

St. Marys River Management Committee Minutes

December 1, 2025

Attendees:

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

Nassau - Bill Cochran, Commissioner Alyson McCullough

Camden - Commissioner Ben Casey

Charlton - 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 7:07 p.m. A quorum was present
- The December agenda was amended
 - Under New Business, two items were added: 1 - Comment Letter re: Revision of Clean Water Act. 2- Comment Letter re: Revision of Endangered Species Proposed Rule
- The November minutes were approved

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 - No Update for December
- 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
 - 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 December
- 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
- 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

Nassau -

- On Island
 - Brett's Waterway Cafe and Intercoastal - Business closed
 - Boutique Hotel - No update in November
 - 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 December
 - Beach re-nourishment - No update in December

- Atlantic Seafood Property - Lessee vacated - building most likely to be demolished - No update in December
- Inland Fernandina Beach - Concern about stormwater management. New areas are flooding from lighter rain events - No update in December
- Waterfront Park - No movement on construction. Work began in the spring, but stopped during the summer - No update in December
- New Fishing Pier - Possible seawall and parking construction - in front of Alachua - No update in December
- Mainland
 - Townhouse Development - No update in December
- BOCC Water-Related Conservation Acquisition Activities
 - St. Marys Farm - Conservation Easement - Closed Week of 11/24/25. 599 acres and 2.42 miles of St. Marys river frontage
 - Piney Island - Closed Week of 11/24/25 - 43 acres
 - Callies on the River - Current negotiating with owner
 - Atlantic to Okefenokee Conservation Corridor (Florida Forever Project)
 - Conveyed to County in 2024 by Wildlight – 10 acres for future boat ramp on Crandall
 - Acquired 2025 – was potential commercial property, between Piney Island/SR 200

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 - No update in December
- 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 December

Charlton -

- Charlton Camp Pinckney County Park Boat Ramp - Waiting on grant funding to proceed, but county did not apply in most recent grant cycle
- 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 December

Water Quality

- NPDES - No new or renewed permits in Camden County or Charlton County
- Spanish Creek 319 - Educational event was held at recent Founder's Day
 - Grant has provided for 30+ septic tank pump outs (originally promised 25) - costs have been lower than initially anticipated, more pump outs will be possible
 - Grant has repaired 7 septic systems (originally promised 5)
- 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 December

- 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 December
 - 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 December
 - Tim Hiers, of White Oak Conservation, is still working on Best Management Practices (BMP) for golf courses; No update for November
 - Educational flyer for landscapers - No update for December
 - Shared with Ace Hardware for distribution in Charlton County
 - Shared with Ace Hardware and Hometown Feed & Seed for distribution in Camden County
- FL TMDL Planning - No update in December
- Georgia EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting - No update in December
- Folkston Wastewater Treatment Plant - No update in December- 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.

Water Quantity

- Four County Stormwater
 - Baker County - Vulnerability study still in progress - Working with NEFL Regional Council - deadline extended to March 2026
 - 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
 - Town of Hilliard - working on Vulnerability Study
 - Camden County - Resiliency Operations Center open and operating - County has begun work on stormwater grant, but waiting on progress update; No update for December
 - 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
 - Charlton County has hired their first E&S employee
 - No update for December, 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 December
 - Macclenny - No update for December

- Updates needed for Hilliard, Kingsland, and St. Marys
- Georgia Water Councils - December Meeting - will have representative from Committee participate

Regulatory/Comp Plans

- Nassau County No Wake Zone - Applications are almost complete; no update for December
- Baker County Comprehensive Plan - Consultant still working on the plan - County did not receive grant funding for assistance in most recent grant cycle - No update for December
- Nassau County Comprehensive Plan - Currently in progress - community visioning sessions have taken place throughout 2025 - No update for December
- Fishing Tournament/ Want Waste Regulations FL - Following review of current season tournaments, there is not a need for the Committee to take action at this time. Committee can reevaluate in the future as needed - No update for December
- 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 December

Administrative

- 2024 Annual Report
 - Presented to Baker County - February 18, 2025
 - Presented to Camden County - February 18, 2025
 - Presented to Charlton County - February 20, 2025
 - Presentation to Nassau County pending
- 2025 Annual Report - Discussion on items included in the draft report

County Projects

- Boating Safety signs at Boat Ramps
 - Signs have been installed at Traders Hill and Camp Pinckney. All Florida agencies have approved the sign design, and the printed signs are ready for distribution. Delivery to Baker County and to the Florida Forest Service is scheduled for this week. Contact with Nassau County is still pending. Camden County has the sign and it is reported to be up - No update for December

New Business

- Comment Letter re: Revision of Clean Water Act - Committee voted to submit a comment letter. The first concern is the inadequate comment period. The second concern is the lack of available data.
- Comment Letters re: Revision to Endangered Species - Committee voted to submit comment letters. The primary concern is the inadequate comment period. Other concerns include the impacts on the critical habitats (St. Marys River) and the de-listing procedures
- Approved 2026 Meeting Calendar
- Nominating Committee - Commissioner Ben Casey, Commissioner James Everett, and Commissioner Alyson McCullough agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee. They met

during the December meeting and voted to nominate the same slate of officers for 2026. The Committee then voted to approve the slate.

- Florida Co-Chair: Danny Norton
- Georgia Co-Chair: Chip Campbell
- Secretary: Merrill Varn
- Treasurer: Bill Cochran

Partner Reports

- St. Marys Riverkeeper (SMRK) - No update in December
- St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) -
 - SJRWMD is working with the Northeast Florida Regional Council on the Military Readiness Project with a focus on resilience. Working to identify what issues may impact bases moving forward
 - Long-term water supply
 - Increasing urban interface - causing issues with prescribed burns
 - Uncertainty remains regarding SB 180. Although there has been much discussion, actual impacts are unknown

Committee Member Reports

- No reports for December

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

Next Meeting January 5, 2026 Callahan Fire Department