

Saluda River Basin Council

March 22, 2023, Meeting Minutes

RBC Members Present: Katherine Amidon, Sharon Appell, Jeff Boss, Ed Bruce, David Coggins, Jason Davis, Mark Farris, Brandon Grooms, Robert Hanley, Rick Huffman, Patrick Jackson, Joel Ledbetter, Paul Lewis, Justin McGrady, Kevin Miller, Jim Moore, Larry Nates, Josie Newton, Jay Nicholson, Eddie Owen, KC Price, Melanie Ruhlman, Thompson Smith, Rett Templeton, Charlie Timmons, Mike Waddell, & Rebecca Wade

RBC Members Absent: David Lawrence & Devin Orr

Planning Team Present: John Boyer, Scott Harder, Leigh Anne Monroe, Tom Walker, Jeff Allen, Andy Wachob, Alexis Modzelesky, Joe Gellici, & Hannah Hartley

Total Present: 53

1. Welcome (Ken Rentiers and Scott Harder, SCDNR) 10:00–10:10

Ken called the meeting to order at 10 am. He highlighted the main items on the agenda, and Ken Rentiers welcomed members and alternates in attendance.

2. Review of the Meeting Objectives and Approval of the Agenda 10:10–10:15

(John Boyer, CDM Smith)

- a. Meet the Saluda RBC and Planning Team Members
- b. The river basin planning framework (roles and responsibilities of the RBC)
- c. RBC bylaws and identify potential priorities for managing water resources in the basin.
- d. Preferences for future meeting times, dates, locations, and format.

The agenda was unanimously approved. Justin McGrady – 1st made a motion to approve the agenda which was seconded by Robert Hanley - 2nd and was unanimously approved.

3. RBC and Planning Team Introductions 10:15–10:30

John Boyer introduced the Planning Team.

The objective of the planning team (CDM Smith, DNR, DHEC, Clemson University) is to help set the agenda, work out logistics, meeting minutes and summary, create new agendas, field trips, deal with any issues, and support the River Basin Council in every way possible. Each member of the RBC at the meeting had an opportunity to introduce themselves, the organization, role, and interest category represented. What made them serve on the Saluda RBC and support the river basin planning process? One unique fact about them to share with the RBC and how familiar they are with the river basin planning process. Three levels are used to identify members' familiarity with the planning framework: (1). Not very familiar with it, (2). Somewhat familiar with it, and (3). Very familiar with it.

Jason Davis – 3rd generation farmer who would like to preserve and protect the river - #1 not familiar with the process

Mike Waddell – Interested in wild trout and native trout and represents water-based recreational

Thompson Smith – Farm Bureau and is interested in how the process impacts agricultural landowners, #2 somewhat familiar

Jeff Boss - Interested in source water and water quality and primarily water supply interests, #3 very familiar

Patrick Jackson – Public supply interest

Larry Nates – Conservation district with a conservation interest regarding natural resources

David Coggins – Retired dairy farmer – currently beef cow and chicken farmer – follow the water and has a big stake in the Saluda basin

Mark Farris – Economic interest in recruiting business to Greenville (development) – likes to paddle and wants to serve and loves the outdoors – has hiked about 12% of the Appalachian Trail, #1 not familiar

Jim Moore – from Saluda County Council – Local Government and Lake Murray was the reason he applied – Retired Naval Officer and Teacher, #1 not familiar

Melanie Ruhlman – from Save our Saluda with interests in the Saluda and Reedy Rivers, wants to learn more about the watershed and fair allocation of the resource

Joel Ledbetter – Easley Utilities, #1 not familiar

Ed Bruce – Duke Energy and has been very involved in the planning process, #3 very familiar

KC Price – Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission and interests with Lake Greenwood – was on the SWAM Technical Advisory Committee – and is serving on the RBC and now everything has come full circle – owns property adjacent to the Reedy River, #3 very familiar

Robert Hanley – Commissioner and is in the Ag, Forestry, and Irrigation interest group and has had an interest for many years – has degrees from SEC and ACC schools – interested in sustainability, #2 somewhat familiar

Rick Huffman – SC Native Plant Society and Friends of the Reedy River – helped develop the master plan for the Black River and is interested in water quantity and water quality, #3 very familiar

Rebecca Wade – Upstate Forever interested in advocacy and conservation – happy to be on the Council, #2 somewhat familiar

Josie Newton – Friends of the Reedy River – born and raised on Lake Murray, #2 somewhat familiar

Katherine Amidon – Bolton Menk and on the Board of Friends of the Reedy River – is from Maine – and is interested in planned use relating to water quantity and water quality – also hiked parts of the Appalachian Trail, #2 somewhat familiar

Sharon Appell – REWA (discharges into the basin) and is excited to be on the Council – also has backpacked parts of the Appalachian Trail, #2 somewhat familiar

Jay Nicholson – Water Utility (Lexington Joint) and they are partners with West Columbia Water and has been very interested in the process and is a Farm Bureau member, #2 somewhat familiar

Paul Lewis – Holly Tree Country Club and has worked at 6 Golf Clubs over the last 20 years hasn't been to the Master's (yet), #1 not familiar

Brandon Grooms – Colonial Pipeline – wants to help out the Saluda River however he can – is a 2nd generation pipeliner, #1 not familiar

Rett Templeton – Lake Greenwood primary interest but also interested in the Saluda watershed overall, #1 not familiar

Justin McGrady – SC River Guide in the Water Recreational interest sector – also serves on the Broad RBC, #3 very familiar

Kevin Miller – Foothills paddling club also enjoys boating on the river – additional service with Save our Saluda and Friens of the Reedy River and enjoys whitewater canoeing, #1 not familiar

Charlie Timmons – is a minority owner of property in the Middle Saluda

Eddie Owen – Dominion Energy 3.5 years with expertise in hydrology and hydraulics but loves the recreational side as well

Public Comment (John Boyer)

10:30–10:40

There were no public comments.

Overview of River Basin Planning, the Planning Framework, and Examples 10:40–11:20

(Scott Harder and John Boyer)

Scott Harder presented an overview of Saluda River Basin Planning. He stated sectors that use water in South Carolina are energy production, fishing, manufacturing/industry, public water supply, fish and wildlife, river recreation, agriculture, etc. The planning process aims to look at our future and see how we meet water needs while protecting water resources. The reason for planning is due to uncertainty in future droughts and increased water demand caused by population growth, resulting in the need for comprehensive state and river basin planning. Population growth, for example, between 1990-2020, SC population increased from 3.5 to 5.1, and the implication of this will increase future water demands and may increase competition for our water supplies. The recent droughts in SC have stressed the state's water resources. He gave a brief history of South Carolina Water Planning. One primary recommendation from early plans was to develop a regional water plan for each major river basin in the state. He highlighted the five-step process, which is (1) surface water availability assessment, (2) groundwater availability assessment, (3) water demand projections, (4) river basin plans, and (5) new state water plan.

The five-step processes address the challenge of how much water we have. How much water will we need in the future? And how do we meet the future demand? He further described the planning process advisory committee (PPAC) that SCDNR convened in March 2018 to develop a guidance document (planning framework) for developing River Basin Plans for updating the State Water Plan.

He also noted the importance of stakeholders' participation in the planning process. The contents of planning frameworks discussed and features of a River Basin Plan. The role and responsibilities of RBC are highlighted, and various water interest categories are explained. He explained the RBC support mechanism, such as contractors, state and federal agencies to serve as advisors or participate in RBC meetings, outside advisors, and coordinating with other planning bodies.

Scott Harder talked about the Saluda surface water model (SWAM) and water demand projections (developed by Clemson/SCDNR) models used as decision-making tools to assess water availability and management strategies and will support the development of River Basin Plans. He also noted some stakeholder/public participation guidelines in the planning framework. The SCDNR Hydrology website helps to announce events and access to water planning documents -planning framework, technical reports, and RBC meeting materials- agendas, presentations, and recordings. Lastly, the River Basin planning current status and State Water plan schedule include Edisto, Broad, Pee Dee, Saluda, Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah/Salkehatchie, Santee, and Catawba.

Questions: Will Waters of the United States (WOTUS) affect this process?

Ans. We will not talk about the water of the US, but if the RBC wants us to, we can consider it in the planning process. If it's something the council members would like to discuss or talk about. The federal government has jurisdiction to regulate water and does not come into play regarding quantity or what river basin and council planning groups intend to do.

Question: what is the long-term vision of the River Basin Plan?

Ans: Two years approximately to develop the plan and then implement the plan and then update the plan every 5 years. We have staggered term limits to ensure continuity for members 2 years, 3 years, and 4 years. Can reapply after your term is up.

River Basin Planning Phases and Examples:

The process is broken into 4 phases. Phase 1 (These are the main objective of the first 6 months); we learned about the basins water and related resources, got familiar with rules and laws governing water use and modeling tools, reviewed water demand projections, and developed a vision statement and goals. One of the RBC's expectations in phase 1 is identifying additional topics to explore and learn and also selecting a chair and vice chair. Phase 1 examples from Edisto, Broad, and Pee Dee.

Phase 2: We evaluate current and future water availability issues, water supply reservoirs' safe yields, and flow ecology relationships. An example is from the Broad, where we assess future water availability issues (surface water shortage).

In phase 3, we develop and evaluate water management strategies and recommend and prioritize strategies. The focus of this phase is finding solutions, and our expectations are to provide directions to the modeling team on water management strategies to evaluate and select strategies appropriately. Example from the Broad modeling simulations where we looked at water utilities drought management plans and supply side strategies.

Finally phase 4, we develop legislative, policy, technical, and planning process recommendations and prepare the River Basin plan that includes an implementation plan, identifies drought response initiatives, and considers public input. An example from Edisto includes a detailed implementation plan with specific short-term and long-term strategies and actions to address major objectives: technical, policy, legislative, regulatory, and planning process recommendations. The important thing to remember is that River basin planning is an ongoing process; the process is intended to be stakeholder driven which also provides transparency. Another example is the Georgia Regional Water plan; we can learn how they implement some strategies.

Break 11:20-11:30

Review of RBC Bylaws (John Boyer) 11:30–12:00

RBC Bylaws - are rules and guides how we engage with each other and behave. The Bylaws describe an open, interest-based process for developing and implementing the River Basin Plan. The purpose of the Bylaws is to govern the decision-making process, define membership and appointment procedures, describe how the RBC will operate, and the method of election and powers of the chair and vice chair.

Membership and attendance: members must be knowledgeable and experienced in their interest category. Attendance is important, and members are expected to fully participate in each meeting/teleconference. Alternates are encouraged to attend meetings to stay current on proceedings.

Q: What is an excused absence? Having an alternate present. Attendance can be in-person or virtually.

Removal, Resignation, and Reinstatement: member may be removed due to failure to meet attendance requirements, conduct inconsistent with the Bylaws, and felony conviction terms. Resigning members should provide a 30-day notice to the RBC chair. Expelled or resigned members can be reinstated by a super-majority vote and are subject to SCDNR approval.

RBC Term lengths: member will initially serve for 2, 3, or 4 years. Subsequent terms will be for 3 years after their initial term. RBC members may request to serve another 3 years, subject to SCDNR approval, and members may not serve more than 3 consecutive terms.

Code of Conduct: members and alternates are expected to be prepared and ready to contribute to all meetings, operate in good faith, respect the interest and opinions of others, avoid conflicts of interest, avoid seeking to gain advantage through political means, agree to not negotiate through the media, and avoid finger pointing and assigning blame.

RBC Chair and Vice Chair: the responsibility of the Chair is to serve as executive and spokesperson, coordinate with the planning team to set schedules, agendas, and special meetings, monitor progress, and make final appointments to subcommittees. The Vice-Chair will assist the Chair with his/her duties and assume the chair's responsibilities when the chair is unable to do so. The RBC members will make the Chair and Vice Chair nominations.

Question: when would the Saluda RBC like to select the chair and vice chair?

The chair and vice chair will serve for the rest of the first calendar year 2023 and the following two calendar years (2024-2025), and subsequent chairs and vice chairs will serve for 2 calendar years.

Meetings: Regular meetings are those designated for preparing River Basin plans. A member can request closed meetings to discuss a sensitive topic, approval by a majority vote, and special meetings to address unforeseen and time-sensitive circumstances. It is called by the chair or by 25 percent of the members.

Decision-making: RBCs will make most decisions by consensus through interest-based negotiations. Building a consensus may require preparing alternative solutions, assessing the impacts of alternatives, and compromising.

Decision making -River Basin Plan Approval: 2 steps are involved. Step 1 is testing for a consensus on the draft plan. Once the draft is prepared, you can review it, comment on it, and provide suggestions,

and you will ask each member to endorse it on a 5-point scale (different levels of endorsements). Step 2 for the final plan, each RBC member will indicate their support or disagreement. By supporting the final plan, each member acknowledges their concurrence with the plan and commitment to supporting the implementation of the plan.

Subcommittee: short- and long-term subcommittees may be formed to address specific issues, geographic areas, or water sources. The subcommittee will elect its own chair and vice chair, and members are not subject to regular meeting requirements.

Interbasin River Councils (IRCs) may be established to facilitate collaboration among neighboring river basins and help resolve conflicts.

Term Lengths:

Katherine Amidon – 4, Sharon Appell – 4, Jeff Boss – 3, Ed Bruce – 2, David Coggins – 4, Jason Davis – 2, Mark Farris – 2, Broandon Grooms – 4, Robert Hanley – 2, Rick Huffman – 4, Patrick Jackson – 2, David Lawrence – 2, Joel Ledbetter – 2, Paul Lewis – 3, Justin McGrady – 3, Kevin Miller – 4, Jim Moore – 4, Larry Nates – 3, Josie Newton – 3, Jay Nicholson – 3, Devin Orr – 2, Eddie Owen – 3, KC Price – 4, Melanie Ruhlman – 2, Thompson Smith – 3, Rett Templeton – 2, Charlie Timmons – 3, Mike Waddell – 3, and Rebecca Wade – 4.

When to elect the Chair and Vice Chair? Wait until the 3rd or 4th meeting or so.

Question: Regarding voting and super majority, does the Bylaws require two-thirds of the member present or remotely?

Ans: super-majority could be online or in person; as long as we have a quorum, we can vote and decide.

Basin Priorities - Breakout Group Discussion and Report-out over Lunch 12:00–1:40

The discussion groups aim to help us in the next couple of meetings when we develop our vision and goals statement. We intend to highlight what we want and what outcome we want to achieve.

Group 1 – BREAKOUT GROUP 1: Mark Farris elected as spokesman

1. What do you want to preserve, protect, or enhance?

- a. Would like to see regulations at a minimum but at the same time don't want to turn river into cesspool. History with family. Understand ReWa is upstream. Don't put something on me that you wouldn't put on yourself
- b. Education is important. Kids understand natural resource, taught about environment. And adults
 - i. Nothing too aggressive that would jeopardize education opportunities
- c. Comprehensive, science-based approach to accommodate all stakeholders now and in future
 - i. Ag interest, some utilities
- d. Water supply and future water supply. Our growth is not restricted, maintaining our existing permits.
- e. Not just about the river itself. Don't live on river but in basin. Has farms on tributaries in the basin. Want not many restrictions, so farm is not restricted. Want a good healthy water flow for all uses. How do we balance?
 - i. Avoid low flow and scarcity but need a balance. Greenville water can't use it all!
- f. Mike Waddell
 - i. Come up with a plan that is equitable under drought conditions, based on science. Equitable plan to allocate under those conditions.
- g. Mark Farris
 - i. Ensure that low flow conditions will not jeopardize intake valves for nuclear plants, etc.
 - ii. Understanding of inter-basin transfers
- h. Family has had property here for 100 years, has 14 grandchildren who will need to share these water resources. Farm for a living...must be balanced with the other uses
 - i. Sediment deposition is a problem, coming from upstream. Be careful things downstream are not destroyed/harmed

- i. Residency and industry has taken away a lot of the agriculture in this basin. Watering cows doesn't take that much water
2. What are the outcomes you want to encourage?
 - a. Just needs a good water management plan that is scientifically based and can project accurately into the future
 - b. Supply for the projected growth. Cannot stop growth
 - c. Look for other water sources to help?
 - d. Industry and what is already here can't leave. Need an answer to use what we have, or find more
 3. What types of actions do you want to promote?
 - a. Conservation of homeowners/industry usage will help ReWa manage their end of the supply, if water sources are not added
 - b. Look at present conditions, find how many water withdrawals and where, know capacity we have in drought. No one will care in normal conditions.
 - c. How does inter-basin transfer apply?
 - d. Help smaller water systems that will be more stressed under drought conditions
 - e. Find out how to allocate water during a drought
 4. How do you want the basin to be managed?
 - a. Sewage is able to return 70% back to the water supply. Should count ReWa's discharge into these tributaries as water supply
 - b. What rebound do we get when it rains?
 - c. What gages do we have on the river, to track how it responds to rainfall?
 - d. Using science to discover the most efficient management strategies

Other notes (CDM team): Group 1

- 1) Reduce impact downstream, awareness and education, protecting environment associated with river. Concern about type of regulations that may be considered want to minimize regulation.
Low flow protocol
- 2) Good water management that is science based and sustainable. Coordination with other users within basin
- 3) Inventory of withdrawals, conservation, interbasin transfers
- 4) Supply to be adequate in drought situation, preserving capacity for retention in reservoirs, decisions being made based on science

Group 2 –

1 – Preserve – Protect and enhance – protect tributaries and headwaters – riparian buffers – drinking water supply – support growth community – recreational opportunities

2 – Green infrastructure – common agreed on goals for all users/stakeholders – water conservation planning/management – actionable items/recommendations and not another library book that stays on the shelf

3 – equitable – resilient infrastructure – conservation – actionable item implementation – funding source – prioritize – public education

4 – well – attentive and equitable to all users – data driven/based on the science – collaboratively/stakeholder involvement

Other notes (CDM team): Group 2

Group 2:

- 1) Tributaries and headwaters, riparian buffers, existing users and drinking water supply, recreational opportunities, supporting growth
- 2) Common goals for all stakeholders for conservation, planning, management; actionable plan that is implemented.
- 3) Actions that are equitable among users, programs and policies that support resilient infrastructure, implementation, funding/realistic measures, public education

4) Well. Actionable items, equitable plan, data-driven and science based, collaborative

Group 3 – Breakouts

Saluda River Basin Priorities

1. What do you want to preserve, protect, or enhance?

a. Preserve

i. Buffers

ii. River flow during drought

b. Protect

i. Striper – project the spawning – flow coming out of the Saluda every spring has the highest impact in the success. Below Lake Murry – last 9 miles of the Saluda river – everything above it is coming down into this stretch

1. Data need to better understand the reproductive rate and flow needed – does it exist or is this a gap?*

2. Spawn below 77 bridge

3. Immediately below two waste water treatment plants

4. Low flow conditions trigger taste and odor – bad quality can result due to low quantity – algae bloom issue in the lower board summer 2022. – influence from the broad – stratifying and de-stratifying of Lake Murry.

ii. Wetlands and floodplain protection for storage

iii. Flow for water supply for drinking water, recreation, and power – Lake Greenwood more at the bottom

- c. Enhance
 - i. Buffer Policy
 - ii. Understanding of low flow conditions -triggers for alarms?
Who has the control – Data need/gap
 - 1. There is no trigger for surface water?
- 2. What are the outcomes you want to encourage?
 - i. enhancement of buffers – reduce erosion
 - ii. land use policy - Stormwater concerns due to development.
- b. Fair distributions of withdrawals by user – need a process – consistent governance – allowing permits to grow – how do we define reasonable use
- c. Pipeline protection – all types of utilities
- 3. What type of actions do you want to promote?
 - a. Stress points on pipes that cross the water bodies (rivers, creeks, streams)
 - i. USGS gauges – need more accurate data – need more monitoring points – more balance throughout the basin – Would like to view a map of the existing.
 - ii. Maintain unique ecological resources in a sustainable way
 - 1. Spawning areas
 - 2. Cultural areas
 - 3. Prime farmland
 - 4. Macro habitat
 - iii. User education – identify top priorities for education

4. How do you want the basin to be managed?

- a. Comprehensive view – continue the basin council? – continue this – implementation – communication strategy to present the information
- b. Equitable allocation
- c. FERC approvals need to be taken into account
- d. Is it good for me, is it good for the whole, is it good for the customer

Other notes (CDM team): Group 3

Group 3:

- 1) Preserve buffers and drought flows, protect flows for striper population, wetlands floodplains for storage, flow for recreation and power, enhance buffer policies, understand low flow policies, land use policies, fair distribution of withdraws for users, pipeline
- 2) Pipes (better data), information on gauges,
- 3) Unique ecological resources in a sustainable way. User education identify top priorities
- 4) Implementation of basin plan; inform policy through process; equitable allocation

Group 4 –

1 – 3 dams – Northbrook – river dams – flow fluctuations and Surface water modeling – lowflows and health of the river

2 – better managed flows for users – more open info on how management takes place – water quantity no quality

3 – advanced technology for for quality – access to information within the river – quantitative action

4 – first find common ground – equity among users – what limits are on the river

Other notes (CDM team): Group 4

Online group:

- 1) Modeling of reservoir systems, surface modeling overall; river
- 2) Encourage – better management of flows for end users, more open flow of information (group and public)
- 3) Advanced technologies with water quality modeling, access to information for end users, quantitative actions
- 4) Equity for everyone; priority list of users

4. Future RBC Meetings Discussion (John Boyer) 1:40–1:50

Meetings will typically be 4 hours. We will strive to schedule in-person meetings and encourage RBC members to attend in person to promote collaboration, build consensus and facilitate decision-making.

Virtual attendance by RBC is discouraged but will be an option for special circumstances.

Discussion: RBC meeting time, duration, date, and location preferences: The regular meeting time preference is from 10 AM to 2:00 PM on the third Wednesday of each month.

5. Meeting Conclusion 1:50–2:00

Saluda RBC next meeting in April 19, 2023 from 10 AM – 2 PM at The Ridge at Laurens. Laurens County Water Plant idea for Field Trip. Question regarding an online “parking lot” for ideas (google doc or something similar). Headshots of each member were taken to match them with their names for easy identification.

Minutes: Iffy Ogbekene and Tom Walker

Approved: 4/19/23

RBC Chat:

09:58:58 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

waiting on folks to get situated, should start at 10 or shortly after

10:46:11 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

any public comments

10:46:27 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

agency comments?

11:26:15 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

if anyone online would like to be added to the Saluda distribution list (if you aren't already) please send me an e-mail and I can add you - tcwalke@clemson.edu

11:39:53 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

11 minute break

12:13:08 From Kevin Miller to Everyone:

Can someone draw for me?

12:15:11 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

we will

12:16:01 From Kevin Miller to Everyone:

haha

12:17:40 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

lunch until 12:40 and then we'll do online breakout for online rbc members. rbc members be back by 12:40

12:18:23 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

12:37ish is 20 minutes and john will reconvene the group

12:41:13 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

online rbc members, once we begin breakouts, you will receive a prompt to join a breakout room. kevin and eddie you will be with grace. if Charlie rejoins i will send him in

12:42:03 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

for everyone else. i will pause the meeting for the breakouts and then record the breakout talking points when we reconvene

12:42:30 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

breakouts will be about 30-40 minutes before we reconvene

13:17:50 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

we will reconvene here in a minute

13:32:46 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

eddie, can you e-mail me your responses for the minutes please? when you get a chance

13:38:24 From Kevin Miller to Everyone:

I'm okay with Laurens as the regular meeting place.

13:38:35 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

thank you kevin

13:50:22 From Thomas Walker to Everyone:

meeting adjourned. thank you