

**Suwannee River Water Management District
Minutes of
Upper and Middle Suwannee River MFL Peer Review Virtual Meeting (Meeting 3)**

GoTo Webinar Link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/821308128770663264>

**Tuesday, May 2, 2023
1:00 p.m.**

Meeting participants that chose to identify themselves are listed below.

Peer Review Panel

Marty Hamel, Peer Review Panelist
Gregg Jones, Peer Review Panel Chair
Adam Munson, Peer Review Panelist

District Staff and Representatives

Amy Brown	Louis Mantini
Sean King	Chelsea Dinon

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.

Summary of Discussion

Public comment deadline has been moved to May 31, 2023.

Peer reviewer Adam Munson addressed potential bias in the estimates used in the hindcasting and gap filling process, typically in groundwater wells, and subsequently used in the NFSEG model. Adam pointed out one hindcast had an average error almost equal to the absolute average error, which suggests bias and appears to underpredict. This analysis was conducted for the Middle Suwannee River but was not presented as clearly in the Upper Suwannee River MFL Report. Adam would like to see more error calculations particularly for the Upper Suwannee analyses. Sean King, SRWMD MFL Office Chief, clarified the NFSEG model was only calibrated for water years 2001 and 2009, which was where the groundwater well data was used. The RTF process used a hindcasted water use dataset, and no groundwater well data. Gregg would like to see a more detailed discussion of the RTF development process, and he'd like to see the District address assumptions that are made in the NFSEG model. Adam agreed.

Adam's second comment focused on the velocity characteristics of sturgeon fish passage. He and Peer Reviewer Marty Hamel thought this was a valuable piece that was not addressed and should be included. Marty pointed out that, while data may be limited on adults, there are published reports that include critical swimming speeds for juvenile Gulf sturgeon and that information should be incorporated.

Adam's third comment centered on the potential use of surface water at flows above the median. He expressed concern for the language used in this report as it may not make sense to differentiate the difference between the 45th and the 55th percentile when determining significant

harm thresholds. Gregg and Adam mentioned methods used by SWFWMD such as setting a minimum high flow MFL and limiting the amount of water that could be taken during high flows to reduce impacts.

Marty Hamel's comments were related to the Gulf sturgeon. He said flow velocities need to be included in this analysis. He also thinks the habitat of holding areas needs to be defined, and that the District should investigate how various flow regimes can impact the holding area habitats. Secondly, minimum flow velocities need to be considered for both spring and fall spawning period for successful year classes.

Gregg Jones mentioned Figure 30 in the USR MFL Report titled "Estimated net yearly groundwater withdrawal impacts of Suwannee River at five USGS gauges." Gregg didn't understand how the gauge at White Sulfur Spring can show no impact when flows have steadily declined over the decades unless the river gauge is upstream of the spring. The District confirmed the river gauge is upstream of the spring. Gregg suggested a paragraph to explain this discrepancy.

Gregg noted that the only location of injection well hindcasting is Alachua County. He suggested if Alachua County is the only location within the NFSEG model domain that uses injection wells, that needs to be specified in the MFL document.

Gregg showed Figure 72 in the USR MFL Report and requested clarification when interpreting the graph.

Gregg suggested that the District address drought conditions, even if that means including a couple sentences that point to the permitting or regulatory processes after MFL establishment.

Gregg commented on the Floridan aquifer freshwater storage capabilities. He suggests the District address freshwater storage and supply in the Floridan Aquifer while considering the groundwater to surface water equilibrium that existed prior to development.

Gregg showed Figure 4-3 on page 83 of the Middle Suwannee River MFL Report. He noted the "H" is missing from the graphic. Additionally, he questioned why the application of the amount of available water for withdrawal was where indicated on the graph instead of higher. Sean King replied in saying the graphic was specific to the most limiting metric, such as sturgeon passage.

Discussion of peer reviewer report logistics:

Gregg proposed that reviewers focus on major topics and discuss based on 3 categories: data quality, technical assumptions, and procedures and analyses. Reviewers will only comment if they have comments that should be reviewed and addressed by the District. Reviewers cannot share one document outside of the WebBoard or public meeting. Adam and Marty will fill out their own peer review comment forms. Once those have been completed, Gregg will compile comments into one document.

Chelsea Dinon, MFL Environmental Scientist, gave an overview of the WebBoard. The WebBoard will be used by the peer reviewers only for the purpose of interacting with each other while remaining compliant with the Sunshine Law.

Public comment:

Public comment 1:

Roberto Denis commented the reviewers are right to emphasize the importance of the RTFs, and its difficult to remove the uncertainty as the process is complex. He stated the 2009 adjusted RTF does not match the NFSEG model outputs for the same year, which needs to be addressed. Secondly, he agreed with the peer reviewers in the seasonality of this MFL and suggested not setting one MFL at the median but incorporating seasonality in the MFL development.

Public comment 2:

John Quarterman suggested the District consider wells in pine plantation ditches. He questioned if the model can predict what will happen in the next 10 years when the phosphate mine is no longer operational.

Next Public meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 16th from 1:30-3:00pm

Meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.