

**Saluda River Basin Council Meeting Minutes**  
**March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**RBC Members Present:** Larry Nates, Eddie Owen, KC Price, Katherine Amidon, Micheal Waddell, Tate Davis, Rick Huffman, Robert Hanley, Josie Newton, Kaleigh Sims, Rebecca Wade, Kevin Miller, Thompson Smith, Charlie Timmons, David Coggins, Jeff Boss, Phil Fragapane, Brandon Grooms, Melanie Ruhlman, & Jay Nicholson

**RBC Members Absent:** Rett Templeton (Julie Davis, alternate, present), Jason Davis, Patrick Jackson, Devin Orr, & Paul Lewis

**Planning Team Present:** John Boyer, Tom Walker, Hannah Hartley, Scott Harder, Andy Wachob, Joe Koon, Leigh Anne Monroe, & Kirk Westphal

**Total Present:** 32

K.C. Price, Chair, called the March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting to order at 10:03 AM. The Saluda RBC's March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting objectives included reviewing drafts of the River Basin Plan, Executive Summary, and 2-page Summary Sheet, as well as planning for the public meeting.

K.C. Price called for approval of the meeting agenda. Katherine Amidon – 1<sup>st</sup> made a motion to approve the meeting agenda with Michael Waddell – 2<sup>nd</sup>, which was approved unanimously. There was a motion to approve the February 19th meeting minutes and summary. Tate Davis – 1<sup>st</sup> – made a motion which was seconded by Eddie Owen – 2<sup>nd</sup>. Members unanimously approved the last meeting minutes and summary.

Announcement and WaterSC Update: On March 5<sup>th</sup>, a Drought Tabletop exercise was hosted by Dr. Hope Mizzell from DNR. The meeting was all about drought and how we can manage drought, including response mechanisms. This was a follow-up exercise following two previous drought tabletop exercises in 2017 and 2019.

C: It was good, we got into the weeds. We're more at-risk than we realize. Wildfire issues addressed at the EOC. During the meeting,

Q: Have you considered any additional modifications to route-related recommendations that you have included in our plan?

A: No, I shared some aspects of our plan, and communication will be key to these events. So, in one of the scenarios, they had an extreme level of drought, where they threw a nuance, and Lake Greenwood was having a horrible algal bloom. This situation will require a heightened level of public awareness.

WaterSC Working Meeting:

Next meeting is March 20<sup>th</sup>

April 8, 9, 10 Listening Sessions in Statewide Locations.

Also, Melanie will be recognized at the Forever Green event by Upstate Forever on April 22 as the 2025 Clean Water Champion for our state.

Public and Agency Comment: no comment.

Katherine started discussing her 30-minute presentation at the SCEC with a special invitation from Robert Osborne. Having been with the members for the last two years, she made a toast to celebrate everybody for being part of this process and show gratitude to everyone. Cheers to water with our successful journey so far.

### **Draft Plan Review and Opportunity for Final RBC Comments:**

John Boyer anchored this session by discussing the final comments schedule and that emails were sent out with a number of chapters 1, 7,9 and 10. We will take comments on those draft chapters until Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **Final Review Schedule:**

- Accepting final chapter comments until Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup>
- Complete Draft River Basin Plan available by Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup>
- Test of Consensus at the April 16<sup>th</sup> RBC meeting

**Recommendation Approved by RBC consensus:**

We made some recommendations that we debated over the span of 2 or 3 meetings where we had multiple recommendations, and we then consolidated them into one. This is Rick's Proposed Additional Recommendation:

**The RBC strongly recommends counties and municipalities prioritize and incentivize native tree canopy protection and permanent vegetative cover within headwater streams and along riparian areas.** Trees and tree canopies provide ecosystem services for watersheds by protecting headwater streams, slowing evapotranspiration, cooling water, slowing runoff, and directly affecting surface drinking water supply. Trees are the cornerstone of ecosystem services for watersheds.

A vote was taken- 15 voted for, and 5 opposed.

Discussion:

C: Provided links and abstracts about the value of trees particularly pertaining to surface water. Protect the headwaters for water quantity. Follow links and read the abstracts and data. Our area most needs tree canopy cover.

C: Agree, value of trees and forests. Applying conservation ag practices. Incentives in place for people to keep land in permanent cover. Greenville county stormwater fees could be used to protect covered areas. Is it more about quality or quantity? Add in incentivization measures for permanent vegetative cover.

C: More emphasis on grasslands and keep in natural state.

C: Permanent veg cover – grasses and other veg holds land together. Provide cover and stability to hold things together.

C: This phase is quantity and not quality. Quality is in the next phase of the plan.

C: Documented research – it does affect storage which is quantity. Both quantity and quality.

C: 80% is quality. Direct responsibility to keep it on quantity.

C: Data says everything about quantity in these papers.

C: Mostly quality.

C: Watershed is almost (the rest) of the basin. If we can endorse ability to keep water flowing. Protected for quality but also quantity. How the trees are for quantity? If we cut down trees we'd have more quantity.

C: 3 steps – can live with and some I can't.

C: 25 feet near intake there is an island with silt/sediment. Lake won't exist anymore.

Q: Why have native?

A: Natives support deeper water root system and canopy. What's the alternative? Bradford pear trees. Natives provide ecosystem services.

C: Ecosystem steps into quality.

C: Does affect quantity.

C: WaterSC – RBCS are going to get scraped off by WaterSC and legislative committee.

C: I do shoreline inspections – hundreds of miles. No trees = shoreline erosion. Trees impact water quality and water quantity. With no trees – erosion. Trees with root system will stabilize banks.

C: More structured stability with trees. FERC requires us to do that and pay for it.

Water resource – protect it. Can't take a scalpel and only focus on water quantity and not quality.

Tree cover helps water quantity. Absorbs the rain into the ground which supports baseflow.

C: What is in bold is one thing. Unbolded to focus on quantity issue better. Justification written more quantity-driven.

C: Forests use more water than ag does. Based on studies, hardwood forests use more than ag. Cut down the trees.

C: Crop lands up here we don't get that baseflow component. Paper on economic drivers for forestry canopy.

C: I have observed – study – see when the trees cut in drinking the water.

C: I can live with it but I don't support it.

C: Look forward to addressing quality at some point.

C: We are all about quality. Doing 319s all up and down. I can live with it but it should be quantity only.

C: Not that black and white in the framework.

C: Who else manages riparian rights? How hard is it to enforce it? FERC/USACE issues.

C: Laurens Co is talking about zoning. RBC in order to emphasize quantity in our county should look at ways to enact to improve quantity. How a watershed should be managed.

C: Trying to get quality out of me. Worry about someone who is more radical – throwing out parts of the plan.

C: I'm for incentivizing but not taking away private landowner rights.

C: Greenville Co buffer applies to new developments.

C: Prioritize or incentivize?

C: Replace both with consider.

C: Scared Lexington Co might weaponize it.

C: Upgrading/expanding withdrawal. 35 mgd to 42 mgd and FERC 48 mgd to 72 mgd. Surface water withdrawal of FERC – now FERC is ahead of withdrawal. Lake Murray peak 23-24 mgd. Ours peak over 12 mgd.

C: FERC approval – West Columbia increased to 42 mgd. DES needs to weigh in.

C: New permit or modify the permit.

C: Modification request from them unsure. West Columbia water treatment plant.

C: Capacity of Murray is a lot. Won't affect runs.

C: Maybe 1/10 of cfs – but it is a big difference.

C: In the Executive Summary, had to separate quantity from quality. People need to know it is difficult to separate the two.

C: Hardest discussion in this group.

Q: Has every chapter been revised?

A: Yes

### **Draft Executive Summary Review and Opportunity for Final RBC Comments:**

We got the most comments from Katherine and KC on the executive summary. We will accept any other comments on the executive summary until next Friday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of March.

C: Everyone reviewed it, still need time to send comments?

C: Too long

C: I'm fine as is.

Q: When do we get 2-pager?

A: Will review it in a sec

C: Need more photos – any ag photos?

### **Draft 2-Page Summary Sheet Review and Discussion:**

The 2-page summary sheet contained our majority consensus (vote), which included key recommendations, regulatory, legislative and policy recommendations, planning process

recommendations. I will send out this updated version of the 2-page summary sheet with regard to Katherine's comments. Additional comments will also be accepted to capture the important things we do until the 28<sup>th</sup> of March.

C: My comments added text so trying to remove unneeded words.

C: Planning process recommendation – concerned we use interbasin river basin council. People will think of interbasin transfer. Need something else as interbasin is polarizing.

C: It is well-defined in the framework and hesitant to change it.

C: Is it a legal thing?

C: Just in the framework.

C: Fine when it forms – don't want it in the ES or 2-pager. Upstate Multi-basin Council.

C: Water utilities should consider regionalization opportunities.

C: I'll go back and look at how its determined. Smaller utilities hear regionalization and think they will get swallowed up. "Regionalization" is a tricky word in our industry.

C: Regionalization – partnership and collaboration can take the place of regionalization.

C: Change it in Ch 9?

C: Change to "within watersheds" approved by consensus

C: Key findings – overallocation seems to be one of the most important finding likely would not be? If Greenville, and other utilities, disaster situation.

C: Is that strong enough? May vs likely.

C: It may but it has never happened.

C: May – using past hydrology so nothing stronger than may suggest stronger wording.

C: Overallocation – while unlikely it is allowable.

C: "Under state law".

C: Can this be turned around quickly for the comments. Everything by 3/28 comments,

C: Criteria to change for different audiences?

C: RBC needs to approve.

### **Public Meeting Presentation Review and Discussion:**

We did 2 public meetings, one to receive comments and present on the draft and then the second one for the Broad meetings. (we had one in Spartanburg and the second one in Columbia).

However, we will have our first public meeting in Greenville and decide whether to have the second one in Columbia.

C: Greenville for public meeting #1 in the Greenville Water Community room?

C: Thoughts on 1 vs 2?

Q: How well attended was the previous public meeting between Columbia and Spartanburg?

A: The one in Columbia was much better; it had about 30 interested stakeholders at the meeting. A significant amount of people went for the informative kickoff meetings than the final plan meetings.

C: Might consider recording and not doing it live.

C: We have an opportunity to learn from previous meeting experiences and come up with different approaches in the form of advertising or giveaways (do something fun) to attract more stakeholders/people in our next public meetings.

C: Bolton and Menk can donate something.

C: Advertising and incentivize attendance. Get the word out to our constituents.

C: ReWa can open the innovation campus as a backup.

Q: When does the path open?

A: May 3<sup>rd</sup> – nature trail

C: Slides of the timeline is easy for people to grasp added WaterSC timeline can add.

Q: Are a lot of questions asked during the session?

A: Usually hold questions until the end.

Q: What day of the week?

A: Tuesdays and Thursdays – Tuesdays may be best.

C: Implementation – too light – this meeting is to encourage that it isn't static document. Actions that RBC is recommending and is seeking public participation. Encourage to get involved during implementation.

C: What the state has gained with 5,000 volunteer hours.

C: Add reached consensus info

The public meeting will not be advertised until after our next meeting because we want to make sure we get a vote on the plan, and then we release the plan after our next meeting.

#### Public Meeting Agenda and Speaking Roles:

- Welcome and Introduction: K.C, RBC Chair 6:00 – 6:10
- Overview of the Planning Process 6:10 – 6:20
- Draft Saluda River Basin Plan Highlights: 6:20 – 7:20
  - (a) Vision and Goals - Katherine
  - (b) Water Demands – Katherine
  - (c) Surface Water Availability - Phil
  - (d) Streamflow-Ecology Relationships – kevin
  - (e) Water Management Strategies – Jeff and Thompson
  - (f) Public Recommendations – Melanie
  - (g) Implementation Plan - Robert
- Public Comments and Q&A with the RBC- Tom 7:25 – 7:55
- Submitting Comments of the Draft Plan 7:55 – 8:00

Suggestion: the meeting would further encourage people to know that the implementation plans are not a static document but a living document that actions, including recommendations, will be taken by the Basin Council over the next 5 years.

#### Draft Plan Voting Procedure and Upcoming Schedule:

##### Decision making- River Basin Plan Approval Process:

#### **Step 1- Testing for consensus of Draft Plan**

##### Five-Point Rating Scale:

1. Full Endorsement
2. Endorsement, but with minor points of contention
3. Endorsement, but with major points of contention
4. Stand aside with major reservations (requires changes)
5. Withdrawal (member leaves)

#### **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
- Commitment to support implementation of the plan

#### SC Water Planning Calendar:

March 28<sup>th</sup>- last day for RBC Comments

April 7<sup>th</sup>- Draft Plan to RBC

April 8, 9, and 10<sup>th</sup> - WaterSC Listening Session

April 16<sup>th</sup> RBC MTG Vote on Plan

April 18<sup>th</sup> Release Plan to Public

April 21<sup>st</sup> US RBC Public Meeting

#### Public Meeting Options- Greenville Water Community Room:

May 15<sup>th</sup> WaterSC

May 20<sup>th</sup> - Option 1

May 29<sup>th</sup> Option 2

June 3<sup>rd</sup> Option 3

C: Quick survey of counties, all counties meet on Tuesdays. None meet on Thursdays. Might be reasonable. May 29<sup>th</sup> – target @ Greenville Water Community room or ReWA.

C: At ReWa we could have the nature trail walk from 5:30 – 6.

Q: Numbers?

A: Operations Center holds 200. There's also overflow space – trainings, summits, etc.

C: Door prizes – could give a kayak and paddle

C: Agenda item – getting word out and targeted invites next meeting.

C: Pleasure to host his meeting.

Meeting adjourned: 12:51 PM

Motion to adjourn – Robert Hanley – 1<sup>st</sup> and David Coggins – 2<sup>nd</sup>

Minutes: Iffy Ogbekene and Tom Walker

Approved: 4/16/25

### RBC Chat:

00:29:02 Kevin Miller: Kevin Miller online. I'm not sure what name is on my sign in

00:29:23 Charlie Timmons: good morning. who wants to play hookie and go catch trout on the Saluda?

00:31:41 Thomas Walker: Reacted to "Kevin Miller online...." with 👍

00:31:53 Thomas Walker: Reacted to "good morning. who w..." with 👍

00:40:17 Melanie Ruhlman: Thank you K.C.!

00:40:24 Rebecca Wade: Reacted to "Thank you K.C.!" with 🎉

00:40:29 Thomas Walker: Reacted to "Thank you K.C.!" with 🙌

00:40:36 Josie Newton: Reacted to "Thank you K.C.!" with 🎉

00:44:31 Charlie Timmons: beautiful

00:47:15 Thomas Walker: Reacted to "beautiful" with 👍

00:54:39 Melanie Ruhlman: I strongly agree. With the disastrous Rapanos decision last year, we have lost federal protection of a critical headwaters and other waters necessary to protect downstream water supplies.

00:54:53 Rebecca Wade: Reacted to "I strongly agree. Wi..." with 👍

00:56:26 Josie Newton: Reacted to "I strongly agree. Wi..." with 👍

00:57:15 Melanie Ruhlman: Suggest add the word “native” in front of vegetation or tree canopy.

00:57:35 Rebecca Wade: Reacted to "Suggest add the word..." with ❤️

01:00:55 Melanie Ruhlman: Tree canopies play a crucial role in protecting water quantity by intercepting rainfall, reducing runoff, and promoting infiltration.

01:01:07 Rebecca Wade: Reacted to "Tree canopies play a..." with 👍

01:01:16 Josie Newton: Reacted to "Tree canopies play a..." with 👍

01:04:55 Kevin Miller: I support the proposal

01:05:06 Rebecca Wade: I support everything Melanie said and the proposal.

01:06:02 Josie Newton: I also support the proposal, through the lens of water quantity.

01:07:01 Rebecca Wade: Reacted to "I also support the p..." with 👍

01:11:46      Melanie Ruhlman:      Saluda Lake is to poster child in our watershed for decreased reservoir capacity due to accelerated sedimentation resulting primarily from upstream channel destabilization and erosion, due largely to loss of riparian canopy protection.

01:20:23      Melanie Ruhlman:      Local govs can prioritize these things as they develop land development regulations. Some already are.

01:24:13      Rebecca Wade:      Yes

01:24:14      Josie Newton: Yes, in favor.

01:24:15      Kevin Miller: I vote for

01:24:16      Charlie Timmons:      i support

01:24:18      Melanie Ruhlman:      Vote yes

01:28:55      Leigh Anne Monroe - SC DES:      Could I get that question sent to me to look into as well? I missed part of it.

01:29:06      Leigh Anne Monroe - SC DES:      Which facility was it?

01:29:25      Thomas Walker:      yes, one second

01:58:00      Melanie Ruhlman:      Need to add caveat of without consideration of leaving enough water to support designated uses for recreation and support of aquatic life

02:07:29      Thomas Walker:      break until 12 ish

03:03:16      Melanie Ruhlman:      Did we have a slide about how we reached consensus

03:04:20      Thomas Walker:      Replying to "Did we have a slide ..."

for the draft plan presentation?

03:05:05      Melanie Ruhlman:      Replying to "Did we have a slide ..."

yes

03:05:17      Thomas Walker:      Replying to "Did we have a slide ..."

i'll ask

03:08:41      Kevin Miller: I think I can make these work

03:10:06      Charlie Timmons:      Seems like should be invited

03:14:57      Melanie Ruhlman:      Would be great to also invite relevant folks from WaterSC and the legislative water committee

03:16:41 Charlie Timmons: I bet a lot of people here have contact with these officials.  
Additional personal invites would be great too.

03:17:46 Melanie Ruhlman: 🙌🙌

03:17:49 Thomas Walker: meeting adjourned