

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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Chris Clark, Commissioner

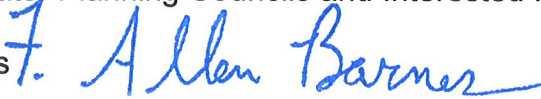
F. Allen Barnes, Director

Environmental Protection Division

404/656-4713

To: Regional Water Planning Councils and Interested Parties

From: Allen Barnes



Date: May 19, 2010

Re: Additional guidance for regional water planning

I am providing the following guidance to clarify Council responsibilities in development of management practices for inclusion in your recommended regional water plan. The approach outlined below is intended to produce recommended regional water plans that are as specific as possible with currently available information. It is also intended to provide flexibility in implementation and to give the Councils an opportunity to identify the information required to refine practices and implementation commitments as regional water plans are reviewed and revised on a five-year cycle.

This memo supplements the Regional Planning Guidance issued by Georgia EPD in July 2009 (available at www.georgiawaterplanning.org/documents/20090731_Regional_Planning_Guidance_000.pdf). In case of contradiction, this guidance supersedes previous guidance.

Selection of Management Practices

- The purpose of the regional plans is to identify management practices to meet water and wastewater needs within resource capacities, as defined by the water resource assessments. Selection of management practices will be guided by goals – the regional goals adopted by the Council and the State Water Plan's goal of sustainable water management to support the state's economy, protect public health and natural systems, and enhance quality of life.¹

— Practices may have the effect of adjusting forecasted demand and/or supplementing resource capacities. Management practices will allow water users to meet forecasted demands and other regional goals while avoiding undue adverse impacts on water users and uses in the planning area or in other planning areas.²

¹ State Water Plan, p. 7.

² State Water Plan, p. 19 and 37. Selection of management practices starts with two questions: 1) Are the regional goals met? 2) Do any gaps need to be filled? After Councils identify an initial set of management practices, the practices will be evaluated on a whole watershed/aquifer scale. EPD will apply tools that model the effect of management practices and test whether those practices will close any gaps between resource capacities and future needs. Councils will evaluate the results and assess whether the practices will meet their regional goals. If gaps are not filled or goals are not met by the initial set of management practices, Councils will review their regional vision and goals; revisit the gap analysis (including the baseline resource assessments and forecasts used in that analysis), and refine their management practices for another round of evaluation. Process will continue until gaps between future

- Given this purpose, Councils will identify management practices that are likely to be effective in closing current gaps in availability of water and/or assimilative capacity as well as avoiding future gaps in availability of water and/or assimilative capacity. The packages of management practices will also meet regional goals.
 - Identification of management practices to close current or avoid future gaps gives Councils an opportunity to better understand the nature of gaps in their region, the factors that contribute to them, and likely or potential impacts. Councils may request that EPD consult with appropriate experts to better understand the nature of gaps for specific water resources.
- Once management practices have been identified, the Councils will have flexibility in selection of recommended practices and in planning for their implementation.
 - Council decisions about management practices will be guided by a variety of considerations (e.g., cost, feasibility). Most of those considerations will focus on the effectiveness of the practices in meeting regional goals and satisfying water and wastewater needs within resource capacities. Those considerations should be an explicit part of the Council's selection of management practices and decisions about implementation of those practices.
 - Regional water plans will be implemented by local governments and other entities that may apply for permits, grants or loans.³ Coordination with local governments and other entities who will implement a regional plan is a critical step in plan development. Councils will consult with local governments in their region per their MOA, and with other entities as appropriate, when selecting management practices and planning for their implementation.
 - Recommended regional water plans will include a schedule for implementation of the water management practices selected to meet regional goals and fill identified water resource gaps.⁴ Implementation of practices may be phased in a way that closes current gaps over time and avoids the development of gaps in the future.
 - Councils may specify information needed to refine their recommended plan in the second round of planning. Information may be needed to better characterize gaps, refine management practices, and/or determine implementation provisions. Implementation commitments in the recommended plan may be contingent upon that information and the recommended plan will specify the parties responsible and timeframe(s) for developing that information.

demand and resource capacities are filled and regional goals met by the modeled water management practices (Regional Planning Guidance, p. 11-12).

³ Regional Planning Guidance, p. 32.

⁴ Regional Planning Guidance, p. 32.