




Vision and Goals Technical Memorandum

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water
Planning Council



Banks Lake, Lanier County

Supplemental Material
Initial Recommended Suwannee-Satilla
Regional Water Plan

May 2011



CDM

*Banks Lake, Lanier County
photo courtesy of the Georgia
Department of Industry,
Trade & Tourism*

1.0 Introduction

The central purpose of Georgia's State Water Planning process is to "guide Georgia in managing water resources in a sustainable manner to support the state's economy, to protect public health and natural systems, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens". The Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council (Suwannee-Satilla Council) was established to help accomplish this at the regional level. This Technical Memorandum summarizes the process used by the Suwannee-Satilla Council to fulfill this purpose.

The Suwannee-Satilla Council first considered how water is used and managed in the region. The Council then considered the vision and goals that should be developed for water resource management in the region. To accomplish this Council found it useful to describe the economic, population, environmental and water use conditions that are desired for the region over the next 40 years. This was accomplished through a series of discussions at several initial Council meetings.

The discussions of vision and goals began at the March 2009 kickoff meeting of the Statewide Water Planning effort. Council Members completed the "Water 35" exercise. This exercise involved Council members identifying critical factors that should be addressed and evaluated during the regional water planning process.

Each Council member identified his/her 5 most important factors and then discussed these factors with other Council members. The factors were scored based on their discussions to help organize the discussion points. The results of the exercise were summarized and provided to Council at their first meeting.

2.0 Suwannee-Satilla RWPC "Water 35" Results

- Protect water resources for region, state and adjoining states.
- Water conservation and quality.
- Access to safe, clean and renewable water source.
- Finite water supply and population growth.
- Workable plan that meets goals of various water management strategies.
- Meet key water demands in a sustainable way.
- Protect quality of life and quality and quantity of water supply for all Georgians.



Suwannee-Satilla Council Boundary

- Sufficient clean water supply and distribution back to rivers.
- Make decisions based on sound science.
- Sustain our water supplies for today and future generations, protect economic/environmental resources, and respect cultural history and private property interests.
- Conserve water for future generations.
- Keep water clean and safe for personal and agricultural use while protecting our aquifer.
- Meet needs of state water quality.
- Ensure water supply is not taken by regional, state, or federal interests.
- Protection and management of current water supplies.
- Respect private property while balancing effects on our neighbors.
- State and regional accountability, accessibility and availability and retain control of our own future.

The outcome of the “Water 35” exercise was built upon during the next Council Meeting [05/06/2009] and Council Members were asked to identify Trends, Forces, and Factors that are or will be affecting water use and management in the Suwannee-Satilla region over the next 40 years. The following Trends, Forces, and Factors were identified by the Council.

3.0 Trends, Forces, and Factors Results

- Healthy forests are important to maintain water quality and develop/sustain the economic base in the basin.
- Continued improvement in technology in measuring water use and quality is important for managing surface water and ground water resources.
- Managing resources to protect native species is important (reduce invasive species).
- Efficient water use for power and domestic purposes is important for long-term sustainability.
- Growth and population increases have impacted resources. Ensuring wise growth that protects resources is important.
- Abundance of ground water resources in basin provides availability for industrial growth in the basin as long as it's done in a responsible way.
- Forestry and agriculture are important to economy.

- Efficient use and management of ground water important to ensure an ample supply for generations.
- More farmers are moving from surface water to ground water as a source of supply.
- Need to have more /adequate information on water use, need to cooperate and share data on water use to be able to effectively manage water resources.
- Retention of stormwater via land management practices can keep surface water in the region available for use.
- Property rights are important.
- How do you sell property to developers with water use restrictions? How do you effectively manage economic development with restricted water sources?
- How can we manage surface and ground water in a way that sustains surface water resources?
- Treated wastewater could provide agricultural irrigation water.
- Local decisions on water usage are important so that problem doesn't go into the hands of Federal government.
- Water transfers out of basin could impact future sustainability of basin.

4.0 Establishment of Vision and Goals

The work on the development of the regional vision task continued through the next Council Meeting [06/24/2009]. Additional background information was provided to Council on how regional vision and goals can be utilized to guide the selection of the water resource management practices. . It was emphasized that certain management practices, if implemented, can either help advance the goals objectives, or conversely might impair attainment of the vision and goals.

It was also pointed out that eventually the Suwannee-Satilla Council will need to develop a decision process for selecting water management practices. The identification and adoption of a regional vision and goals and objectives are a vital part of developing that decision making process. Please see the Council's "Management Practices Selection Process Technical Memorandum" for more information on how this was accomplished.

The Suwannee-Satilla Council worked on refining the information into a concise vision statement and a series of goals that reflected the ideas that had been discussed over the Council meetings. The Council focused on summarizing the information identified within the context of the following questions.

What do you want your rivers, lakes, and groundwater to do for you and the citizens in your planning region?

Consideration was given to the following factors

- Supporting the region's and state's economy
- Protecting public health and natural systems
- Enhancing the quality of life for all citizens

What types of resources/needs do you want to protect?

What do you want to achieve with your water resources?

The Council drafted an initial vision statement and identified action-oriented goals to support the vision. Revisions were made to the vision and goals based on discussion and comments at the Council Meetings. The full Council unanimously adopted the vision and goals at their September and November 2009 meetings.

The Suwannee-Satilla Council revisited the vision statement over the course of the planning process to ensure that all elements of the regional water plan were consistent with and complementary to the region needs, and to consider the information that became available during the water planning process. The following vision statement for the region was adopted by the Council at the September 23, 2009 meeting.

4.1 Vision Statement – September 23, 2009

The vision of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Council is to manage water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia's regulated riparian and regulated reasonable use laws to support the state's and region's economy, to protect public health and natural resources, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens; while preserving the private property rights of Georgia's landowners, and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities.

The Suwannee-Satilla Council identified the following Goals for the region. These Goals were adopted by Council at the November 11, 2009 meeting. The Council revisited these Goals over the planning process but did not identify any necessary revisions to the goals. It is important to note that the goals are not presented in order of priority.

4.2 Goals – November 11, 2009

- Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, industrial water needs, and agricultural water needs including all agricultural sectors (this includes the agro forestry economy of the region).
- Manage ground and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.
- Manage the region's and state's water resources in a manner that preserves and protects private property rights.

- Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human needs, while protecting environmental resources.
- Identify opportunities to optimize existing and future supplies, and water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Promote efficient use and management of surface and groundwater resources to allow for sufficient supplies for current and future generations.
- Protect and manage surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long-term water supplies for the region.
- Protect, maintain, and where appropriate and practicable, identify opportunities to enhance water quality and river base flows.
- Protect and maintain regional water-dependent recreational opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to manage stormwater to improve water quantity and quality.
- Identify and implement cost effective water management strategies.
- Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource service to all citizens of the region.
- Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.