

Meeting Minutes from CFWI Workshop

Focus on Agriculture

May 20, 2015

2:00pm – Glenda Hood, Principal of triSect, welcomed 58 attendees to the workshop and asked each to introduce themselves. Following that, she discussed contents of the packet that each attendee received including the agenda, copy of the Power Point presentation, copy of the CFWI boundary map, copy of the CFWI Regional Project Solutions, snapshot of the new CFWI website, and an executive summary of the CFWI Regional Solutions Plan.

Jim Fletcher, Extension Director, UF IFAS Osceola County, then shared his journey with CFWI. He shared that as part of the CFWI Solutions Team, representing agriculture, he was able to help suggest solutions that were important to the industry and that had a programmatic approach. He added that it was important for the attendees to be at the workshop today because “if you are not at the table, you are on the menu.” He closed by encouraging the attendees to stay engaged in the process and to be there to offer solutions.

Next, Michael Minton, Shareholder with Dean Mead, shared four take-away messages with the group: 1) Get your message out about all that you have already done, 2) Don't punish efficient users, but reward them, 3) Agriculture is part of the solution (the sooner we realize this is part of our business model) and 4) Conservation is important. He also added that, unlike California, our state gets plenty of water so we just need to find a wiser way to use our surface water.

Mark Hammond, Director of Resource Management, Southwest Florida Water Management District then provided an overview of the history of the CFWI. Points of emphasis included:

- There were many people involved in the solutions planning phase including those from government, business, FDEP, consultants, environment representatives, and agriculture representatives
- The issues we are facing with water resources did not happen over the past 12 months and, therefore, will not be solved in the next 12 months. Implementation of the proposed solutions plan will take time.
- Review of what happens when we overuse the aquifer
- It is important to understand what are the issues and options for our region

Further, Mark discussed that we would focus input today on three of the eight solution identified by CFWI:

- Implementing Water Conservation
- Developing Specific Prevention and Recovery Programs

- Supporting Development and Implementation of Regional Projects

Mark also mentioned the following work that has been ongoing:

- CFWI identifies sustainable quantities of groundwater – completed 2 years ago
- Develop strategies to meet water demands – the draft Regional Water Supply Plan is the beginning of this work (a higher level, big picture look at the region); he noted that there is sufficient water to meet our needs, but many need multi-jurisdictional cooperation
- Establish consistent rules – working on that in the next year

Finally, Mark noted the Key Findings of the CFWI Solutions Phase. They include:

- Water conservation is an important element
- Sufficient options to meet the regions' needs through 2035
 - 150 options – more than 334 mgd
- Conceptual management strategies can be developed into specific projects
- Stakeholder engagement has and will continue to be important
- Project cost estimates scenario
 - \$2.8 billion for 225 mgd
- Establishment of consistent rules and regulations to be developed to implement the results of CFWI Planning effort
- Implementing results of CFWI is critical to long-term sustainability

Steven Memberg, Chief Scientist of the South Florida Water Management District, then reviewed the Water Conservation Plan. He noted the following in his presentation:

- Conservation is the least expensive option we have, although he recognized that those in the agriculture business would incur costs to install conservation measures in their businesses
- Water equals money in the agricultural industry
- It is important to look at mobile irrigation labs, maintenance of systems, sensors, etc. when looking at projections
- Only four of the 37 recommendations focus on agriculture water conservation
- The Regional Water Supply Plan is a 20-year plan which will be updated every 5 years
- Additional items noted in the Water Conservation section are:
 - Public Supply & Other Self Supply
 - 10 BMPs
 - Adopt High-Efficiency Standards
 - Landscape and Irrigation Systems
 - Plumbing Fixtures and Appliances
 - Public Education
 - Clearinghouse/Conservation Planning Tools/Research
 - Agriculture (Programmatic Approach)
 - 7 BMP categories
 - Includes training workshops, on-site demonstrations, mobile labs and support for Extension Services

Michael Register, Acting Executive Director of the St. Johns River Water Management District then provided an overview of the Prevention and Recovery section of the Solutions Plan. Items of note included:

- \$2 million in 2016 and \$1.5 million in 2017
 - Evaluate recovery options for 3 waterbodies
 - Options include
 - Conservation
 - Recharge
 - Relocation of withdrawals – looking at the lower Floridian aquifer
 - Development of AWS

Mark Hammond walked through the Regional Projects Solutions List. He noted that not all of this projects will actually be completed immediately; they will be brought online as demand increases.

Mark then opened the floor for questions and comments.

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- Billy Kempfer: South Florida WMD and St. Johns WMD have language that current permits will not be impacted. He indicated that he hoped that would not change. Further, he noted that from the third week of February to end of June last year they didn't use as much irrigation as in past due to the rainfall the area received and they were scolded for not using all the water in their permit. Finally, he asked if there was a plan to build any more wells?
RESPONSE FROM MIKE: Each of the districts recognizes importance of agriculture in our society and the industry's specific restraints like being tied to the weather. There are no plans to reduce permits due to extra rainfall, etc. The water management districts understand different the economics of agriculture and that they cannot pass along costs of updates like they can to other businesses.
- David Gore: Noted that he feels like the solutions still take water from the system.
- Michael Minton: Noted that a significant part of these projects is to keep freshwater here instead of letting it drain and go to coast.
- Jim Fletcher: How are we going to deal with enhancing water permits that they have been issued already or the issuance of new agriculture permits?
RESPONSE FROM MIKE: The purpose of the CFWI is to make sure there is enough water to meet future demands. It is hard to say what the future of agriculture looks like. The WMDs are seeing an increase in people moving here to grow crops. He noted that there is no one who is going to know better than agriculture growers what the need is and asked for the attendees help in planning future needs. RESPONSE FROM MARK: The Solutions Plan and the Regional Water Supply Plan address anticipating need and how to plan for that.

- **Unknown:** Noted that they want to be sure there is someone at the table representing agriculture so that they can get consumptive use permits within 45 days like utilities instead of it taking a year like it currently does. He noted that they could lose business (ie. if someone wants to use their acreage for growing crops, but it is contingent on a permit and that permit takes too long to get, the business will go elsewhere). Further, the attendee noted that those in the agriculture business are individuals and they would like to have an allocation process like other businesses. **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** Great points and this is clearly the reason we need to have more discussions like this so we can discuss the options. He didn't have an answer for some of the points right now, but we can't solve the problems without understanding what they are. **RESPONSE FROM MIKE:** Each of the WMD are trying to address having agriculture representation by creating core staff groups that understanding the specifics of the industry. He also noted that the St. Johns River WMD just hit a turn-around time of 22 days for Consumptive Use Permits. **UNKNOWN RESPONSE BACK:** They just need a level of certainty that they can get a permit so they can do business.
- **Michael Minton:** There is a mechanism that most districts follow that if you already have a permit, you can adjust it to change the commodity.
- **Unknown:** Has the CFWI thought about adjusting the water level projections? **RESPONSE FROM STEVEN:** Yes, those projections will be reviewed in the next round of the plan. **RESPONSE FROM MIKE:** The process that we've been through will hopefully provide a united way to update projections an ongoing basis. We want to look at projections all along and ensure we are using most current information. **RESPONSE FROM STEVEN:** The plan's demand projections are not permanent Districts will continue to work with updated projected demands through the consumptive use permitting process.
- **Unknown:** Surface water projects are very costly. There have been some projects done down south that have been put on private land. Is that something you have thought about doing here? **RESPONSE FROM JEFF SUMNER:** These types of projects have a very limited benefit. During the wet season they allow for limited flow. It is very hard to quantify in water planning, but there may be some localized opportunities.
- **Billy Kempfer:** A lot of areas that are currently in pasture will end up in crops which will increase water demand, so the districts need to keep that in mind. **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** The districts will continue to work with FDACS to continue to monitor that and how quickly the market can change.
- **Unknown:** Where does cost share fall into the plan? **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** Staff will work with the groups to see how they can create better methods for conservation and work with IFAS to research technologies and methods. He noted that they need to find incentives to make technology attractive in conservation measures.

- **Unknown:** The districts are forcing growers to use reclaimed water if it's available and they are at a disadvantage because it's more expensive than surface water and some competitors don't have to use it; that need to be taken into consideration. **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** That is a great point; perhaps grants can be provided to local governments so they can then bring reclaimed water out at a cost that is viable. **RESPONSE FROM MIKE:** If you demonstrate it is not an economically viable option for your business, you do not have to use reclaimed water.
- **Unknown:** How can the agriculture industry better work with and inform the public? We are providing them with food, green space, space for habitats, a place for recharge and need to show that value? **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** This is critically important and something the WMDs need to work on. **RESPONSE FROM GLENDA:** Noted that they need to make sure their colleagues come to meetings and the CFWI can be the collaborator.
- **Billy Kempfer:** What provisions are there within CFWI for cost share measures? **RESPONSE FROM MIKE:** There is nothing specific to CFWI but the WMDs have cost share measure provisions their own in projects. Additionally, they are looking for ways to boost those programs in the future. **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** The districts are looking for more participants along the ridge for those programs.
- **Jim Fletcher:** There is a big push for funding and outreach. 88% of people say water is important but only 8% say they are willing to fund water conservation measures. **RESPONSE FROM MICHAEL MINTON:** When the Central Florida Partnership looked back at the How Shall We Grow process, water was a big issue, but that was during a drought. Now the interest is less. The lesson learned is that we need to embrace not just a water supply issue for agriculture, but that water drives water recreation and tourism. **RESPONSE FROM GLENDA:** We are connecting the dots – water connects economy, and quality of life.
- **Unknown:** Initially all WMDs started as flood control districts. As things now get dry, everyone's concerned about hanging on to water. **RESPONSE FROM GLENDA:** That's part of the water story. We need to make the story personal.
- **Unknown:** What is the total cost for Regional Project Solutions? **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** They utilized a cost estimation pool (some projects are permitted and therefore have real costs and some are not).
- **Unknown:** Do you think these Regional Project Solutions will increase the ad valorem? **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** Not right now.
- **Unknown:** Looking at local conservation, how did we get to the number associated: it seems low? **RESPONSE FROM MARK:** We looked at what BMPs that could be employed and a percentage of participation. We looked at 200BMPs and focused on 20BMPs for conservation estimates and what the reasonable expectation was over time. Follow up from Unknown: Before the plan is revised, is there the opportunity for those numbers to change?

RESPONSE FROM MARK: Yes, we want to add more capital intensive projects. NOTE FROM JIM FLETCHER: The Committee set a threshold of 3BMG in order for them to get to something that was manageable.

Questions on additional 5 on Implementation Strategies:

- Unknown: We need to have consistent rules and regulations. Additionally, we need to have someone at the table who had agriculture interests in mind and that's hard for people in the industry to do as they are busy on their farms, ranches, etc. RESPONSE FROM GLENDA: We are going to look to those that are here to get others to the table. RESPONSE FROM CHARLES Warren: Rich Budell has been sitting on the Steering Committee and representing the agriculture industry. RESPONSE FROM STEVEN: FDACS is also represented on the Steering Committee.
- Unknown: When an agriculture person passes an allocation on from one entity to another, it shouldn't be a painful or expensive process.
- Unknown: Do you think existing law allows for allocation agreements between agriculture and public water supply? RESPONSE FROM STEVEN: There is nothing that prevents it. He added that he didn't see any reason why a district wouldn't support it. RESPONSE FROM MIKE: The districts need to craft permits that allow for the most flexibility.
- Unknown: You really need to live stream and record these forums in the future so farmers can view afterward if they can't get away from their farms or ranches.
- Unknown: How do you treat agriculture wells that are potentially affected by municipal wells? Municipal wells are pumping every day, all day while ag wells are used only when needed? RESPONSE FROM STEVEN: The model accounts for the timing issue of use.
- Rob Teegarden: He agreed that agriculture is underrepresented in the water debate. There are still others that are under-represented in solutions planning including the Florida Irrigation Society, DOT (stormwater issues), and agriculture industries (looks downstream and upstream but doesn't care what goes on three counties away). Governments are arguing whose growth is more sacred instead of creating awareness of those around you in the watershed. RESPONSE FROM GLENDA: So who is the convener of these other groups? That is where the CFWI and DEP are so important – they can continually push and change.
- Unknown: There are commonalities between agriculture and utilities; you want certainty when trying to get a water use permit and if you don't use your permit, you are at risk of losing it. Further, if you become more efficient, are you at risk of being penalize. It is important that we solve this problem together and not fight each other.
- Billy Kempfer: Small wells are not regulated.

Glenda asked each of the WMD representatives to provide closing comments. Mark thanked everyone for coming out and encouraged the attendees to continue to be engaged so that solutions could be identified that would work for the agriculture industry. Steven remarked that he thought it was great these meetings were happening during the open comment process. Mike thanked everyone for their interest and encouraged continued participation as well.

Michael Minton advised the attendees that an additional opportunity to hear from the CFWI would be held at the Cattlemen's Association annual meeting in June.

Glenda Hood reviewed the upcoming workshops and public meetings and encouraged attendees to invite others to provide input during the open comment period. She then reviewed the updated CFWI website with attendees.

Glenda Hood thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting concluded at 4:20pm.