure implementation of the provisions of all three Metro Water District plans.

ANNUAL PLAN SURVEY AND REPORTING

The Metro Water District performs an annual survey of local jurisdictions to appraise overall progress towards implementing the Watershed Management Plan. A summary of these survey results are published annually in the Metro Water District's *Annual Activities and Progress Report*.

Information that will be collected as part of the annual survey and evaluation of progress will include:

- **Model Ordinances** – Adoption status of each model ordinance or equivalent
- **Future-Conditions Floodplain Delineation** – Status of modeling and mapping efforts
- **Integrated Development Review Process** – Collect each local government's checklist or other review instrument
- **Asset Management** – Reporting of status of inventory efforts, as well as inspection/maintenance program
- **Pollution Prevention** – Status of local implementation programs
- **Watershed Conditions Assessment** – Collect long-term ambient trend monitoring program data
- **Watershed Improvement Projects** – Collect list of project and locations, provide regional summary including map

As additional metrics for measuring progress are developed by the Metro Water District and TCC (see Section 7), they will be included in the annual survey and progress report.

CONCLUSIONS

While the performance will be reported annually by the responsible entities, the final measure of implementation success will be the longer term, demonstrable trends of:

- Ongoing implementation of the model ordinances;
- Watershed planning and greater local coordination on land use and watershed health;
- Asset management and the progression of communities towards proactive programs;
- Proactive detection of potential pollutant sources;
- Collection of better watershed conditions data;
- Heightened public awareness and community support through an effective public education and awareness program; and
- Progress on improving surface water quality.