



# Meeting Minutes

## Santee River Basin Council Meeting No. 7 (Hybrid Format)

Date: June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Time: 9:00 AM  
Location: Santee Operations Center  
(1 Riverwood Drive, Moncks Corner, SC 29461)  
Prepared by: CDM Smith  
RBC Members Present: Todd Biegger, Sarah Wiggins, Mike Wooten, Alicia Wilson, Michael Melchers, Riley Egger, John Grego, Jason Thompson, Hunter James (alternate for David Wielicki), Allan Clum, Brandon Stutts\*  
RBC Members Absent: Jeff Ruble (resigned), W.E. Mickey Johnson, Jr., Hixon Copp  
Planning Team Present: John Boyer, Scott Harder, Leigh Anne Monroe, Andrew Wachob\*, Joseph Koon, Alexis Modzelesky\*, Hannah Hartley\*, Kirk Westphal\*  
*\*Attended virtually*

### 1.0 Call To Order and Welcome

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 Todd Biegger with a second by Allan Clum. The agenda was also approved by RBC motion by Mike Wooten and Todd Biegger.

John Boyer mentioned the WaterSC meeting on May 15<sup>th</sup> which focused on multi-state water management considerations and interbasin transfers. There was also a panel discussion about interbasin transfers with executive directors from three different Councils of Government. There will be another WaterSC meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June and Michael Melchers and Alicia Wilson will be participating as part of an RBC panel discussion.

### 2.0 Public and Agency Comments

Public comments: There were no public comments.

Agency comments: There were no Agency comments.

### 3.0 Surface Water Modeling Updated

John provided an update on the surface water modeling effort. CDM Smith recently received and reviewed the Catawba basin baseline (Current Use Scenario) outflow data set. The data looks good enough to move forward and will be incorporated in the Santee basin SWAM model. The Catawba Wateree Water Management Group (CWWMG) noted that they may make further minor adjustments to their model which may alter the outflow data set; however, any changes are expected to be small. If this occurs, CDM Smith will request and replace the original outflow dataset with the new one, and review Santee model output to confirm there are no significant impacts to the updated flows. Catawba basin outflows flows associated with moderate and high demand scenarios have not yet been provided by the CWWMG.

## **4.0 Review of Previous RBC Meeting**

John reviewed the approved drought response recommendations from the May meeting. John noted that he distributed drafts of Plan chapters 2 and 8 to the RBC for review and comments and requested RBC comments by June 20<sup>th</sup>. He also reviewed the approved recommendations in the policy, legislative, and regulatory category and noted that the RBC will revisit the recommendations that were not approved (put in the yellow bucket) or placed in the parking lot.

## **5.0 Discussion of Policy, Regulatory, and Legislative Recommendations**

The RBC approved the recommendation that the state should support statewide water education programs through existing agencies such as Cooperative Extensions that include all sectors of water use and to promote the types of water management strategies recommended in the River Basin Plan. There are existing groups and cooperative extensions, and examples of those will be provided in more detail in the recommendation narrative and implementation plan.

The RBC approved a recommendation that water users should continue to identify partnerships and alternative sources including interconnections to build resilience and ensure adequate quantity of water.

The RBC considered a recommendation made by the Saluda RBC to encourage that counties and municipalities prioritize and incentivize native tree canopy protection and permanent vegetative cover within headwater streams and along riparian areas. Many on the RBC felt this recommendation, while useful in the upstate, is not as important in the Santee River basin. The RBC placed it into the yellow bucket for future consideration.

The RBC considered a Saluda RBC recommendation that SCDNR/SCDES should review the science behind minimum in stream flow standards to ensure they are based on best available science to adequately protect designated uses and recognized regional differences. RBC members questioned if there was any concern about the way minimum in stream flow is measured and wanted to be sure that the RBC is not recommending things just to reiterate what other RBCs have recommended, but that there is a real need for the recommendation. This topic transitioned to the discussion of mean flows versus median flows, and the Saluda's recommendation was placed into the yellow bucket for future consideration.

There was an in-depth discussion about mean versus median annual daily flows and which is more conservative. It was noted that the use of mean annual flow has led to overallocation. The RBC discussed the recommendation that the Surface Water Withdrawal, Permitting, Use and Reporting Regulations should use 80 percent of median annual daily flows instead of 80 percent of mean annual daily flows to determine safe yield at a withdrawal point. The RBC would like to revisit this recommendation after additional discussion. Jason Thompson has a presentation with more data that will be circulated to the group for discussion at a later meeting.

It was discussed that a recommendation should be made to convey that there needs to be more alignment with permit cycle times between groundwater and surface water permits, as well as requirements.

The RBC considered two Saluda RBC recommendations that supported reduction of sediment loading to waterways through a variety of specific best management practices. Several RBC members noted that most of the Lowcountry counties are under MS4 management so reduction of sediment loading to basins is already regulated and may not warrant an RBC recommendation. The RBC agreed to recommend that state and local governments should continue to develop/review/update/adopt and

enforce laws, regulations, policies, and/or ordinances that improve the management of stormwater runoff, encourage infiltration, minimize streambank erosion, reduce sedimentation, and protect water resources. The RBC considered a Broad RBC recommendation concerning the development of a model riparian buffer ordinance for local jurisdictions to consider but decided against making it a Santee RBC recommendation.

In agreement with the Pee Dee RBC, the Santee RBC recommended a cost share program be developed to drill and operate deeper wells into aquifer units with less development pressure. There was discussion whether this would be achievable and how the operations costs tend to be more expensive than the initial installation, so there would need to be adequate funding for continued operations in addition to construction.

The RBC generally agreed with a Lower Savannah-Salkehatchie RBC recommendation that the legislature should approve and adopt the State Water Plan and subsequent updates. It is unclear if there is a mechanism for the legislature to act on this, but it is anticipated that legislature approval would improve funding opportunities. The recommendation was placed in the green bucket, but there was some desire to revisit it to confirm it should remain a recommendation.

The RBC revisited and discussed the recommendation that was approved in May which says that the South Carolina Surface Water Withdrawal, Permitting, Use and Reporting Act should allow for reasonable use criteria to be applied to all surface water withdrawals, like those that currently exist for groundwater withdrawals. They modified the recommendation to indicate that all withdrawals should be revisited if there is no withdrawal within 3 years, or within any 3-year period.

There was a suggestion that perhaps large water users that buy water from a utility, should report their use at a regular interval if over a certain amount. Riley Egger will research if there is a requirement elsewhere for data centers or other users, which purchase water wholesale from a withdrawer, to see if they are required to publicly disclose their usage. Data centers are not the only large users that might fall into this category, but are a relatively newer industry that can have large water use and large net consumption.

## **6.0 Discussion of Planning Process Recommendations**

The RBC agreed to recommend SCDES, the RBC Planning Teams, and the RBCs should conduct regular reviews of the RBC membership to make sure all interest categories are adequately represented and attendance across all interest categories meets the requirements of the RBC Bylaws.

The RBC agreed that SCDES should organize an annual statewide meeting of RBC's and State agencies.

The RBC agreed that SCDES should continue to designate staff to coordinate and support ongoing RBC activities.

The RBC agreed that RBC members should be encouraged to present observations and outcomes of the river basin planning process with approval of the content by the chair or vice-chair.

## **7.0 Conclusions and Upcoming Schedule**

In a future meeting there will be a discussion of technical recommendations. The next RBC meeting will be held on July 8<sup>th</sup>. For the August 12<sup>th</sup> RBC meeting, CDM Smith will present model results, assuming they will be sufficiently complete at that point. Also, John will set up a webinar for Jason to present mean vs. median before the July RBC meeting. When asked if the group would prefer more meetings or

longer meetings the group prefers to meet longer due to the logistics of everyone meeting in person. There is a concern for agricultural voices not being present at most meetings so John will reach out to Mickey to ask him for his input to some of the key talking points from the meeting. The agenda for next meeting will be included prior to the meeting date. The opportunity for an agricultural field trip was also discussed, but no definitive plans were made.