**Middle Chattahoochee Forests & Water Supply**

**Forum Planning Conference Call Notes**

*October 31, 2017*

**Attending:** William Kent, Columbus Water Works; Billy Turner, Troy University Center for Water Resources; Scott Thackston, Georgia Forestry Commission; Chase Cook, SFI Implementation Committee; Kitty Weisman, SE Partnership for Forests & Water; Michael Gillis, Georgia Environmental Protection Division; Dawson Ingram & Warren Wagner, Georgia Power; Jamen Blair, Smiths Water and Sewer; Ron Durham, Lake Harding Association; Veronica Craw, Georgia EPD; Jason Rountree, Forest Investment Associates; Tracie Hadaway, Troup County Planning; LuAnn Craighton, The Nature Conservancy; Henry Jackson, Chattahoochee River Warden; Chris Manganiello and Jason Ulseth, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper; Mark Masters, GA Water Planning & Policy Center; Susan Wilde & Todd Rasmussen, UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources; Christine McKay & Bryan Hummel, US EPA Region 4; Russ Conser, Standard Soil; Daniel McInnis, US Forest Service Southern Region

**AGENDA**

1. ***Follow-Up Actions From This Meeting/Call***

* Kitty will send map to everyone map again after the call
* Kitty will send everyone the Savannah report
* William will send Kitty his USGS contact
* LuAnn will send contact to Kitty for River Valley Regional Commission
* Traci will send contact to Kitty for Lee Russell Regional Commission
* Laurie Fowler at UGA is back from sabbatical next semester – Billy will send Kitty contact info.
* Next steps – create a sub-workgroup to focus on developing a GIS analysis for Middle Chattahoochee similar to Savannah River study that SC TNC conducted. include Daniel McInnis

1. ***Discussion***
   * The GA Forestry Commission’s Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant is a federal grant and requires 50:50 match – cash or in-kind. Kitty and Scott found out after the meeting that the US Forest Service will count GFC’s existing program work towards the match, so no extra cash match is required for this grant. The funds need to be used by the end of 2019.
   * We discussed how we would like to spend the $50,000 LSR grant in the Middle Chattahoochee. Some ideas include: hire a watershed coordinator for two years; conduct a GIS prioritization study like SC TNC did for the Savannah watershed;
   * William Kent said that Columbus Water Works is currently working on #4 and #5 of the Middle Chattahoochee Forum report follow up list, basically trying to establish a baseline for the watershed: a study from west point to Euphalla Dam on nutrient loads and harmful algal blooms; updating the source water protection/assessment plan (their delineated area is from Lake Oliver north), updating GIS and land use maps to identify priority areas for source water protection.
   * We discussed the geographic area we are interested in for the Middle Chattahoochee – the source watershed (as defined by Columbus Water Works’ source water assessment) or the larger Middle Chattahoochee Basin.
   * Billy Turner – ACF (Apalachicola/Chattahoochee/Flint) basin has lots of studies; this section of the watershed is a “stepchild” in all the ACF work; the state has a limited sampling program; papermills do some assessments as part of their permit; there is 25 years’ worth of data; the old Columbus Water Works Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) did a comprehensive assessment plus combined sewer control in early 2000’s (this is the plan that is now being updated according to William Kent). There is also data from the Army Corps of Engineers.
   * Warren – says there is also data on water quality and hydrilla
   * Recreational uses of the watershed include fishing, whitewater, boating, parks, camping facilities
   * We discussed “What is the best use of the $50,000 LSR grant?”
   * Traci – we really need hard data on how land use changes might impact water quality – this would help with land use planning
   * Warren – have to know where we are – baseline – before we can move forward. We all need to be on the same page. Maybe the first step is to conduct a GIS exercise to paint a picture of the watershed.
   * William – we need to know where we are at first to identify priorities; Columbus Water Works is calibrating several models for ammonia and nutrients. Maybe we need to work on the economic case like Savannah has.
   * Jason – we need to understand where there is a threat of changing from forest to non-forest; we also need to work with landowners to enhance their lands to benefit water quality.
   * Chris (CRK0 – It would be really useful to have a document pulling together existing data similar to Savannah River TNC document – CRK supports this type of analysis and believes it would be a good use of the LSR grant.
   * Susan – the UGA School of Forestry and Natural Resources and the River Basin Center have grad students and professors who can conduct that type of GIS analysis and evaluation. This could be a good way to get the work done. For free and also with some additional funding if needed. They can include any GIS or data or models that are available for both Georgia and Alabama.
   * Scott – he was in a meeting dealing with nutrients in Lake Oconee and Lake Sinclair – EPD has models showing how land uses contribute to water quality. Liz Booth at EPA would be a good data contact too. Lots of data on slopes, soil types, nutrients, etc.
   * Warren – Victoria Adams at EPD also engaged in modeling. Stream sampling basis. Good model to look at. Watershed protection groups doing sampling.
   * LuAnn – if UGA work is an option, there is collaboration among departments of UGA. There used to be a lab (Dr. Rebecca Moore) that did a study for Georgia Forestry Association on the economic non-forestry benefits of forest lands. We might want to look into that study.
   * Scott – to conduct an analysis similar to the Savannah study, we should look at the criteria they used for data and analysis, use their template. Kitty suggested working with Eric Krueger, the primary author of the Savannah report, to understand how to structure the analysis.
   * Billy – asked if we have any similar data on Alabama side? How can we make sure we are comparing data appropriately state to state? Need to resolve this. He’s worked with some folks on data evaluation and the data ended up being faulty.
   * Susan said she is working with Matt Waters at Auburn University and can find out about Alabama data.
   * Kitty – Maybe we can pull together a small group to look at how to ensure best data is used for the evaluation – to include Susan, Matt, Eric Kreuger, LuAnn, etc.
   * Susan – there are good GIS layers available and satellite information is very comprehensive. Land analysis won’t be that difficult. Water data is problematic – she will send contact information for GIS experts at Warnell.
   * Billy – Mark Masters has info on Georgia agricultural lands. There may be some similar data on the Alabama side – check University of Alabama at Huntsville (Flint) – Cameron Handyside, who put in a grant request to NOAA focused on the ACF.
   * Traci – we also need a good population forecast – Billy and William say this forecast is in Middle Chattahoochee Water Plan.
   * Billy – having our Middle Chattahoochee partnership can help address issues down the road that are often made more difficult because of legal and political issues. We need to work on issues together in a way that can help resolve specific problems.
   * Jason – the analysis could spatially evaluate and determine priority areas for stewardship and protection in the Middle Chattahoochee.
   * Lake Harding guy – supports study
   * CRW guy – would love to support; has data
   * Jamen – in favor of anything that will bring awareness about water quality; land uses; primary issues are algae blooms; nutrient concerns; turbidity not an issue.
   * Christine – loves idea of a study similar to what savannah did. Any chance to get local governments involved. Quality of life for these communities will be affected by future water quality and land use.
   * Lane County needs to be approached and included/involved – Troupe County is Traci Hadaway.
   * William – how broad can this study be and be viable? The study should focus on uses of the basin like drinking water. West Point – Lagrange takes its drinking water from an arm of the Middle Chattahoochee and they have significant problems with harmful algae blooms. We really need to relate the study to current uses of the “system.” The old source water assessment plan from 2000 didn’t focus on other uses and benefits from the watershed, so we should include these. Also, we need to look at how land and water uses affect the watershed. The Georgia Water Plan (and Middle Chatthoochee Water Plan) has a lot of this information.
   * Susan – the study can definitely include economic uses and benefits – ecosystem services.
   * Todd – Puneet is an economist at UGA School of Forestry and Natural Resources. They have other professors who are working on these types of studies too.
   * Christine – can we also include stormwater management, stormwater prevention benefits?
   * Scott – Jeffery Dorffman at UGA has studied the pros and cons of forest vs. development. Maybe use that information too?
   * Billy Turner – Troy University has Alabama modeling and data – they are overrun with watershed modeling – National Water Center at University of Alabama. Worth looking into. Water quantity data too. Collaborate with Auburn and Univ. of Alabama.
2. Pulp and Paper industry contacts for West Rock and Georgia Pacific – Chase said SFI implementation committee includes these reps and he’s updated them.
3. Traci – also contact and include Lee Russell Regional Commission; Alabama Counties – don’t have home rule.