



Meeting Summary

Santee River Basin Council Meeting No. 4 (Hybrid Format)

Date: March 11th, 2025
Time: 9:00 AM
Location: Jefferies Generating Station
(463 Power House Road, Moncks Corner, SC 29461)
Prepared by: CDM Smith
RBC Members Present: Todd Biegger, Sarah Wiggins, Mike Wooten, Alicia Wilson, Brandon Stutts*, Michael Melchers, Riley Egger, John Grego, Hixon Copp*, Jason Thompson, Hunter Hames (alternate for David Wielicki), W.E. Mickey Johnson, Jr.,
RBC Members Absent: Jeff Ruble, Allan Clum
Planning Team Present: John Boyer, Monica Camacho, Kirk Westphal*, Scott Harder, Brooke Czwartacki, Leigh Anne Monroe, Hannah Hartley*, Andrew Wachob*, Joseph Koon
**Attended virtually*

Action Items (New or Reminders)

1. (Reminder) RBC members should consider identifying an alternate who can fill in for them in they need to miss a meeting and should provide the alternates name and contact information to John Boyer.

Decisions

No decisions were made by the RBC.

Meeting Agenda

The following items were on the agenda, which was approved by RBC motion:

- Review of meeting objectives and approval of the agenda
- Public Comments
- Surface Water and Groundwater Demand Projections
- Charleston Water System - Reservoir and Source Water Management
- Santee Cooper Operations
- Tour of the Jefferies Hydroelectric Station

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order at 9 am, with Michael Melchers welcoming the RBC members. Michael stated the meeting objectives and invited the RBC members for approval of the previous minutes and the agenda. The previous meeting minutes were approved by Jason Thompson with a second by Mickey

Johnson, and John Grego mentioned it be approved “with amendment”. The agenda was also approved by RBC motion.

John Boyer reviewed the information presented during the February RBC meeting, which included presentations by SCDES staff Brooke Czwartacki, Hannah Hartley and Scott Harder. Brooke covered groundwater of the Santee Basin including aquifer extents, recharge areas, cones of depression, and reported groundwater use. Hannah provided an overview of surface water resources and Scott summarized surface water use noting the significant water withdrawals in the Catawba Basin, the seasonality of water withdrawals, and the importance of upstream water management.

Scott Harder of SCDES reviewed surface and ground water demand projection methodologies. Scott outlined the driver variables used in projections, including population growth for public water supply, economic growth rates for manufacturing, new electricity production for thermoelectric power, and irrigated acres for agriculture/golf courses. He further discussed and gave examples of water supply baseline demands and population projections.

Jason Thompson provided an overview of Charleston Water System’s operations, including the history of how they began and how they got to where they are today. Their water sources include Bushy Park Reservoir (primary), Edisto River (secondary), and Goose Creek Reservoir (tertiary). Access to three different sources and two different basins helps with their drought resiliency. Jason noted that Charleston Water System’s drought plan is activated based on SCDNR Drought Committee drought declarations by county, Edisto stream flow triggers, specific conductance within Bushy Park Reservoir, and Goose Creek Reservoir levels.

Micheal Melchers presented on the history and operational strategy of the Santee Cooper project, highlighting its origins, construction, and significance. Michael explained the primary motivators for the project, including hydroelectric power generation, flood control, and health betterment, with the Jefferies Hydroelectric Generating Station generating enough power for 150,000 homes. Michael outlined the federal authorizations for the project, including the initial license in 1926, subsequent licenses, and the latest 50-year license obtained in January 2023, the terms and conditions of which focus on environmental and wildlife provisions. He discussed the challenges related to fish migration and protection, particularly for endangered species like the shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon, and the measures taken to support their passage. Michael provided details on the hydroelectric stations, the integration with the navigation lock, and the importance of managing water flow to preserve the Project’s importance as the only major surface water resource in the region and to prevent issues like siltation in the harbor. He explained the management of the reservoirs, including the rule curve for Lake Marion, which dictates the target elevation to balance inflows, recreational interests, and flood control. Michael described the workflow for daily hydro operation decisions, including the use of USGS gauges, weather forecasts, and an in-house lake management application to balance inflows and outflows. He discussed the Santee Spillway, the only method of flood control for the project, and its capacity to handle significant inflows during flood events.

The next meeting will be held on April 8th, 2025, at the Old Santee Canal Park (the same location of previous RBC meetings). The agenda for next month’s meeting will include water demand projections, an overview of Capacity Use Areas and Groundwater Management Plans, the outlook for groundwater, and a drought management discussion.