

APALACHICOLA, CHATTAHOOCHEE, FLINT STAKEHOLDERS (ACFS) 2011 ANNUAL PLAN

I. Introduction

The ACF Stakeholders (ACFS) is a non-profit organization created to provide a forum for members of that organization to work together to understand the water resources of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River Basin and to find collaborative solutions to its water management conflicts. The ACFS mission is to change the operation and management of the ACF Basin to achieve equitable and viable solutions among stakeholders that balance economic, ecological, and social values and ensure that the entire ACF Basin is a sustainable resource for current and future generations.

ACFS plans to take action on six priorities in 2011. These actions include the development of a Five-Year Planning Program to help accomplish the ACFS' overall mission to achieve equitable allocation of sustainable water resources in the ACF Basin. The near-term priorities for 2011 work initially toward meeting the defined needs of the 14 stakeholder interests identified in the ACFS Charter and By-Laws, captured in the following six inextricably related planning objectives:

- A. Ensure and/or maintain adequate water supplies for public supply/municipal uses including wastewater assimilation needs of current and projected future populations.
- B. Maintain existing and promote future economic/commercial interests' water availability and access for water dependent industries, power generation and recreational interests.
- C. Promote the optimization of the use of water for agriculture irrigation including: type of irrigation technology, selection of crops, sustainable and resource-based permitting and water withdrawal monitoring.
- D. Determine the nature and extent of commercial navigation that the ACF System can effectively support.
- E. Protect the natural systems and ecology of the ACF Basin by defining and implementing desired flow regimes and lake levels, water quality enhancements, including wastewater and stormwater management and best management practices to maintain a healthy natural system and support a productive aquatic ecosystem in the Basin and the estuary.
- F. Create and support relationships with local governmental institutions and other public bodies within the ACF Basin to promote sustainability of the water resources and also to enhance the historical and cultural resources of the basin related to the management of its water resources.

II. ACFS 2011 Priorities

The ACFS focus in 2011 will be to develop its Five-Year Planning Program and to initiate action on a combination of important information collection tasks, on external opportunities to communicate with decision makers about stakeholder interests, and on organizational needs.

ACFS has set the following priorities for commitment of resources in 2011. These priority actions are important because of the basin-wide impact and their significance to most if not all interest groups, the impact on acceptable flows and levels, and their contribution to progress toward ACFS goals overall. These action items are not in any priority order, and some require additional funding to complete.

- A. 2011 Priority Actions That Can Be Accomplished Within Current ACFS Resources:
1. Develop and submit consensus comments to the draft USACE water control manual when released, submit consensus comments on the regional Georgia water plans when released, recommend that Alabama engage in water resource planning, and begin to review Florida water management plans, as they affect the ACF Basin;
 2. Seek opportunities and provide consensus recommendations to the Governors of the States of Alabama, Florida and Georgia, either in the context of implementation of Judge Magnuson's rulings in the Tri-States Water Rights Litigation or related to other interstate agreements;
 3. Create a "best practices" report, based on information collected from members representing all applicable interests and geographic regions within the basin regarding current activities designated to improve water quality and increase conservation and water use efficiency.
 4. Create acceptance of the value of our grass-roots, basin-wide ACFS organization among key national, regional and state decision-makers, including elected officials;
 5. Develop an overarching Five-Year Planning Program, a conceptual guide or organizational "roadmap" of the long-term aspirations and commitments of the organization.
 6. Develop and implement a fundraising strategy for priority action items.
 7. Begin to investigate institutional options for basin-wide water resources planning and management.
 8. Evaluate options for sustainable, paid organizational support and management of ACFS.
 9. Build on the needs matrices developed to date and engage in a dialogue that helps members understand one another's needs further and begins to define approaches for coming to a consensus on how the basin should be managed.

B. 2011 Priority Actions Needing Funds and Implementation Plans

10. initiate a sustainable water resource management assessment to develop an impartial, inclusive and transparent process to define the water quantity and quality needs of the basin stakeholders, evaluate alternative water management scenarios, and reach consensus on one or more management alternatives; and
11. initiate an independent, science-based in-stream flow assessment to identify the flow regime and lake levels necessary to sustain the physical, biological, and chemical integrity and health of the ACF System.

The Executive Committee will coordinate responses, as needed, to unanticipated developments affecting the interests of ACF stakeholders.

III. Implementation Action Plan

Tasks and/or deliverables anticipated in 2011 for each of these priority actions are described briefly below, along with notations about who is responsible for each and a general sense of associated costs.

The Issues Committee will coordinate activities that lead to recommendations to decision makers in the Basin from and by consensus of the Governing Board, as described in the Charter. As noted in the Charter, the Issues Committee may wish to form working groups to address specific issues. The other Standing Committee having a critical "go/no-go" decision making role on planned ACFS actions is the Finance Committee and sub-ordinate work groups it may form to support funding of the specific actions contemplated.

The following are proposed descriptions of each priority action and initial thoughts about the details of implementing each priority action in 2011. These implementation approach tables require validation by the standing committee or work group named as having lead responsibility for that priority action. This document can be amended by the Governing Board at future meetings.

A. 2011 Priorities That Can be Accomplished within the Current Resources of ACFS

1. **Develop and submit consensus comments to the draft USACE water control manual when released**, submit consensus comments on the regional Georgia water plans when released, recommend that Alabama engage in water resource planning, and begin to review Florida water management plans; **(A-3 and E-7 of Five-Year Planning Program)**

The Corps of Engineers currently plans to release a draft, revised Water Control Manual for public comment in June 2011. This manual will have a significant effect on the interests of all stakeholders in the Basin and, thus, offers a significant, near-term challenge and opportunity for the ACFS to "change the management of the water resources of the ACF" to achieve an "equitable allocation" of those waters. Because time is short, it will be important to identify elements that the Governing Board can reach

consensus on. One option is to draft a comment letter, either before or after the public comment period. Such a letter could list the results or interests ACF stakeholders want the manual to achieve and raises these as questions to the Corps. During the time from a draft to final manual, ACFS will have made progress on the assessments and collaborative modeling needed to engage with the Corps in a dialogue about how to answer these questions.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|------------------|---|
| March 17-18 | Discuss initial set of questions and interests that ACFS may wish to convey in a comment letter, and whether to submit a comment letter before or during the public comment process (or both). <i>[Note: timetable below may need to be revised accordingly.]</i> |
| April | Organize the consensus process, e.g. decide whether to form a working group and/or whether to ask RESOLVE to facilitate the process Request presentation by USACE and the Georgia regional water councils to ACFS at May Board meeting Compile an initial set of questions and/or the interests that ACFS may wish to convey in a comment letter, drawing on the needs statements prepared in 2010 by interest groups |
| May | Circulate a questionnaire to Governing Board members inviting comment on this initial set of questions |
| June | Review draft Water Control Manual and directions for public comment (consider whether the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee should do a summary to be distributed to the Governing Board) Request extension of the comment period to be able to draw on the in-stream flow analysis and modeling effort Add to and/or revise the initial set of questions and draft a comment letter based on results of questionnaire to Governing Board and what is in the draft Water Control Manual |
| July/August | Seek consensus of the Governing Board on a comment letter (timing depends on the length of the public comment process) |
| TBD | Submit consensus comments to the Corps |

Lead Responsibility: Issues Committee (perhaps through formation of a working group)

Contributing Roles: Intergovernmental Affairs Committee

Estimated Costs: TBD

2. Seek opportunities and provide consensus recommendations to the Governors of the States of Alabama, Florida and Georgia either in the context of implementation of Judge Magnuson’s rulings in the Tri-States Water Rights Litigation or related to other interstate agreements (A-5 of Five-Year Planning Program)

If ACFS efforts are to have relevance, consensus recommendations need to be published and advocated prior to the July 2012 implementation of Judge Magnuson's ruling. These consensus recommendations to the states will be informed by building relationships with applicable staff in the new Governors’ administrations (item 4 below) and the work on baseline data (item 10), collaborative modeling (item 9), and process for drafting comments on the Corps’ Water Control Manual (item 1) above.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

| Milestone | Tasks/Deliverables |
|---------------------|--|
| January-June | Establish relationships with new state leadership (item 6) Monitor actions by the states (reconsider timeline and tasks in response to new developments) |
| July-August | Review recommendations being developed for the Corps’ Water Control Manual and discuss which may be applicable to any agreements or actions by the states. Depending on what actions the states are taking, establish a proactive approach for providing recommendations. |
| Fall | Begin proactive outreach using the approach developed in the summer. |
| January – June 2012 | TBD |

Lead Responsibility: Intergovernmental Affairs Committee

Contributing Roles: Education and Outreach Committee, Executive Committee

Estimated Costs: in-kind contributions of members; travel expense reimbursement for members is included in item 6

3. Create a “best practices” report, based on information collected from members representing all applicable interests and geographic regions within the basin regarding current activities designated to improve water quality and increase conservation and water use efficiency.

Innovative efforts to improve water quality and water use efficiency need to be considered more widely as part of a comprehensive plan for the ACF basin. Identification and compilation of these initiatives into a best practices report and broad dissemination will give stakeholders needed information to consider what each can do on a voluntary basis to contribute to sustainable water management.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|------------------|---|
| March | Define work plan and objectives with UGA |
| | Send members a request for information |
| | Due date for information |
| | Compile the information and write a “best practices” report |
| | Disseminate draft report |

Lead Responsibility: Do Better Work Group

Contributing Roles: University of Georgia

Estimated Costs: TBD

4. Create acceptance of the value of our grass-roots, basin-wide ACFS organization among key national, regional, and state decision-makers, including elected officials (F-1 of Five-Year Planning Program)

ACFS has enormous potential to affect decision making in the ACF basin because of the broad representation across all interest groups. However, it is a new organization in the basin and its ability to influence the actions of others depends to great degree on the size of the ACFS membership and the awareness of decision makers about ACFS.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|------------------------------|--|
| February | Identify and seek in-person meeting with each new Governor’s point person for water issues |
| February - June | Monitor actions by the states and inform Issues Committee and Executive Committee about new developments |
| Each Governing Board meeting | Report information learned and actions taken |
| July-December | TBD |

Lead Responsibility: Intergovernmental Affairs Committee

Contributing Roles: Sub-basin caucus coordinators and Education and Outreach Committee (e.g. for newsletters, web site updates, etc)

Estimated Costs: \$8,000-16,000 (the higher end is the combined budgets for the two committees)

5. Develop an overarching Five-Year Planning Program, a conceptual guide or organizational “roadmap” of the long-term aspirations and commitments of the organization.

Numerous public and private entities make decisions establishing plans, programs and policies that affect sustainable water management in the ACF Basin. Thus, ACFS works toward consensus recommendations to influence the plans and policies of others. The ACFS’s Five-Year Planning Program provides a framework for and set of objectives that ACFS recommendations will seek to achieve. ACFS also undertakes studies in partnership with or with funding from others. Thus, another purpose of the Five-Year Planning Program is to provide a description and rationale for cooperative efforts, in-kind support, and funding for ACFS recommended plans and programs and to enable related regional cooperation to benefit the ACF Basin as a whole. Tasks in 2011 are for the revisions applicable to 2012.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|--------------------|--|
| Summer | Interest groups submit comments to Issues Committee* on Five Year Planning Program, with suggestions for the priorities to include in the 2012 Annual Plan |
| August-September | Issues Committee* consults standing committees about priority and feasibility of suggested priorities for the 2012 Annual Plan. |
| Fall Meeting | Governing Board discusses and provides input on the revised Five-Year Planning Program and draft 2012 Annual Plan |
| After Fall Meeting | Issues Committee* revises Five-Year Planning Program and 2012 Annual Plan documents, consulting with standing committees as appropriate |
| December Meeting | Governing Board approves program and plan documents |

Lead Responsibility: Issues Committee (perhaps through formation of a working group)

Contributing Roles: Intergovernmental Affairs Committee, Finance Committee, Executive Committee

Estimated Costs: TBD (in scope of work for facilitation services)

6. Develop and implement a fundraising strategy for priority action items.

The 2011 priority actions require dedicated funding in addition to what is provided by the dues structure. Thus, ACFS needs a proactive fundraising strategy for specific action items.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

[to be developed by the Finance Committee.]

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
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Lead Responsibility: Finance Committee

Contributing Roles: Standing committees or work groups assigned by the Issues Committee for specific priority actions.

Estimated Costs: TBD

7. Begin to investigate institutional options for basin-wide water resources planning and management.

The ACF Basin does not have a comprehensive, multi-state institution for water resources planning. ACFS needs to learn about and assess the strengths and weaknesses of different models in existence at this time, e.g. Delaware River Basin Commission, EPA’s Gulf of Mexico Program, Tennessee - Tom Bigbee Waterway Authority, Great Lakes Commission, regional compacts, and others.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):
[to be developed by the Issues Committee]

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|-----------|------------------|
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Lead Responsibility: Issues Committee (to develop an approach)

Contributing Roles: Intergovernmental Affairs Committee, Executive Committee

Estimated Costs: TBD

8. Evaluate options for sustainable, paid organizational support and management of ACFS.

ACFS currently is a volunteer organization, with both the strengths and weaknesses of a volunteer organization. This is not sustainable given the importance and extent of the issues to be addressed in achieving equitable allocation of water resources in the basin.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):
[to be developed by the Executive Committee]

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|-----------|------------------|
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Lead Responsibility: Executive Committee

Contributing Roles: Professional Services Committee, Finance Committee

Estimated Costs: TBD

- 9. Build on the needs matrices developed to date and engage in a dialogue that helps members understand one another’s needs further and begins to define approaches for coming to a consensus on how the basin should be managed.**

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

[to be developed by the DNS Workgroup]

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|-----------|------------------|
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Lead Responsibility: DNS Workgroup

Contributing Roles: TBD

Estimated Costs: TBD

B. 2011 Priority Actions Needing Funding and Implementation Plans

- 10. Initiate a sustainable water resource management assessment to develop an impartial, inclusive and transparent process to define the water quantity and quality needs of the basin stakeholders, evaluate alternative water management scenarios, and reach consensus on one or more management alternatives (B-1 of Five-Year Planning Program)**

The Governing Board approved drafting a scope of work for an RFQ to identify qualified candidates and estimated costs to assist ACFS to reach consensus on one or a few sustainable water quantity and quality management alternatives or scenarios that best meet the needs of all ACF stakeholder groups throughout the basin. Associated tasks include but are not limited to reaching a baseline understanding of how water currently is used under different types of water years, data gap analysis for unimpaired flows,

forecasts or scenarios for future needs, and an iterative and collaborative modeling process that involves participation of the Governing Board. The responses to the RFQ are anticipated to be the basis for raising funds to support the work.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|-----------------|--|
| February | Draft and circulate request for qualifications (RfQ) |
| February 28 | Qualification statements due |
| March 17 | Select list of qualified candidates to bid on a detailed request for proposals (RfP) |
| April-May | Initiate fund-raising |
| May-June | Prepare RfP for specific scopes of work, review and select contractor and issue contract |
| 2012-2013 (est) | Contractor completes work on the proposed contract |

Lead Responsibility: DNS Working Group (once contract is awarded)

Contributing Roles: DNS Working Group (produce scope of work during the selection process), Professional Services Committee (selection process), Finance Committee (fundraising)

Estimated Costs:

Cost of drafting the RfQ, circulating it and reviewing responses: in-kind contribution of experienced ACFS members

Cost of implementing the contract: TBD

11. Initiate an independent, science-based in-stream flow assessment to identify the flow regime and lake levels necessary to sustain the physical, biological, and chemical integrity and health of the ACF System (E-1 of Five-Year Planning Program)

This is one of several, technical assessments to determine ecological, agricultural, municipal/industrial, recreational and other needs on a sub-basin scale. The results of this activity will contribute to the information needed for the modeling in item 1 above, and ideally would be accomplished first. A partnership with NOAA's National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) is being explored. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data may also be useful. Portions of this priority action may be integrated into the sustainable water resource management assessment above.

Implementation Approach (2011 Tasks and Milestones):

| Milestone | Task/Deliverable |
|----------------|---|
| February-March | Identify a partner to provide ecological baseline data set |
| April - ? | Develop a scope of work and contract, and conduct fundraising as needed (data collection) |

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|----------------|--|
| TBD | Begin the project (data collection) |
| TBD | Final report (data collection) |
| | |
| February-March | Identify a partner to conduct the flows and levels assessment |
| TBD | Develop a scope of work and contract, and conduct fundraising as needed, for the flows and levels assessment |
| TBD | Begin the flows and levels assessment |
| TBD | Final report for the flows and levels assessment |

Lead Responsibility: DNS Working Group

Contributing Roles: Environmental / Conservation interests (to identify potential partner)

Estimated Costs: TBD

IV. Additional 2011 Activities

ACFS will be undertaking several additional activities in 2011. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Contingency planning by the Executive Committee for coordinating responds to unanticipated developments that may affect the interests of stakeholders in the basin. The Executive Committee will report actions taken to the Governing Board at each meeting.
- Membership Committee will assess, at the request of the Executive Committee, how well the sub-basin caucuses are implementing the guidance in the Charter.
- The Finance Committee will engage in ongoing fundraising.