



St. Marys River Management Committee

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2013 Annual Report

To the County Commissioners:

Please accept this document as the Committee's required Annual Report.

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or Committee) is a quasi-governmental advisory panel established by Interlocal Agreement between Baker and Nassau counties in Florida and Camden and Charlton counties in Georgia. The Committee is comprised of five voting representatives from each county: one county commissioner and four appointed members (two riverfront landowners or representatives of corporations with riverfront property and two at-large members). One representative from the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and one representative from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) serve as non-voting members. All meetings are open to the general public with notice provided on the Committee's website: www.saintmarysriver.org.

Summary of 2013 Committee Activity

Activity in 2013 focused on four major areas: public outreach, water quality, land use and planning, and water quantity (including many state and federal permits and regulations). Each of these focus areas has a subcommittee of three to four appointed members who track the issues between monthly meetings.

I. PUBLIC OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE

Almost 800 volunteers picked up an estimated 19 tons of trash during the Annual River Clean Up and Celebration on March 24, 2013. Keep Nassau Beautiful donated the use of dumpsters. Charlton County disposed of 250 tires collected in Charlton and Nassau counties. Camden County volunteers disposed of 170 tires. Baker County residents had a separate tire collection earlier in the month. Following the Clean Up, volunteers were rewarded with t-shirts, hotdogs, and a big thank you at the River Celebration at Trader's Hill Campground. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (G-EPD) brought a septic tank demonstration, which both adults and children enjoyed. Committee members distributed septic tank maintenance information. The Flea Hill area in Camden County was added as a site in 2013. In 2014, SMRMC hopes to expand the Clean

The St. Marys River Management Committee is an intergovernmental entity of elected and appointed members from the four counties framing the river: Charlton and Camden, GA, and Nassau and Baker, FL.

The committee advises the four county commissions and provides a public forum on issues concerning the St. Marys River.

Up to include some of the tributaries. Grants received from Rayonier and the M. K. Pentecost Ecological Fund will help defray the \$1,500 cost of expanding the tire pick up in 2014.

In September and October, SMRMC members staffed booths at the Catfish and Okefenokee Festivals to distribute information about the Committee, the River Clean Up, and septic system maintenance. At each festival, the committee awarded free septic pumpouts and inspections funded by a section 319 grant to the University of Georgia River Basin Center (UGA-RBC) and Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

The Public Outreach Subcommittee also began researching the advantages of joining the Georgia River Network and the criteria for being designated a Blueway. The Blueway designation would further the SMRMC goal of expanding river access and extending awareness and appreciation of the river.

II. WATER QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE

The Water Quality Subcommittee focused on assisting with the final year of the Clean Water Act Section 319 Grant awarded to UGA-RBC to address the problems outlined in the Implementation Plan for Horsepen Creek (Camden County). At a barbeque held in November 2012, residents of the Horsepen Creek watershed were given the opportunity to sign up for free septic tank pumpouts and system inspections. Of the 12 tanks pumped, all but two had maintenance problems. Three were repairable; the remaining seven required either major repairs or replacement. At least one property had no suitable site for a traditional system and needed an advanced technology unit. Since the funds for the grant were limited, UGA-RBC elected to repair three rather than replace one unit. G-EPD gave the grantees permission to channel all remaining monies to inspection and repair rather than follow-up water quality testing of the creek. UGA-RBC has applied for additional funding to conduct additional repairs and inspections in Horsepen Creek and assess, repair and/or replace septic systems in other similarly situated communities in Camden County. This is a continuation of the effort to develop a long-term septic management strategy for the county.

The grant also funded a demonstration system at Temple Landing, a nearby public access to the St. Marys River. The restrooms at the facility had long been plagued with drainfield problems. Though the soils on most of the park were problematic, the county soil scientist did find a suitable site. The 319 grant funded \$7,700 of the cost and Camden County paid the remaining \$1,000 as part of a county park upgrade program.

Other concurrent 319 grants aimed at improving the water quality of the St. Marys River are one addressing the historically low dissolved oxygen levels in the Catfish Creek to Miller Branch segment near the U. S. 17 bridge (Camden County), and another grant providing for mapping and visual inspection of all septic systems in Charlton, Brantley and Ware counties.

Charlton County has begun the application process for requesting funding for an implementation plan for Spanish Creek. The 2013 grant cycle did not fund new implementation plans but instead focused on remediation plans for implementation plans already approved. Charlton County is

approaching Southeast Georgia Regional Commission for assistance with grant preparation for the 2014 cycle.

In 2012, the Florida Legislature rescinded a 2010 law, which would have required the Florida Department of Health to create and administer a statewide septic tank inspection program. Florida Department of Environmental Protection currently tests sites on the main stem of the river where the main problem is high mercury levels. They have begun testing tributaries; the Little St. Marys River and Deep Creek show high levels of fecal coliform. Other impairments will likely be identified as testing sites are added.

III. LAND USE SUBCOMMITTEE

The City of St. Marys (Camden County) applied for and received a grant to address the derelict vessel problem in their harbor.

There continues to be great concern in Charlton County over the EZBase trials by JEA on Rayonier property in the county. In March, Scott Schultz, Director of By-Product Services with JEA, gave a presentation to the Committee about the production and use of EZBase by-product material. A copy of the presentation can be found on the Committee's website, <http://www.saintmarysriver.org>, under Meeting Documents for March 4. SMRMC periodically contacted G-EPD concerning the permit and their findings. Earthkeepers St. Marys Riverwatch group also monitored the EZBase issue. In June, Earthkeepers St. Marys informed SMRMC that JEA had submitted their EZ base test results but that G-EPD had not publicly released their interpretation. Earthkeepers submitted a public records request for the results and interpretation when they are available. As of December they had not received any information and G-EPD had provided SMRMC with no updates.

In January, SMRMC found that Richard Blaudow, Advanced Technology Services, Inc., had purchased the Devil's Elbow property (Charlton County) from The Nature Conservancy (December 5, 2012). The subcommittee reviewed the conservation easement and remained concerned about potential development of the property. Al Crace, Charlton County Administrator felt that SMRMC should speak with the new owners since private investors would purchase more and more of the river property as long-time landowners and timber companies began to sell their tracts, and SMRMC should monitor the land use of each purchase.

During meetings from June through August, the committee reviewed and discussed two sand mining proposals in Baker County and considered their potential impact to the St. Marys River. There was discussion about the potential benefits of the proposed reuse of the city of Macclenny's treated wastewater, by eliminating the discharge of wastewater to a tributary of the St. Marys River, and there were questions raised about the potential adverse impacts to the aquifer, and possibly related impacts to the river, from the proposed mining activities. The Baker County Commission denied the zoning application for one of the proposed sand mines, but the committee will continue to review land use proposals that have the potential to impact the flow or water quality of the river.

In October, Angela Ten Broeck, the property manager for Traders Hill Farms in Nassau and Charlton Counties and the current overseer of the Devil's Elbow Tract made a presentation to the Committee. Richard and Bridgette Blaudow, owners of Trader's Hill Farms, also attended to answer questions. Ten Broeck's major involvement is with the Nassau County landholding where she oversees a sustainable tilapia and hydroponic vegetable farm. Ten Broeck said that at the Devil's Elbow property plans are to build a farmhouse and conference center for use by Blaudow's clients and associates at Advance Technologies Inc. The owners intend to maintain the wetlands and regenerate the upland longleaf pine community. There are also tentative plans to install a second access to the river.

The Land Use Subcommittee also maintained contact with the Camden County Board of Commissioners throughout the two years of the 319 grant for Horsepen Creek and will continue to support UGA-RBC, as needed, for future grant projects.

IV. WATER QUANTITY SUBCOMMITTEE

The Water Quantity Subcommittee continued to monitor NOAA's ongoing discussions about the necessity of and funding for additional river gauges along the St. Marys River. Federal sequestration reduced funding levels to the point that gauges will be impossible for the foreseeable future.

SMRMC looked into the possibility of producing and installing county monitored gauges at St. George Bridge (SR2), Reynolds Bridge, U.S. 1 in Boulogne, and the boat ramp in King's Ferry. SJRWMD can provide benchmark and elevation data to help calibrate the gauges. SMRMC will continue to work on river gauges to provide serial data about rate of river rise during flood events.

In 2014, the subcommittee will also look into monitoring in place and needed for stormwater runoff at county landfills within the St. Marys River basin.

V. PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

SMRMC continued to attend meetings of the Southeastern Fisheries Restoration Project. After finding relict populations of Atlantic white sturgeon in the St. Marys River, the project shifted attention to striped bass and American shad.

Ashby Nix was hired as Satilla Riverkeeper in June. In July, she attended the SMRMC meeting to discuss her goals for her tenure as Riverkeeper. Though SMRMC and the Satilla Riverkeeper face very different problems with very different tools and approaches, the rivers themselves are similar and we agreed to stay in touch and exchange pertinent information

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE

During 2013, the Camden County Board of County Commissioners appointed Commissioner Tony Sheppard to the committee, as well as at-large representative Rick Frey. The Charlton County Board of County Commissioners appointed Commissioner John Meyer to the committee, as well as property owner Ray Edwards. The Baker County Board of County Commissioners appointed Commissioner James Croft to the committee. Twenty-year member Winifred Stephenson (Nassau County) resigned from the committee in November; her replacement is scheduled to be named in January of 2014.

2013 Income and Expenses: In 2013 SMRMC received \$2,500 in county membership dues (which included \$500 in delinquent payments), per the established Interlocal Agreement. The Committee also received \$1,000 in grant funding and \$ 1,600 in donations for the annual river cleanup. The committee received in-kind contributions from Sand Hill Recycling and State Line Advanced Disposal (both contributed roll-off dumpsters for the river cleanup).

Total receipts for 2013 were \$5100. Expenditures totaled \$2218.39, including \$1916.59 for the administrative assistant (including costs for mileage), \$119.40 for office supplies and postage, \$54 for a postal box, and \$128.40 for web services.

VII. 2014 BUDGET

Anticipated County Revenue:

Baker County, FL	\$500.00	
Camden County, GA	\$500.00	
Charlton County, GA	\$500.00	
Nassau County, FL	\$1,000.00 (2012 delinquent)	
		Total: \$2,500.00

Dedicated Revenue:

Grant – Pentecost Fund	\$500.00 (received in 2013)	
		Total: \$500.00

TOTAL REVENUE \$3,000.00

Allocated Expenses:

Administrative Assistant	\$1,200.00	
Office Expenses	\$ 100.00	
Water Quality Luncheon	\$ 150.00	
Community Outreach	\$ 500.00	
		Total \$1,950.00

Anticipated Expenses:

River Celebration	\$1,500.00	
Tire Cleanup Expenses	\$1,500.00	
		Total: \$3,000.00

TOTAL EXPENSES \$4950.00