

**Environmental Management Commission
Water Allocation Committee
Minutes**

**November 8, 2017
9:00 a.m.**

On November 8, 2017, the Water Allocation Committee or WAC met in the Ground Floor Hearing Room at the Archdale Building in Raleigh, North Carolina.

WAC Members in Attendance:

Richard Whisnant, Chair
David W. Anderson
Charles Carter
Charles Elam
Mitch Gillespie
Bill Puette
JD Solomon, EMC Chair

Others Present:

Marion Deerhake
Dr. Stan Meiburg
Dr. Albert Rubin
Julie A. Wilsey
Jennie Hauser, Attorney General's office

I. Preliminary Matters:

In accordance with North Carolina General Statute §138A-15, Chairman Whisnant asked if any WAC member knew of a known conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to items on the November 8, 2017 WAC agenda; none of the committee members identified a conflict. At Chairman Whisnant's request, Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve the July 12, 2017 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Puette and the July 12, 2017 minutes were unanimously approved.

II. Informational Items:

A. Drought Response Planning in the Catawba Basin (Barry Gullet, Charlotte Water)

Mr. Gullet provided an overview of the Catawba-Wateree River basin. There are 11 interconnected reservoirs, all operated by Duke Energy. There are 18 public water supply utilities that depend on the main stem of the river basin. In times of drought or water shortage, the Catawba-Wateree River basin operates under a Low Inflow Protocol (LIP) to conserve water until precipitation replenishes water storage in the reservoirs. There are specific operational steps to take at different LIP thresholds to ensure regional needs are met during a drought.

Drought indicators that are considered include: how much water is left in the reservoirs; how much water is flowing into the reservoirs; and reports from the U.S. Drought Monitor, a government index specific to the Catawba-Wateree basin. The storage index, indicating how much water is in the reservoirs, is the key indicator. By design, it is harder to get out of a declared drought than it is to go into a drought. All indicators must improve to a lesser drought stage in order to move from a more severe drought stage to a less severe drought stage. The number of groundwater monitoring wells have increased to include groundwater as an extra indicator for the stage of a drought.

The development of LIP triggers and thresholds incorporates 80 years of hydrologic data in the modeling. The drought of record is modeled against 50-year growth projections when considering LIP triggers. The LIP provides flexibility in how targets are met. The LIP includes stages '0' through '4,' though the goal is to never reach stage 4. There are well defined water use restrictions, fines, and actions to take at each LIP stage. Local water systems have the authority to impose fines on violators. A review of the LIP results from the 2006-2009 drought demonstrated that the water use reduction goals were met or exceeded. The largest savings came from eliminating outdoor watering. There is now concern about being able to meet future targets during times of drought because people in the basin are still not using as much water for outdoor watering as they had been before the 2006-2009 drought, so there isn't as much room for reductions.

There is broad representation on the Catawba Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group, including state and federal agencies and owners of large water intakes. Members of the group must own an intake of at least 1 MGD on the mainstem or reservoirs; there are 18 members of the group. The group is scientifically and technically driven, not politically driven. Maintaining the quality of life and economic viability for the region is part of the group's mission.

Mr. Puette was interested in hearing more about water quality in the basin and asked when that information may be available. Mr. Gullet responded that there is a current water quality project ongoing in the basin about which the advisory group receives periodic updates. It will be 6-9 months before that project is completed. Mr. Gullet indicated he will be happy to return to the WAC to report on the results of the project once completed.

Mr. Solomon asked how work of the Catawba Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group can be translated to other basins across the state? Mr. Gullet responded that there needs to be a driver, a reason to do it. In the case of the Catawba Wateree basin, Duke was proposing fees for water withdrawal from the reservoirs, which led to the formation of this group as a solution to the issue. IBT issues are big in the Catawba, creating hurdles. There is a similar advisory group starting up in the Yadkin River basin, the seeds were planted by the Catawba

Wateree group. It is hoped that the two groups will be able to work and plan together, supporting good policy decisions. Mr. Solomon then asked at what point will the process need to be legislatively driven? Mr. Gullet replied that as long as the process is working well voluntarily, he hopes that it will remain that way. More will be accomplished when the members come to the table voluntarily than when they are required to comply with a regulatory process.

Mr. Gillespie asked about the elevation of new water withdrawals. Mr. Gullet responded that the water supply master plan for the basin accounts for new intakes planned in the basin. There is a critical elevation, and the plan is for new intakes to be below that elevation. Some existing intakes may need to be lowered, though it may not be necessary for another 30-40 years. However, now is the time to identify needs, including improvements to intakes that will be needed in the future. Mr. Gillespie then stated that he had been a member of the Catawba Wateree bi-state commission for 14 years. From that experience, there are two issues that he wanted to stress to the WAC members: IBTs are critical, and water re-use is extremely valuable, especially during times of severe drought. Policy should promote water re-use, particularly for irrigation.

B. Water Supply Planning Low-Flow Statistics (Tom Fransen, N.C. DWR)

Mr. Fransen postponed his presentation until the January 10, 2018 WAC meeting since there was insufficient time remaining for the last two agenda items.

C. IBT Program Update (Kim Nimmer, N.C. DWR)

Ms. Nimmer provided a brief update on the IBT program. There is currently one new IBT certificate request working through the process, following subsection (w) of the IBT statute NCGS 143-215.22L, which outlines the process for coastal counties to apply for an IBT certificate. The IBT request is from Pender County to transfer up to 14.5 MGD from the Cape Fear River IBT basin to the Northeast Cape Fear River, New River, and South River IBT basins to meet projected demands through 2045. The Petition, Water Conservation Plan, and Drought Management Plan were in the process of being finalized by the applicant. Once determined by DWR staff to be adequate and to be satisfying statutory requirements, the documents will be published for public review through State Clearinghouse and 30-day notice will be provided for a public hearing.

III. Concluding Remarks:

Chairman Whisnant asked if there was anything else that needed to be discussed or if there were other comments. There were no additional comments by the committee members or staff. The meeting was adjourned.