



St. Marys River Management Committee

Post Office Box 251 • Folkston, GA 31537

St. Marys River Management Committee

2016 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.

River Clean-Up & Celebration

At the March St. Marys River Clean-Up, 650 volunteers collected approximately 38,950 pounds of trash from the river and its banks. The debris included tires in both Camden and Charlton counties. The Celebration which followed at White Oak Plantation was well attended despite the drizzly overcast weather. The newly formed St. Marys Riverkeeper will assume leadership of the St. Marys River Clean-Up & Celebration starting in 2017. The Committee wishes to thank Dean Woerhle for his many years of dedication running the event.

Land Use

Baker County workshopped issues surrounding sandmining in 2016 and hopes to update their ordinances in 2017. It was reported that a Tampa area senator brought legislation to reduce Florida Department of Transportation appropriations to counties restricting sand mining. The legislation was not approved, but it may be an issue that returns to the Senate.

Baker County continues to struggle with the administration of the Shoals Park. In the absence of funding to staff the park, there are ongoing problems with misuse and vandalism. Over the summer, an outbreak of southern pine beetle resulted in emergency cutting of trees. In the fall, Baker County reported that the contract on the Shoals Park was renegotiated and they have applied for a grant to do trail work. SMRMC offered to help organize a volunteer clean-up day. In September, South Prong Plantation, in Baker County, was selected from a field of 122 applicants to be funded by the state of Florida under the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. The program focuses on protecting working farms from development while simultaneously preserving high value conservation areas. North Florida Land Trust facilitated the grant application.

In December of 2015, over 400 people attended a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) scoping meeting regarding the application for an operational license for a spaceport in Camden

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County. There was a legislative subcommittee meeting with the Georgia House and Senate Science Committee and a public hearing on the Spaceport in September 2016. The environmental concerns voiced at the hearing included solid rocket propulsion, habitat destruction and noise pollution. FAA countered that the Cape Kennedy design model they are using included a large buffer between the development and the marsh/river aimed which should limit impact. The FAA application for the spaceport will begin following the completion of the Environmental Impact Statement.

In December 2016, Camden Board of Commissioners heard a request to subdivide an 80-acre private property on Cumberland Island into 10 sub parcels. There is no development proposed as part of the subdividing action and no current impact on the river is anticipated. A decision will be made at their January meeting.

In December 2016, Nassau County reported that the Board of Commissioners had approved (3-2) the proposed Terra Point stewardship district and that it would be considered by the state House and Senate during the 2017 legislative session. At a Terra Point presentation in 2012, SMRMC voiced concern over vegetative buffers along the riverbank and requirements to adhere to future environmental regulations. There will be an update by Terra Point at the February 2017 SMRMC meeting.

Water Quality-

Kinder Morgan temporarily suspended development of the Palmetto Pipeline after the Georgia General Assembly approved a moratorium on permits while a citizen's commission studied the state's eminent domain laws and made recommendations for improvements. Based on current regulations, it is unclear whether or not private companies qualify for use of eminent domain. The pipeline would cross under the St. Marys River near US301 in Charlton County. Despite repeated attempts in 2016, the Committee was not able to get answers from Kinder-Morgan to questions posed about problems SMRMC foresaw with the crossing. The moratorium terminates in July 2017.

Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) reported a "statistically significant" spike in vanadium in one of the test wells surrounding the Chesser Island Landfill in Charlton County. Vanadium is of special concern because it is one of the heavy metals found in the coal ash waste that the landfill accepts from the JEA plant in Jacksonville. Currently, it appears that the 12.5% increase at one test well near Harris Creek was an isolated event and there are many measures in place to ensure safety and security of ground and surface waters. The Committee will continue to monitor the quarterly reports of the landfill.

Nassau County members continue to be concerned about runoff and discharge from paper mills in Fernandina, in particular the temporary lime piles for the chipping process.

Stream impairments continue to be a problem in all four counties. Work is underway to remediate several of the river and tributary segments listed on the 2012 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Integrated 305(b) and 303(d) List as waters not supporting the designated use of fishing and swimming. The most common impairments in the main stem of the river are mercury and dissolved oxygen. In 2014, Camden County completed a Nine-Element Plan for the Dissolved Oxygen impairment of the Miller Branch to Catfish Creek segment and the City of St. Marys has a second application currently under consideration for the 2017-2018 grant cycle to remediate runoff problems along their waterfront. Two tributaries in Georgia are impaired for fecal coliform; maximum daily loads have been calculated for both segments. The

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Committee partnered with University of Georgia River Basin Center in 2010-2011 on a 319 grant to pinpoint and begin remediation work on Horsepen Creek. Camden County has a second application to continue remediation work under consideration for the 2017-2018 grant cycle. In December 2016, Charlton County submitted a Coastal Incentive Grant to complete a Nine-Element Watershed Plan for Spanish Creek. In addition, the Board of Commissioners supported the SMRMC poster campaign to promote proper septic tank maintenance. The City of Folkston received a grant/loan package of almost \$20 million to replace their current sewage lagoon with a mechanical system, possibly a batch reactor, over the next four years. The lagoon discharges into Clay Branch of Spanish Creek. Though several St. Marys tributaries in Florida were categorized as impaired on the initial list in 1998, only one is listed as impaired by Florida Department of Environmental Protection in their Integrated Water Quality Assessment for Florida: 2016 Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314 Report and Listing Update. The only listings, other than main stem mercury impairments in the 2016 document were for mercury in Ocean Pond 2339 (Baker County) and fecal coliform in Deep Creek 2196 (Nassau County). The dissolved oxygen impairments are no longer listed. SMRMC will question FDEP about the discrepancy in 2017 and report to the two Florida counties when the data is available.

Water Quantity

The new St. Marys River gage is installed and operational at Traders Hill. The data for the gage can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/stmarysrivergage>

Other

Commissioner Spicer mentioned that a group from Ft. White requested that the Nassau Board of County Commissioners pass a resolution against fracking. He mentioned that 24 counties and 39 cities in Florida have resolutions against fracking. Commissioner James Croft relayed the same group came before the Baker County Board. Neither county was ready to draft resolutions.

Additional Advocacy and Protection for the St. Marys River

SMRMC has long recognized that its status as a quasi-governmental entity formed under an interlocal agreement between Georgia and Florida counties not only makes it impossible to supplement counties' dues to support work such as annual St. Marys River Clean-Up & Celebration but also impedes quick action and subcommittee work because of the obligation to work within the parameters of sunshine laws of the two states. In 2016, after several years of discussion by SMRMC and with the advice and support of individual past and present committee members, Camden County SMRMC appointee Rick Frey was licensed by the international Waterkeepers Alliance as the St. Marys Riverkeeper. He resigned from the Committee to avoid conflicts of interest.

SMRMC and St. Marys Riverkeeper are cooperating and collaborating on several projects. As a USC 501 (c)(3) non-profit, St. Marys Riverkeeper, Inc. will assume leadership of the St. Marys River Clean-Up & Celebration starting in 2017.

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Admin

Sam Williams, a Georgia DNR Law Enforcement Ranger, was appointed as an at-large member of SMRMC by Charlton County.

Respectfully submitted,



John Myers
GA Chair SMRMC



Chris Gazes
FL Chair SMRMC

2017 Proposed Budget

Anticipated County Revenue:

Baker County, FL:	\$500.00
Nassau County, FL:	\$500.00
Charlton County, GA:	\$500.00
Camden County, GA:	\$500.00

Total Revenue: \$2,000.00

Allocated Expenses:

Administrative Assistant:	\$2700.00
Office Expenses:	\$150.00
Community Outreach:	\$500.00

Total Expenses: \$3350.00

Cash On Hand 01/01/2017: \$5828.58