

**Water Quality Subcommittee
(St. Marys River Management Committee)**

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 2, 2011

6 p.m.

The Water Quality Subcommittee (of the St. Marys River Management Committee/SMRMC) held a meeting on May 2, 2011, at the Cedar River Seafood restaurant in Callahan, Florida.

Members in attendance:

Merrill Varn, Winifred Stephenson, Mike Griffis, Chip Campbell

Septic Tank Issues

The Septic Think Tank meeting was postponed from May 3 to May 31; please let Merrill Varn know if you wish to attend because the meeting will need to be noticed if more than one committee member attends. The Think Tank group will be reviewing the septic regulation spreadsheet and discussing possible improvements that each county could make in the coming year.

Laurie Fowler should hear about results of the Section 319 grant application this month. If she is awarded the grant, we will need to have meetings more frequently than the monthly "Cedar River" discussions. The subcommittee agreed that Wednesday or Thursday nights at 5pm would work the best. Mike Griffis said that we could use his NEFCOM conference call lines in addition to the SJRWMD line that Geoff Sample has volunteered. In either case, Melinda Granlund will need to post the conference call phone numbers on the website in order to adhere to Sunshine rules. If Laurie Fowler is awarded the grant, Merrill Varn said that she would send copies to the subcommittee so that they can become thoroughly familiar with the committee's role before the phone conference calls.

UF Conservation Law Clinic is researching river overlays (including current Nassau and proposed Camden). They are also collecting information on various septic ordinances. Merrill Varn will send them a copy of the Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources sample ordinance.

Mike Griffis reported that the Florida House of Representatives had now formally reversed the septic inspection ordinance. The companion Senate bill will be on the floor very soon. Merrill Varn commented that this is exactly what Chad Bickerton had described in his March 3 talk to the FL/GA Water Quality Technical Meeting that SMRMC organized and sponsored. Merrill Varn also said that it would be interesting to see what happened with Florida's 319 funding since that was basically contingent upon septic inspection.

Fecal Coliform Impairments-

Merrill reported that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has completed collation of the fecal coliform data for the two states and has allocated 10 samples per month for the St. Marys tributary project. FDEP has completed preliminary investigations of two of the five tributaries- Brandy Branch and the Little St. Marys. Merrill Varn asked if anyone wanted to

help with remaining 3 recons. Winifred Stephenson said she might be able to get off work. FDEP has completed their Implementation Guidance for Fecal Coliform TMDLs. Merrill Varn said that she would send everyone the link to the document so that they could become familiar with the process the tributary project would be following.

Water Quantity Issues

Miocene Holdings- Merrill Varn reported that investigation into the Miocene Holdings withdrawal application had shown that the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) permit offices were operating independently on this application. A great deal of discussion ensued but in summary it was decided that the section of the river would be impacted mostly by the quality of the discharge. While the net withdrawal described in the application may not impact the river, if water was not replaced while it was being withdrawn it may have an impact on the river biota. There was concern that the two monitoring stations between which the project would be located, Moniac and Macclenny, both have more flow than the area where the withdrawal is proposed. The major concern is with the water quality of the discharge. Merrill Varn said that tannins are critical in nutrient cycling; Chip Campbell said their absence could impact biota. Campbell said that adherence to federal discharge requirements (pH and DO in particular) could also alter the characteristics of the river because the flow is so limited at that location. Campbell said he wouldn't be so concerned if the discharge was further downstream where it could be diluted.

JEA CUP- Merrill Varn reported that JEA is consolidating a number of its consumptive use permits into one large one. St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) is recommending approval of the application with numerous conditions. Merrill Varn was most concerned by the fact that the technical report indicated that there would be a drawdown of the surrounding surface waters. Waters to the north were not supposed to be affected because of the impervious confining layer. She was concerned that SJRWMD was only requiring JEA to monitor surface waters to the south and southwest. She said that the Suwannee River and Santa Fe River were both specified as being impacted. She hadn't seen any mention of the St. Marys River. Chip Campbell was concerned because the Hawthorne Formation was not solid throughout.

Proposal of Water Quantity subcommittee- Merrill Varn said that she had asked Melinda to put discussion of water quantity subcommittee on the SMRMC agenda for tonight. The above two water quantity issues would be moved to their purview since the water quality subcommittee was already busy with septic think tank and fecal coliform impairment studies and possibly a Section 319 grant.