
In This Section

- What Is the Purpose of This Plan?
- What's Inside?
- How Do I Use This Plan?
- What Is the Schedule of Activities for the Oconee River Basin?
- How Do Stakeholders Get Involved in the Basin Planning Process?
- What's Next?

Section I

Introduction

What Is the Purpose of This Plan?

This document presents Georgia's river basin management plan for the Oconee River, which is being produced as a part of Georgia's River Basin Management Planning (RBMP) approach. The purpose of this plan is to provide relevant information on the Oconee River basin characteristics, describe the status of water quality and quantity in the Oconee River basin, identify present and future water resource demands, present and facilitate the implementation of water protection efforts, and enhance stakeholder understanding and involvement in basin planning.

This plan has been produced by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division (EPD), based on data and information gathered by EPD, other state and federal agencies, universities, utilities, consultants, and environmental groups. A basin team made up of representatives from the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division (WRD), Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), and EPD's Water Resources Management Branch, Water Protection Branch, and Geologic Survey Branch compiled the information to generate the plan. The U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the EPD Geologic Survey Branch created the majority of the figures in this report using geographic information system technologies.

River Basin Management Planning

RBMP is designed to coordinate management of water quantity and quality within river basins by integrating activities across regulatory and non-regulatory programs (Appendix A). The RBMP approach provides the framework for identifying, assessing,

and prioritizing water resources issues, developing management strategies, and providing opportunities for targeted, cooperative actions to reduce pollution, enhance aquatic habitat, and provide a dependable water supply. RBMP includes opportunities for stakeholders in the State's river basins to participate in developing and implementing river basin management plans. These plans will benefit from the collective experience and combined resources of a variety of stakeholders.

A separate document is available from Georgia EPD that describes the RBMP approach in greater detail.

Initial Efforts For the Oconee River Basin

Begun in 1993, RBMP is a new approach to the management of Georgia's water resources. This is the first river basin management plan produced under RBMP for the Oconee River (Figure 1-1). Under the RBMP approach, the Oconee River plan will be updated every five years. During the first iteration of RBMP in Georgia, much effort and resources are being dedicated to making programmatic changes, building the infrastructure of RBMP, cataloging current water management activities and beginning to coordinate with the many agencies, organizations, and individuals that have a stake in river basin management. As a result, some portions of the RBMP cycle have had to be condensed during this first iteration; in particular, it has not been possible to spend as much effort on developing management strategies as is planned for future iterations. Future iterations of the basin planning cycle will provide a better opportunity for developing new, innovative, and cost-effective strategies for managing water quality and quantity.

What's Inside?

This plan is organized into the following sections:

Executive Summary

The executive summary provides a broad perspective on the condition of the basin and the management strategies recommended to protect and enhance the Oconee River basin's water resources.

1.0 Introduction

The introduction provides a brief description of Georgia's River Basin Management Planning approach, the planning cycle for the Oconee River basin, opportunities for stakeholder involvement and a description on how to use this document.

2.0 River Basin Characteristics

This chapter provides a description of the basin and its important characteristics, including boundaries, climate, physiography and geology, geochemistry, soils, surface water resources, ground water resources, biological resources, population and land use, local government and jurisdictions, and water use classifications.

3.0 Water Quantity

This chapter describes current surface and ground water availability, as well as forecasts for future demand. This chapter also includes sections on historic, present and possible proposed permitting activities pertaining to water availability.

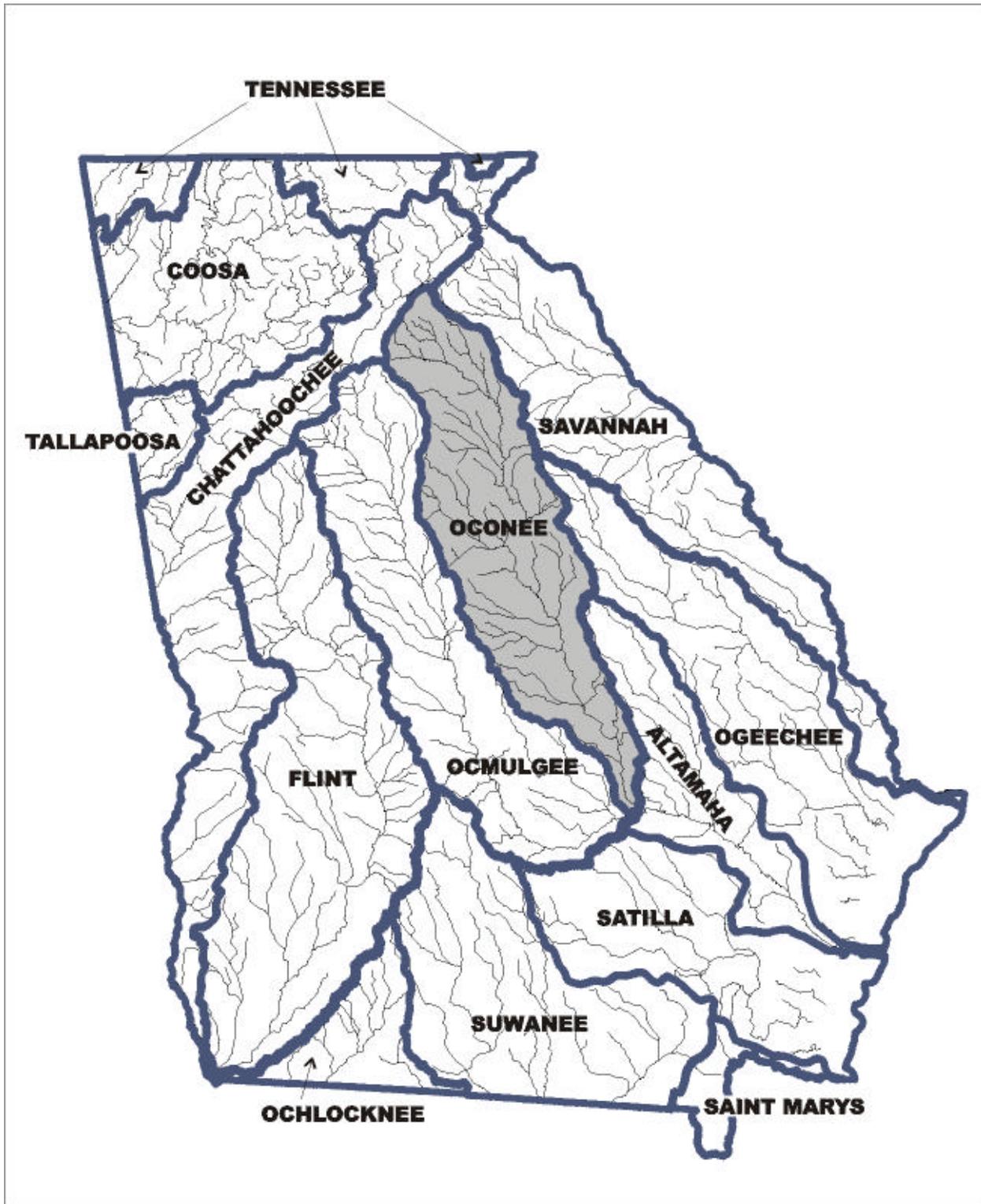


Figure I-I. The Oconee River Basin

4.0 Environmental Stressors

This chapter describes the major stressors in the basin that may impair water or habitat quality. The stressors are divided into point sources (i.e., NPDES permitted discharges) and nonpoint sources.

5.0 Assessment

This chapter provides an assessment of water quality and quantity in the streams, lakes, estuaries, and groundwater along with an assessment of the basin's biological integrity. The data sources and analysis techniques for these assessments are also discussed.

6.0 Concerns and Priority Issues

This chapter summarizes and prioritizes the issues of concern that were identified through the assessment in Chapter 5.

7.0 Implementation Strategies

This chapter presents strategies for addressing the issues of concern in the order that they appear on the priority list in Chapter 6 with a description of each issue, goals and objectives of management, overview of alternatives considered, and descriptions of recommended options for implementation.

8.0 Future Issues and Challenges

This chapter discusses long-range goals to set the stage for further improvements in managing water resources and water quality. Due to limited resources (data, time, funding, etc.), some issues will be addressed in future iterations of each basin planning cycle.

Appendices

The appendices contain technical information for those interested in specific details involved in the planning process.

How Do I Use This Plan?

This river basin plan will serve as the road map for managing the water resources in the Oconee River basin. It contains useful information on the health of the Oconee River basin and recommended strategies to protect the basin now and into the future. The document can be used as a reference tool for watershed conditions in the basin, as well as a planning guide for implementing key actions throughout the basin cycle.

Chapter 7 contains the key management strategies that have been identified to address the priority issues and concerns in the basin. The earlier chapters show the reader how the issues were identified and where the specific stressors in the basin occur. Each chapter in this river basin plan builds upon the previous ones. For example, the recommended management strategies in Chapter 7 were formulated based on the priority concerns identified in Chapter 6. Similarly, the priority issues in Chapter 6 were derived as a result of the assessment in Chapter 5.

Links to other chapters

Because issues are discussed across several chapters, an explanatory paragraph at the beginning of chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 will alert the reader that an issue may be discussed elsewhere. For example, Chapter 4 discusses stressors to the water body from various point and nonpoint sources. Chapter 5 provides an assessment summary of water quality and water quantity based on the sources of environmental stressors. Next, Chapter 6 combines the assessment information from Chapter five to identify priority issues for the development of management strategies. Finally, Chapter 7 provides general goals and strategies to address the most significant existing and future water quality and quantity issues within the Oconee basin.

What Is the Schedule of Activities for the Oconee River Basin?

The schedule of activities for the first two Oconee River basin cycles , i.e., 1993-1999 and 1998-2003, is provided in Figures 1-2 and 1-3. As mentioned earlier, initial scheduling complications and the need to devote resources to development of the RBMP infrastructure have caused the first basin cycle to be somewhat condensed. In the Oconee basin, this has meant that there was not as much time available in the first cycle (1994-1998) to prioritize watersheds and develop management strategies (steps 7 and 8) as there will be once the program converges into a long-term rotating cycle (after 2000). Also, the implementation stage of the first cycle (step 12 in Figure 1-2) is shortened in order to bring the basin cycle into phase with the long-term rotating cycle, which has the Oconee basin planning cycle joining that of the Ocmulgee and Altamaha beginning in April of 1998 (and every five years thereafter).

Having just completed the first RBMP-generated basin plan in the Oconee, EPD and its partners will have a stronger foundation of information to share with stakeholders in discussing management needs and information gaps. Stakeholder input will be sought prior to development of the information collection plan. However, EPD considers stakeholder involvement as a continuous process, not limited to scheduled meetings, and encourages stakeholders to provide input and assistance at any time.

How Do Stakeholders Get Involved in the Basin Planning Process?

A major goal of RBMP is to involve interested citizens and organizations in plan development and implementation. This is intended to improve the identification and prioritization of water quality and quantity problems, maximize the efficient use of resources and expertise, create better and more cost-effective management strategies, and be responsive to stakeholder perceptions and needs. The opportunities for stakeholders to get involved in river basin management planning include the following:

Support the Basin Team

Every basin planning cycle begins with the organization of the basin team. The Oconee River basin team will be reorganizing itself in the July to September quarter of 1998. Support and provide input to the agency that represents your interests.

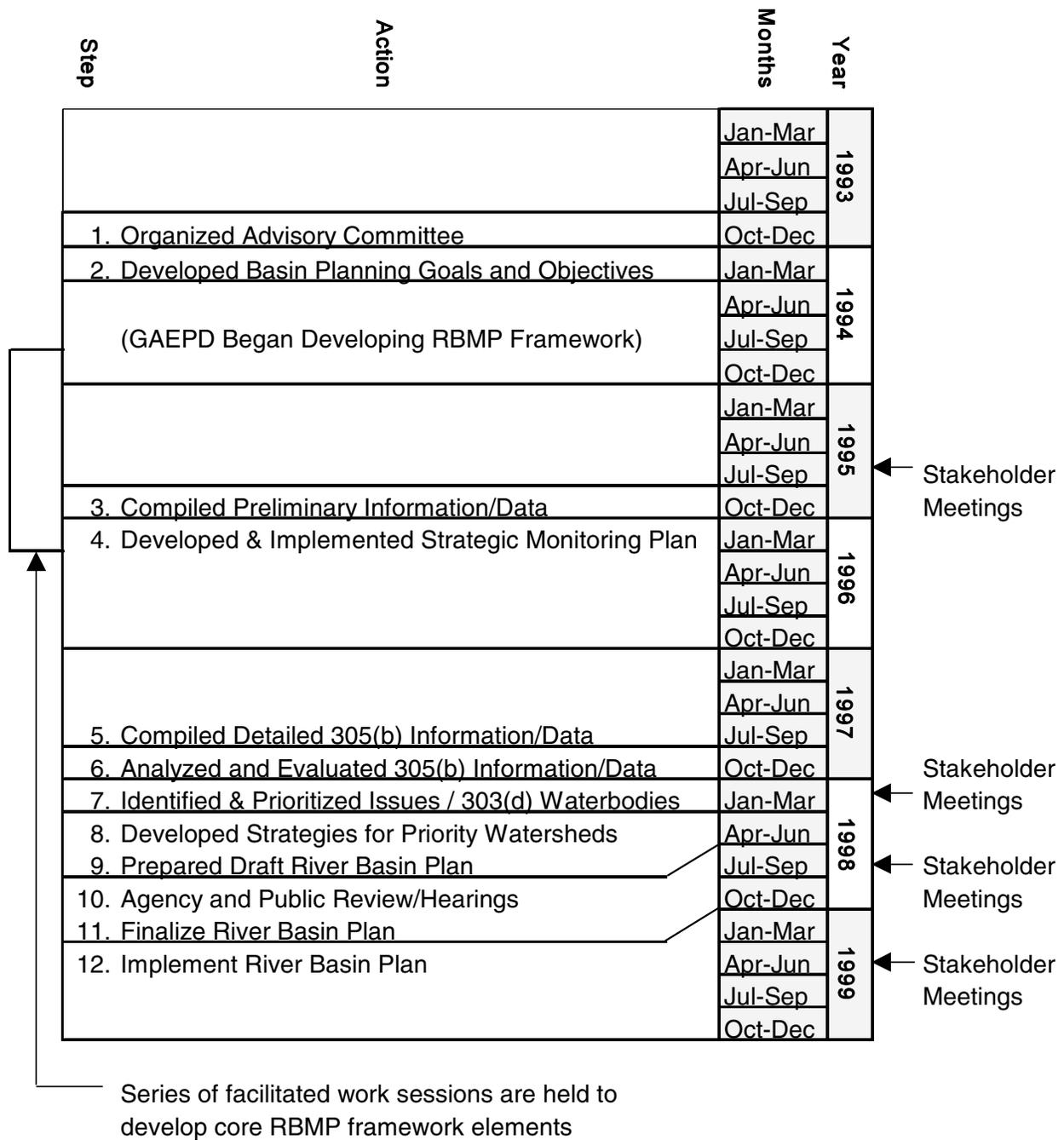


Figure I-2. Oconee River Basin Schedule, 1st Cycle, 1993-1999

Members of the basin team are selected from EPD programs and branches, and other interested governmental partners (e.g., the Department of Community Affairs, GFC, GSWCC, NRCS, and WRD). Emphasis is placed on technical knowledge, available resources, and potential implementation responsibilities. Other agencies may act as partners in the RBMP process, contributing resources and expertise, while not being directly involved in Basin Team activities. Support and provide input to the agency that represents your interests.

Step	Action	Months	Year	
1. Organize Advisory Committee and Basin Team 2. Review Basin Planning Goals and Objectives 3a. Compile Preliminary Information/Data 3b. Review Preliminary Information/Data 4. Develop Strategic Information Collection Plan		Jan-Mar	1998	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
5a. Implement Monitoring Plan 5b. Compile Detailed Information/Data		Jan-Mar	1999	
		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		
6. Analyze and Evaluate Detailed Information		Jan-Mar	2000	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Apr-Jun		
7. Update Basin Assessment and Priority Issues List 8. Develop Strategies for Priority Issues		Jul-Sep	2001	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Oct-Dec		
		Jan-Mar		
9. Prepare/Update Draft River Basin Plan 10. Agency and Public Review/Hearings		Apr-Jun	2002	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Jul-Sep		
11. Finalize River Basin Plan 12. Implement River Basin Plan		Oct-Dec	2003	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Jan-Mar		
		Apr-Jun		
		Jul-Sep		
		Oct-Dec		

Figure I-3. Oconee River Basin Schedule, 2nd Cycle, 1998-2003

Support the Local Advisory Committee

The local advisory committees provide advice and counsel to EPD during river basin management plan development, representing a forum for involving local stakeholders. These local advisory committees form a link between EPD and the regulated community and local watershed interests. The local advisory committee will be reorganized simultaneously with the basin teams.

The committees consist of local people representing a variety of stakeholder interests including local governments, agriculture, industry, forestry, environmental groups, land-owners, and citizens. Committee members and chairs are appointed by the EPD Director following a nomination process at the beginning (step 1) of each river basin planning cycle. These committees meet periodically during the planning cycle and provide input to EPD in the creation of river basin management plans. Meetings are called at the discretion of the chairman of the local advisory committee, and all meetings are open to the public. Table 1-1 lists the members of the Oconee River Basin Local Advisory

Table I-I. Oconee River Basin Local Advisory Committee Members

Mr. Al Crace County Manager Clarke County Post Office Box 1868 Athens, Georgia 30613-4199	Mr. Chuck Moody Oconee Environmental Coalition 351 Milledge Avenue Milledgeville, Georgia 31061
Mr. Bill Evans Environmental Affairs Georgia Power Company 333 Piedmont Avenue Post Office Box 4545 Atlanta, Georgia 30302	Mr. William Segars Cooperative Extension Service University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service Cooperative Extension Service Athens, Georgia 30602
Mr. Albert Ike, Chairman Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission 300 Old College University of Georgia Athens, Georgia 30602	Ms. Danna Smith Georgia Environmental Organization 334 Bil Rutledge Road Winder, Georgia 30680
Ms. Mary Kay Lynde-Maas Project Engineer Southeast Paper Manufacturing Post Office Box 1169 Dublin, Georgia 31040	Mr. Steve Tomlin Union Camp Route 1, Box 223 Ailey, Georgia 30410
Mr. Drew Marczak Georgia Pacific Corporation Post Office Box 990 Watkinsville, Georgia 30677-2524	

Committee serving for the first planning cycle (1995-1999). Support and provide input to the committee member who represents your interests.

Participate in Stakeholder Forums

While River Basin Advisory Committees operate at the major basin level, there is an opportunity under RBMP for more localized stakeholder forums to play an important role in the creation and implementation of water resources management strategies. Some strategies, such as best management practices (BMPs) to control pollutant runoff from urban, agricultural or forestry areas, are best managed at the city, county, or sub-watershed level. These local forums might already exist in the form of conservation districts or watershed associations, or may be created as an outgrowth of RBMP.

Attend a stakeholder meeting

The RBMP approach includes regularly-scheduled stakeholder meetings, which provide the opportunity for the general public to learn about the status of water-related issues and management activities in their river basin, as well as contribute input that can influence basin management planning.

Figures 1-2 and 1-3 show the timing of stakeholder meetings that have been and will be held as part of the Oconee basin RBMP cycles. The first two groups of stakeholder meetings have already been held for the current planning cycle. EPD hosted initial stakeholder meetings at Athens and Dublin in July, 1995 to invite and encourage stakeholder input early in the planning process for the Oconee River basin. Second

stakeholder meetings were held at Athens and Dublin in February, 1998 to discuss water quality assessment results, problem areas, and prioritization of actions to address problem areas. A third group of stakeholder meetings—to give stakeholders the opportunity to review this river basin management plan—is planned for the fall of 1998. This meeting will also be used to provide stakeholders an opportunity to be involved in the planning for the next cycle of focused water quality monitoring in the Oconee basin. A fourth group of meetings in 1999 will give stakeholders a chance to discuss implementation of management strategies. The dates of ensuing stakeholder meetings are indicated in Figure 1-3.

What's Next?

This plan was reviewed by governmental partners, the Oconee River Basin Advisory Committee, and the public. Public meetings were held to solicit comments and recommendations regarding the river basin management plan. Following this review, appropriate modifications were made to the plan, and the final plan was submitted for review and acceptance by the Board of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The RBMP cycle for the Oconee will become synchronized with the schedule for the Ocmulgee and Altamaha basins, and partners and stakeholders will continue with the next 5-year cycle iteration to evaluate and update the plan as necessary.