

St. Marys River Management Committee

P.O. Box 251 Folkston, Georgia 31537

MINUTES OF MEETING

July 1, 2013

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its noticed meeting on July 1, 2013, at the Nassau County Building in Callahan, Florida. Committee members and visitors in attendance are listed at the end of the minutes. A quorum of members was present.

Call to Order and Housekeeping Items

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman Chip Campbell at 7:13 p.m. Members and visitors introduced themselves. The draft agenda was reviewed and approved. Previous meeting minutes from June 3, 2013, were reviewed and approved. John Myers, committee Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report for June: the committee's main account had a balance of \$6,264.12, including receipts for \$1,000.00 from Camden County, \$500.00 from Nassau County, and \$500.00 in grant funding from Rayonier. It was determined that Baker County was the only county yet to submit funding for 2013; Al Crace, Charlton County Administrator, said he would check on that.

Satilla Riverkeeper Presentation

Ashby Nix, the Satilla Riverkeeper, spoke briefly to the committee about the Satilla River and her role as Riverkeeper. She described the river, including its similarities to the St. Marys River. She discussed some of the impairments affecting the river and the invasive species that are impacting the river. Nix said some man-made channels along the river are impacting the river's flow and its wildlife.

Nix said she was hired as the Riverkeeper several weeks ago, and prior to her assuming the role, the position was handled on an interim basis by Clay Montague. Nix said she is still learning about the needs of the river. She expressed interest in the role the SMRMC serves for the St. Marys River, and said the Satilla River would benefit from a similar style volunteer group. Nix said there are 10 members on the Satilla Riverkeeper board, and about 800 individuals on the group's mailing list. Merrill Varn suggested an annual meeting should be held between the SMRMC and the Satilla board.

There was discussion between Nix and several committee members about the invasive Flathead catfish and various ways to dispose of them. There was general discussion about the different fish species in the river. Chip Campbell asked whether there were any sturgeon in the river, and Clay Montague said he wasn't aware of any in the river.

There was discussion about low dissolved oxygen (D.O.) impairments within segments of the river, and about low D.O. on blackwater rivers in general. There was also discussion about fecal coliform impairment on both rivers. Montague said he wasn't aware of any specific fecal coliform impairments in the Satilla, other than what might be directly attributed to local wastewater treatment plants.

*Minutes were formally approved at the SMRMC meeting on August 5, 2013.

Sand Mining Update

Due to Kevin Shell's absence, the committee did not discuss amending the original "sand mining concerns" letter.

Chip Campbell said he had heard that Old Castle's consumptive use permit application has been withdrawn. Chris Gazes said the county's zoning approval for the mining operation is up for a vote on July 16.

Campbell said he was concerned about the supposed lack of a clay confining layer in proposed mining area. He said he couldn't find any documentation that indicates the lack of a confining layer. Alice Vick said the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's data shows the confining layers between the Upper and Lower Floridian aquifer are hydraulically connected and because of that, they are not issuing further withdrawal permits for Savannah and the surrounding the area.

There was general discussion about what will happen to the water that is withdrawn for the sand mining.

Subcommittee Updates

Water Quality Subcommittee

John Myers said he, Karen Chisholm, and Scott Pippin (with the University of Georgia River Basin Center – UGA-RBC) attended the June 18 Camden County Commission meeting to provide an update on the Section 319 Horsepen Creek grant. The UGA-RBC will continue to seek grants to continue the work started with the Horsepen Creek project. Myers said the timeframe for the construction of the demonstration system at the Browntown Park (at Temple Landing) has been pushed back significantly, possibly to next year. In order to keep the community informed and involved, the SMRMC subcommittees should shift their focus to public outreach for the upcoming Catfish Festival in Kingsland over Labor Day weekend. Pippin will check with the Environmental Protection Division to determine if hosting a booth at the festival can substitute for the final "public meeting" required by the grant. The committee will ask Pippin for educational materials to distribute at the festival.

Myers also suggested the committee will need to approve expenditures for the festival booth rental and costs to make a banner. Chris Gazes offered a motion for approval of up to \$350 to be spent on festival costs. The motion was seconded by Keith Tindall and approved by the committee.

Karen Chisholm said that four septic tanks in the Browntown area have been repaired, but now the grant is out of money, so she is unsure what will happen next.

Committee Member Updates

Karen Chisholm expressed concern with recent trimming of trees along Temple Creek, near Browntown Road. She said the contractors dropped the trimmed branches in the creek, and they are now impacting the flow of the creek. Al Crace suggested she contact Camden County or the utility company who paid the contractor for the trimming. Alice Vick said such actions are subject to fines.

Rick Frey said the EarthKeepers still have yet to receive any results or test information regarding EZBase. He said he would inform the committee when the data is available.

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Melinda Granlund informed the committee that she would be vacating the administrative assistant position due to her family's relocation to Tallahassee. She said she expects to attend the August meeting, but that will probably be her last one. Committee members expressed interest in continuing to fund the administrative assistant position. Geoff Sample discussed the committee's approach to finding a replacement. The committee agreed to let the co-chairs work with Sample to identify a candidate, under basically the same terms as the current administrative assistant.

Granlund said there was one last box of River Guides available for distribution. John Myers said they could be handed out at the upcoming Catfish festival.

Rick Frey asked if any members were aware of the recent St. Johns Riverkeeper meeting at which there was discussion of cattle farming impacts on Silver Springs. Frey said that a comment was made that only 20-30 years of water remained to flow out of the spring. Approximately 350 million gallons per day are being withdrawn in the Silver Springs area to grow grass for cattle. Frey said information is available through the St. Johns Riverkeeper website.

Chip Campbell said he's looking for any historical data regarding the river to help a colleague who is working on a grant. Several people suggested contacting Eloise Bailey. Dean Woehrle suggested the book, *Yesterday's Reflections*. Karen Chisholm suggested looking at the Camden library.

Public Comment

Al Crace said he met Angela TenBroeck, the new property manager of Traders Hill Farms, which bought the Devil's Elbow property from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Crace said it might be a good idea to invite her to speak to the committee. Commissioner Meyer said he is concerned about some of the proposals for the land (e.g., chicken farming). Crace said he thinks more private investors will become landowners in the future as timber companies and long-time landowners begin to sell their tracts.

Chip Campbell said he and Russell Barber had personal interest in the Devil's Elbow property, as he and Barber were the property caretakers until it was sold. He said he had also heard several questionable proposals about development for the property.

The committee agreed that they would like to invite TenBroeck to speak to the committee. Crace said he would try to arrange for her to attend one the upcoming meetings.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

St. Marys River Management Committee Attendance Log – July 1, 2013

Baker County Members

Chris Gazes

Nassau County Members

Cory Black

Keith Tindall

Dean Woehrle

Camden County Members

Karen Chisholm

Rick Frey

John Myers

Charlton County Members

John Meyer, Commissioner

Russell Barber

Chip Campbell

Merrill Varn

Non-voting Members

Geoff Sample, St. Johns River Water Management District

Alice Vick, Georgia Environmental Protection Division

Administrative Assistant – Melinda Granlund

Visitors

Al Crace, Charlton County

Clay Montague

Steve Nance, Charlton County

Ashby Nix, Satilla Riverkeeper