

St. Marys River Management Committee Minutes

January 12, 2026

Attendees:

Baker - Commissioner Ronald Mann, Danny Norton (FL Co-Chair)

Nassau - Bill Cochran, Dean Woehrle

Camden - Chris Roland, Jay Smith

Charlton - Russell Barber, Chip Campbell (GA Co-Chair), Commissioner James Everett, Merrill Varn

Other - Claire Feazel (SMRMC Admin), Cori Hermle (SJRWMD, Virtual)

- The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was present
- The December agenda was approved
- The December minutes were approved with a correction
- Treasurer's Report - \$8,865.46 as of 12/31/2025

Old Business/Reports

Land Use (including public access)

Baker -

- Boat Ramp - Delay due to FEMA reimbursement and the Florida Forest Service \$380,000 grant - FFS extended grant period by 2.5 years - Demolition on-going - Contract has been let
- Development Projects - Multiple projects within Baker County may impact the St. Marys River. Approximately 680 homes within the first two developments that would be on city sewer and city water - No update for January
 - Barber Point Development - old golf course - on 23A
 - Nehemiah Point - southernmost development on 23A - entrances and exits have been approved by Baker County Board of Commissioners
 - Mid Pointe Development - potentially for unincorporated Baker County
- Maple Set Recreation Area - Improvements at John M. Bethea State Forest, the upper most access point to the river. No update in January
- Reynolds Bridge - connection between northeast Baker County, Florida and southwest Charlton County, Georgia is currently closed. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has the \$8.5 million dollar rebuild is scheduled for 2028 on their Draft Tentative Five-Year Work Program - No update for January
- National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA)- Presentation scheduled for December 2 Board of Commissioners meeting
 - Includes two public feedback sessions
 - Review of 2, 4, 7, and 11-mile kayak trails within Baker County on river from Moniac to Boy Scout Camp
 - Shoals Park - Considering the idea of a recreation development 7-mile kayak trail - Meeting in January - Funding available for kayak/canoe trail

Nassau -

- On Island
 - Brett's Waterway Cafe and Intercoastal - Business closed
 - Boutique Hotel - No update in January
 - Bioethanol plant - Concern with land use plan - \$6.6 million lawsuit filed against City of Fernandina Beach - City has until November to respond - No update in January
 - Beach re-nourishment - No update in January

- Atlantic Seafood Property - Lessee vacated - building most likely to be demolished - No update in January
 - Inland Fernandina Beach - Concern about stormwater management. New areas are flooding from lighter rain events - No update in January
 - Waterfront Park - No movement on construction. Work began in the spring, but stopped during the summer - No update in January
 - New Fishing Pier - Possible seawall and parking construction - in front of Alachua - No update in January
 - Mainland
 - Townhouse Development - No update in January
 - New Race Track development west of I-95, near the Florida Welcome Center - approximately 600 acres
 - BOCC Water-Related Conservation Acquisition Activities
 - Callies on the River - Current negotiating with owner - No update in January
- Camden -
- Blue Bridge - No update in December
 - Raydient Development - Taylor Morrison has begun construction on *Esplanade at St. Marys*, a residential subdivision and golf course - concern remains surrounding adequate water retention on site. It may be possible to obtain storm water plans - Anticipated to open around February/early 2026 - Golf Course will be complete before residential development
 - Temple Creek - Boardwalk complete - Interpretive Trail is under construction
 - Sheffield Island Development - A development has been proposed for the Sheffield Island area in Camden County. The developers are asking for the area to be annexed into the City of Kingsland. Both the city and county have issued statements about the proposed development. City of Kingsland Planning Commission tabled action - No update in January
- Charlton -
- Charlton Camp Pinckney County Park Boat Ramp - Waiting on grant funding to proceed - No update in January
 - Raydient - The Refuge, featuring 12 lots ranging from +/-20 to +/-45 acres along the St. Marys River, has been advertised as “coming soon” from Raydient Rural. This is near the Atlantic White Sturgeon protection area - No update for January

Water Quality

- NPDES - No new or renewed permits in Camden County or Charlton County
- Spanish Creek 319 - Septic tank repair is delayed due to contractor schedule; repair may be rescheduled for next quarter.
 - Funds available for Phase II of septic tank pump-outs - Houses in the priority zone have been contacted and five more tanks have been pumped.
 - Steering Committee designed and printed Q10 newsletter for distribution in January
- Septic Think Tank - Project is currently on hold, but there is still a need to do septic tank maintenance talks with any HOAs on both the Florida and Georgia sides of the river and its tributaries. There is a need to improve communication and education to help property owners understand septic tank maintenance needs and issues - No update for January

- E&S spreadsheet
 - Florida requires a 25' buffer for wetlands, but not for surface waters. The committee continues to work towards a 25' construction buffer for Florida; No update for January
 - Nassau County has included a 50' buffer in the Visioning Exercise of the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update
 - Georgia does not have Nitrogen and Phosphorus (N/P) regulations; No update for January
 - Educational flyer for landscapers - Will redistribute to local hardware stores in Camden and Charlton Counties
- FL TMDL Planning - No update in January
- Georgia EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting - No update in December
- Folkston WasteWater Treatment Plant - No update in January - Pender Lloyd, Folkston City Manager, reported that construction has begun on the new system, which will increase capacity to 1.25 MGD. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2026, with some final installations potentially extending into the first two quarters of 2027. The current facility has a capacity of 1.0 MGD.
 - The GEO Group is in the process of converting the D. Ray James prison facility to expand ICE capacity, bringing the total population to approximately 2,800–3,000 individuals. When both the prison and ICE facility were previously at capacity (3,000), the city's treatment facility was processing 0.75 MGD - No update in January

Water Quantity

- Four County Stormwater
 - Baker County - Vulnerability study still in progress - Working with NEFL Regional Council - deadline extended to March 2026
 - Fara Ilami will make presentation at upcoming meeting (April/May)
 - Nassau County - Following 2023 Vulnerability Assessment County awarded funding for an Adaptation Action Plan - working with City of Fernandina Beach using the same consultant to prevent duplication of services - No update in January
 - Town of Hilliard - working on Vulnerability Study - No update in January
 - Camden County - County has begun work on stormwater grant, but waiting on progress update; No update for January
 - Charlton County - Vulnerability and Stormwater- EPD's Base Level Engineering Map is completed and is being uploaded to the online viewer. Updates are slowly being added to the St. Marys River Watershed
 - No update for January, but work in-progress by Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division (CRD) and St. Marys Riverkeeper may help with Vulnerability Assessment
- City Stormwater rehab -
 - Folkston Stormwater improvements - No update for January
 - Macclenny - Nearing completion of Phase II and anticipate applying for Phase III
- Georgia Water Councils - Coastal Water Council met in December

Regulatory/Comp Plans

- Nassau County No Wake Zone - Currently on hold - No update in January
- Baker County Comprehensive Plan - Consultant still working on the plan - No update for January

- Nassau County Comprehensive Plan - Currently in progress - community visioning sessions have taken place throughout 2025 - No update for January
- Resiliency Plans - The Committee submitted comments on the Section 309 Assessment and 2026–2030 Strategy. The Coastal Resources Division (CRD) acknowledged receipt of the letter and reported that they are coordinating with Dewberry regarding Base Level Engineering (BLE) maps, as well as with FEMA concerning their mapping efforts. CRD also indicated they will remain in contact with the St. Marys Riverkeeper (SMRK) and the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NFRC) regarding their respective resiliency plans - No update for January

Administrative

- 2024 Annual Report
 - Presentation to Nassau County pending
- 2025 Annual Report - Approved 2025 Annual Report

County Projects

- Discussion of possible new project for 2026
 - Updates to ARC Story Map - Goal of adding new GIS layer to identify areas for possible conservation - Will need to engage third-party to assist with this effort

New Business

- Change to Meeting Time - Voted to move meeting time from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. - pending room availability

Partner Reports

- St. Marys Riverkeeper (SMRK) - No update in January
- St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) -
 - SJRWMD Board is meeting in January to discuss future of grant program for mosquito/ditching projects
 - North Florida Southeast Georgia (NFSG) Model - Possible future presentation to discuss water levels
 - Review of Florida Legislative activities - topics include:
 - HB 123 - Removing Soil & Water Boards
 - Growth Management - Taking regulations away from local governments
 - Blue Ribbon - Projects of 10,000 + acres - removing local control
 - SB 208 - 100 acres or less - bypassing local government
 - HB 479 - Home Rule - Preventing local government's efforts re: water quality & water quantity

Committee Member Reports

- No reports for January

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Next Meeting February 2, 2026 Callahan Fire Department