



**Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District
Ocmulgee Basin Advisory Council
MEETING SUMMARY
January 14, 2008**

The Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Ocmulgee Basin Advisory Council met on Monday, January 14, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. at the DeKalb County Covington Branch Public Library in Decatur, GA.

Members Present

Jay Ash
Paul Bowen
Ellen Heath
Erik Lombard
Shirley Lucia
James Moore
Larissa Thomas

Welcome and Introductions

Joy Hinkle of the Metro Water District staff welcomed the Council and initiated introductions. Members introduced themselves with name, organization and favorite water activity or resource within the Ocmulgee basin.

Basin Profile Overview

Kim Shorter of Metcalf & Eddy presented the draft Ocmulgee basin profile, which covered the following:

- 53% increase in population (second largest in the District)
- 650 square miles
- Land Use will include revised future land use (2035)
- Increase in residential land use, med. density
- Low and medium density estimates may be revised based on current development trends
- Fecal Coliform listings likely from septic and agricultural sources in the upper part of the basin and sanitary sewer infrastructure in more urban portions

- Discussion that biota listings are likely to increase dramatically as more monitoring is conducted
- Water withdrawals (not yet in the report to TCC for QA/QC)
- Wastewater treatment – lots of septic tanks in Oconee (draft not yet reported to TCC for QA/QC)
- Successes: South River Trail, Clean Water Initiative, and Big Haynes Creek Wetlands Demonstration Project
- Challenges: fecal coliform bacteria, extensive land use changes, keeping Lake Jackson healthy

Open Discussion

Kim Shorter facilitated discussion on successes and challenges in the Ocmulgee Basin that could be added to the draft basin profile. Council members provided the following feedback:

General

- Henry County is in very good shape for available drinking water sources.
- Gwinnett County is going to study the implications of discharging water from the Ocmulgee Basin into Lake Lanier. They currently do not have a permit to do this.
- Henry County would like to be able to show everyone a map illustrating where water goes from each home in the stormwater system. Henry County has not started working on this yet.
- Need more watershed identification signs to make the public more aware of water quality issues.
- Citizens expressed interest in participating in World Water Monitoring Day.

Successes

- In addition to the success stories mentioned in the profile, the Lakefield regional detention and pond restoration project in Rockdale County.
- Gwinnett County has an aggressive homeowner education program already in place – septic systems, homeowner pond maintenance program recently added.
- DeKalb County has a school stormwater program used to educate the public through the SWU (Ted Rhinehart's group)
- DeKalb County also held a Water Conservation Symposium (of interest for WSWC Plan)
- Henry County is working with Chris Kodani and CCSU on monitoring the health of streams throughout the county

Challenges

- There needs to be more education on the role impervious surfaces play in water quality issues.
- There needs to be a more coordinated effort to educate the development community on best practices. Elected officials also need education as well.
- Beaver Ruin Creek has a lot of problems including runoff issues and petroleum products in the creek.
- It does not appear Gwinnett County is paying as much attention to the Ocmulgee Basin as they are to other parts of the county.
- The biggest challenge in the Ocmulgee Basin is getting the message out to the public.
- Need to communicate the message that “industry” is not responsible for water quality challenges, nonpoint sources play a larger role than most understand.

Phosphorus and Septic System Discussion and Polling

Ms. Shorter led a brief discussion about reducing phosphorus and septic systems issues. Council members provided the following comments:

- Homeowner education about phosphorus must also include companies that landscape. One option would be to require citizens to present a valid soil sample before approving the sale of fertilizer.
- There was a question related to the presence of blue green algae in Lake Jackson – not known at this time.

Ms. Shorter concluded the meeting by polling Council members using an automated response system. The BAC was asked to choose their preferred answer to the following (% response):

- What is the best method of reducing phosphorus contributions from fertilizer?
 - A) Homeowner fertilizer education programs (80%)
 - B) Stream buffer restoration programs (0%)
 - C) Ordinances restricting phosphorus fertilizers without supporting soil samples (20%)
 - D) Other (0%)
- What is the best program to improve septic system quality?
 - A) Increase minimum lot size to 1 acre (14%)
 - B) Local construction inspections (29%)
 - C) Require mandatory inspections/pump out certification every five years (57%)
 - D) Homeowner education on proper maintenance (0%)

Ms. Hinkle reviewed the plan update schedule and reminded Council members to check email and the Web site for meeting announcements. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.