

WaterSC and Your Community

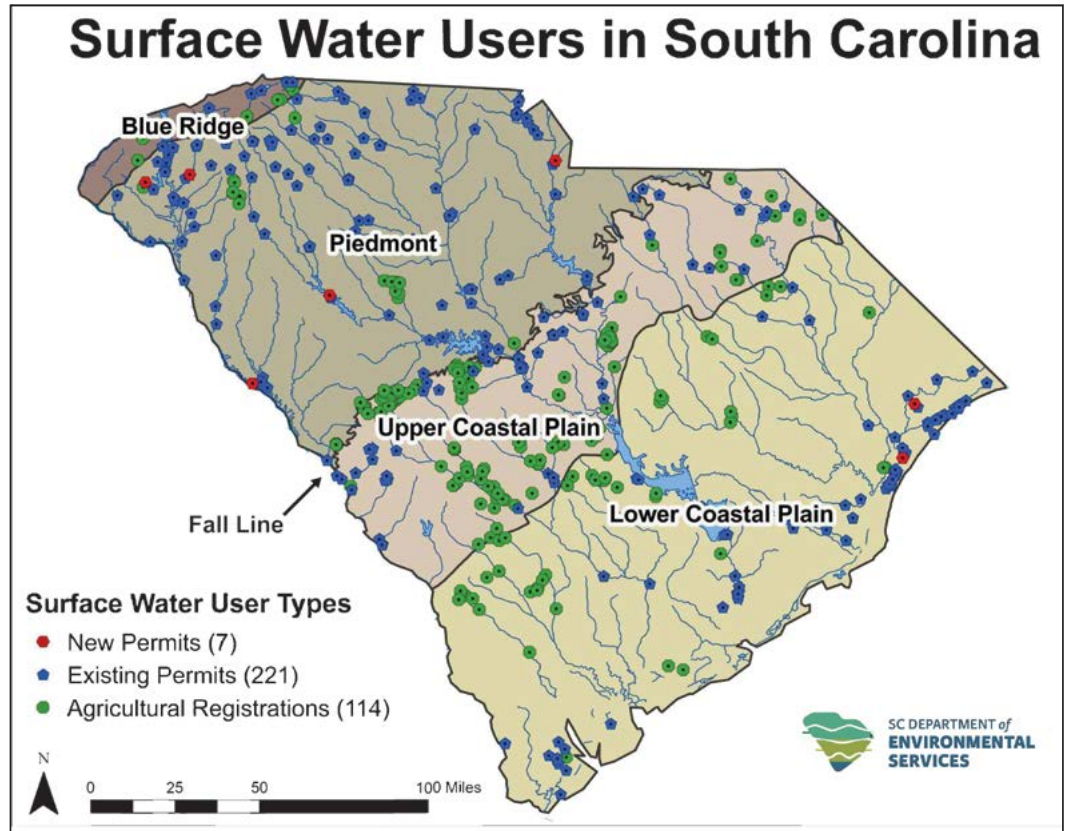
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You can find FOLKS Board Member and Advisor Dr. John Hains’s report of the Upper Savannah River Basin Council (USRBC) in the special edition of *Keowee* magazine. The USRBC plans will be incorporated into the updated South Carolina Water Plan, which will also involve WaterSC Water Resources Working Group (WaterSC) and stakeholder studies and comments.

The South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) website for WaterSC explains the organization’s development:

On Sept. 24, 2024, Governor Henry McMaster issued Executive Order 2024-22, establishing the WaterSC Water Resources Working Group. WaterSC works across state agencies and with key stakeholders to develop a state water plan that balances South Carolina’s economic and environmental interests to ensure the long-term protection of the state’s water resources as demand increases from record-breaking economic development and population growth.

Joe Koon, SCDES’s Director of Water Resources, presented



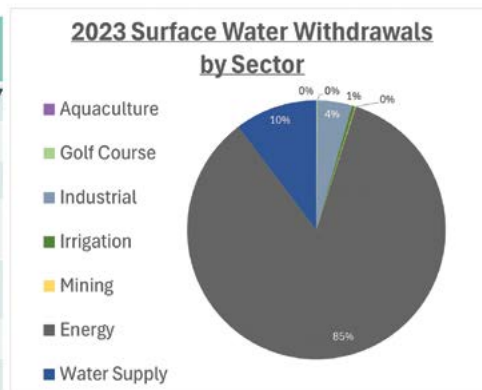
the “State of Surface Water in SC” at the WaterSC meeting on November 22. In 2023, 95% of water withdrawals in SC were from surface water, excluding hydropower. From 2013–2023, withdrawals for energy increased 3.1%. (However, the majority of water is returned after processing.) Withdrawals for water supply increased 19.3% and industrial withdrawals increased 13.7%. Total surface water withdrawals have increased 3.8%; excluding energy, they have increased 7.9%. Population and economic growth, as well as drought have been contributing factors. WaterSC is considering

the long-term surface water use that is likely as a result of this growth.

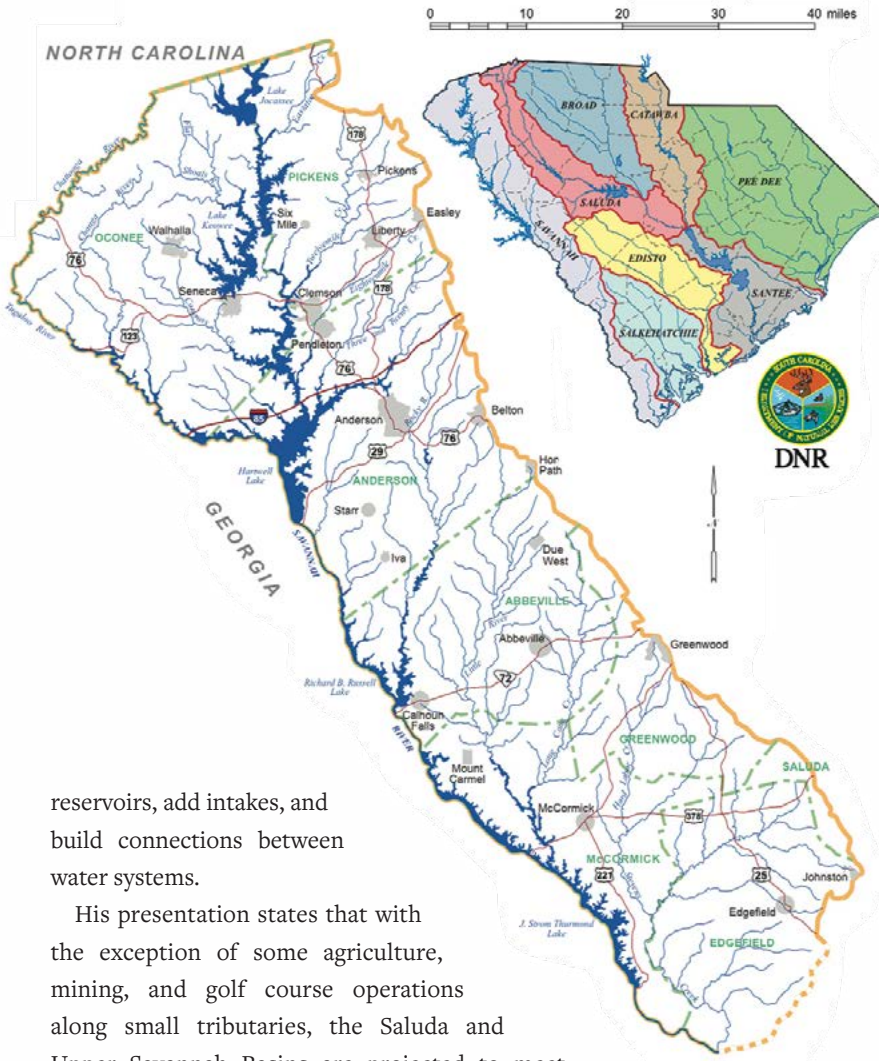
Engineer John Boyer from CDM Smith discussed modeling based upon historical hydrologic data at the November meeting. Models of Upstate water basins indicate the ability to meet current needs. However, in a High Demand Scenario, the Broad River Basin, which contains parts of 11 counties, including all of Cherokee, Spartanburg, and Union Counties, may need to optimize use of

2023 Reported Surface Water Withdrawals

Water Use Sector	Water Used (Million Gallons)
1. Energy	1,742,747
2. Water Supply	210,769
3. Industry	90,119
4. Agricultural Irrigation	8,449
5. Golf Course Irrigation	3,214
6. Mining	1,538
7. Aquaculture	337



UPPER SAVANNAH RIVER BASIN



reservoirs, add intakes, and build connections between water systems.

His presentation states that with the exception of some agriculture, mining, and golf course operations along small tributaries, the Saluda and Upper Savannah Basins are projected to meet High Demand water supply needs through 2070. He notes, “If surface water users withdrew their full permitted and registered amounts, there would be frequent and significant shortages in the Broad and Saluda Basins, but relatively few shortages in the Upper Savannah Basin (Boyer).” Only longer and severe droughts could stress the Upper Savannah and Broad Basins.

Laura Renwick of SCDES Media Relations notes, “We’re asking residents to be active participants in WaterSC by watching meetings, reading the WaterSC Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and providing comments to the WaterSC Resource Working Group by emailing WaterSC@des.sc.gov or using the online form at des.sc.gov/WaterSC.”

They encourage members of the public to attend listening sessions to speak to stakeholders, ask questions, and provide input. 🌸

2025 MEETING INFORMATION

WaterSC meeting recordings, presentations, and minutes will be made available on the website in the days after the meetings. Meeting dates are currently tentative and subject to change with appropriate notice made. Meetings are available to the public by watching live on SCETV.

FEBRUARY 20 WORKING GROUP MEETING

- Details TBD

MARCH 20 WORKING GROUP MEETING

- Details TBD

APRIL 8, 9, 10 LISTENING SESSIONS IN STATEWIDE LOCATIONS

- Listening Sessions in statewide locations with opportunities for public comment
- Details TBD

APRIL 24 WORKING GROUP MEETING

- Details TBD

MAY 15 WORKING GROUP MEETING

- Details TBD

JUNE 19 WORKING GROUP MEETING

- Details TBD