



**Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District
FLINT BASIN ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Summary
October 3, 2012**

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's Flint Basin Advisory Council met on Wednesday, October 3, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. at the Peachtree City City Hall Community Service Room in Peachtree City, GA.

Members Present

Richard A. Greuel, BAC Chair	Brice Martin, Coweta Co Stormwater
Vanessa Birrell, Fayette Co Board of Comm.	Dale Phenicie, Fayette County Chamber
John Caldwell	Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper
Roger A. Greuel, Fayette Co Farm Bureau	Tracy Thigpen, Coweta Co WSA
Dorothy Harris, D. Clark Harris Inc.	Scott Tolar

Members Not Present

William Brundage	Richard Harp
Adrienne Collins, Georgia Power Company	Richard Little
Ernest Curtis	Neal Spradlin
Don Easterbrook, City of Fayetteville	Edward Strong, Newnan Utilities

Board Representative Present

Tim Thoms, Citizen Member

Metro Water District Staff Present

Sarah Simmons, Senior Program Specialist

Welcome and Introductions

District Board Member, Tim Thoms welcomed the group on behalf of the Metro Water District Board and officially convened the meeting. Mr. Thoms turned the meeting over to BAC Chair Richard Greuel who welcomed new member Gordon Rogers.

BAC Chair Election

Sarah Simmons informed the group that she sent an email in September asking for nominations for BAC chair and that she received one nomination for Mr. Richard Greuel to continue as chair of the Flint BAC. Ms. Simmons announced that she would accept additional nominations at the meeting. No additional nominations were made. A quorum of members was present, and the group was able to vote to elect a chair. A motion was made by Mr. Gordon Rogers to re-elect Richard Greuel as chair of the Flint BAC. The motion was seconded by Ms. Vanessa Birrell. Mr. Greuel was named as chair of the Flint BAC for another one year term ending October 2013.

Public Review and Comment Period: Amendment to the Floodplain Model Ordinance of the Stormwater Management Plan

Ms. Simmons provided a brief overview of the Metro Water District's Floodplain Model Ordinance and the reasoning for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) requested amendments. FEMA assisted the District in developing the Floodplain Model Ordinance in 2006 based on the state of Georgia's floodplain ordinance. A local jurisdiction is required to adopt the Floodplain Model Ordinance so that private property owners in that jurisdiction can apply for flood insurance under the National Flood Insurance Program.

In the summer of 2012, FEMA approached the District with amendments to the already adopted Floodplain Model Ordinance to bring the ordinance up to date with current definitions and federal guidelines. District staff brought these requested changes to the Stormwater Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) at their August meeting for guidance. The TCC had questions and clarifications which were addressed again by FEMA and District staff. District staff brought a final version of requested amendments to the District Executive Committee at their meeting in September. At that time, the Executive Committee assessed the changes as a major amendment to the model ordinance and released the changes for a 30 day public review and comment period. The public comment period started September 17 and will last through October 16, 2012. Ms. Simmons requested that all formal public comments be submitted by email to her.

BAC members had the following comments and questions:

- FEMA requires local communities to keep track of certain information for the National Flood Insurance Program.

Drought Update

Ms. Simmons gave an update on the current drought conditions in the state and highlighted the current status of federal reservoir levels. Drought conditions have continued in the metro area through the late summer and early fall months, and much of middle and north Georgia is still experiencing extreme drought conditions. Although the downpour Metro Atlanta experienced in the first part of October brought a significant amount of rain, drought conditions persist and lake levels are still at or below the long-term average. BAC members had no questions or comments.

Drought in the Flint Basin and Suspension of Agricultural Permitting

Dr. Gail Cowie, GA EPD's Assistant Branch Chief of the Chattahoochee and Flint Basins provided a detailed overview of the drought conditions in the Flint Basin, specifically conditions in the Lower Flint in the southern part of the state. The precipitation deficit in the Lower Flint is showing up in the record low stream flows at almost every gauge along the Flint River. This part of the basin is still in great need of a long-term recharge.

Additionally, Dr. Cowie provided an overview of EPD Director Jud Turner's recent decision to suspend permitting of new or modified requests for withdrawals of surface water and

groundwater for agricultural uses until better tools are available for addressing agricultural irrigation needs in the basin.

Members had the following questions and comments:

- How is it possible that two gauges reading a lower stream flow can be in between two gauges that reflect a higher stream flow? The stream flows in those areas may have been supported by groundwater flows; however groundwater levels tend to reflect similar conditions as stream flow.
- The aquifer has been recharged completely since 2007. Twenty months of decent precipitation levels in 2009 helped to totally recharge the aquifer. One rain event, even a tropical storm, will not be enough to recharge an aquifer.
- We have been in a state of drought punctuated by wet periods since the early 2000s.
- The suspension of agricultural permitting is temporary, although a specified duration has not been set. Suspension of permitting will be evaluated annually starting in November 2013.
- Since 2008, EPD has seen an increase in the use of the resource, as well as an increase in the amount of new permits. New data and information is now available, and EPD wants to ensure that best practices are being used to manage the resource.
- From a farmer's perspective, we will see the price of groceries increase. As a result, a lot of farmers are looking into 'smarter' irrigation tools and methods.
- This is not the first time permitting suspension has occurred.
- From this point moving forward to November 2013, EPD will be collecting and evaluating data and working with the Water Policy Center. EPD will be working to set in place advanced technologies, improve meter systems and data management tools and improve mapping of irrigated acreage.
- EPD will also be looking into how to decrease demand and shift to other sources for irrigation. Current law allows for an auction for the removal of lands from irrigation in those areas that are affected the most by low stream flows.
- EPD does not foresee suspension of agricultural permitting occurring into the Upper Flint region. It is the heavy use of the resource in the Lower Flint that has demonstrated the need for permitting suspension.

Topics for 2013 BAC Agendas

Ms. Simmons asked the group to recommend topics for the 2013 BAC agendas. District staff wants to bring speakers and topics of interest to the BAC meetings that have a particular relevance to the BAC members, as these topics related to the District plans.

BAC members had the following questions and comments:

- It would be interesting to hear from EPD again next year as they continue to develop new tools and best management practices for managing agriculture permitting in the Lower Flint Basin. Also, invite EPD to speak on their revisions of Flint River Drought Protection Act as those are developed.
- Stream restoration projects in the basin and how they tie to the floodplain ordinance.

- A full briefing of the ACF Stakeholders group and what part they will play in developing a water sharing plan.
- Would like to see a big picture look at what how the Flint BAC and the Metro Water District play a role in state water planning efforts.
- What implication do District plan ordinances have at the local level? What is the cost/benefit analysis?

Other

Ms. Simmons provided a meeting wrap up and informed the group that the 2013 meeting schedule was listed at the bottom of the agenda. The next meeting will be on January 15, 2013. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.