

St. Marys River Management Committee Reports

June 1, 2026

Attendees:

Baker - Danny Norton (FL Co-Chair)

Nassau - William Cochran (Treasurer)

Camden - Commissioner Ben Casey, Joshua Spruell

Charlton - Russell Barber, Chip Campbell (GA Co-Chair), Merrill Varn (Secretary)

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

- The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. A quorum was present
- The June agenda was approved with an addition under New Business
- The May minutes were approved
- Treasurer's Report - \$11,578.40 (as May 31, 2026)

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 - Communications with FEMA were suspended due to the Federal Government Shut Down, but have resumed - No update for June
- 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 - No update for June
 - Nehemiah Point - southernmost development on 23A - entrances and exits have been approved by Baker County Board of Commissioners - No update for June
 - Mid Pointe Development - Application submitted in early May for unincorporated Baker County - Would have private water and sewer - No update for June
- Maple Set Recreation Area - Improvements at John M. Bethea State Forest, the upper most access point to the river - No update for June
- 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 June
- National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) - No update for June
 - Review of 2, 4, 7, and 11-mile kayak trails within Baker County on river from Moniac to Boy Scout Camp
 - Shoals Park - Working on Canoe Trail - Also working to make the area more accessible and kid friendly

Nassau -

- On Island
 - Boutique Hotel - No update for June
 - 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 for June
 - Beach re-nourishment - No update for June

- Atlantic Seafood Property - Lessee vacated - building most likely to be demolished - No update for June
 - Inland Fernandina Beach - Concern about stormwater management. New areas are flooding from lighter rain events - No update for June
 - Waterfront Park - No movement on construction. Work began in the spring, but stopped during the summer - No update for June
 - New Fishing Pier - Possible seawall and parking construction - in front of Alachua - No update for June
 - Mainland
 - Townhouse Development - No update for June
 - New Race Track development west of I-95, near the Florida Welcome Center - approximately 600 acres - No update for June
 - BOCC continues to negotiate for future conservation easements. One property is approximately 1,400 acres - No update for June
 - BOCC is working on a 12-month moratorium on Data Centers. Two Public Hearings will be held as part of the process - No update for June
- Camden -
- Blue Bridge - Mediation completed and working to complete the deed transfer - No update for June
 - 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 - No update for June
 - Temple Creek - Boardwalk complete - Interpretive Trail is under construction - Camden County Public Works is working on project, completion anticipated in the late Fall 2026 - No update for June
- Charlton -
- Charlton Camp Pinckney County Park Boat Ramp - GA-DNR conducted a technical review in March 2025 and sent a letter to Charlton County identifying necessary improvements - Progress on this item is currently paused as discussions with the County continue
 - After discussions with the Road Superintendent, the road is being graded every three weeks
 - Encouraged discussions with a subject matter expert and hope for additional technical assistance
 - Possible grant writing assistance available from Southern Regional Commission
 - 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 June

Water Quality

- NPDES - No new or renewed permits in Camden County or Charlton County that would impact the St. Marys River
- Spanish Creek 319 - Continuing to work on one complicated septic tank - Progress has been slowed by DPH staffing constraints and limited assistance from neighboring county - Completion of this septic system is required before any additional work can be undertaken under this grant

- 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 - No update for June
- 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 June
 - Georgia does not have Nitrogen and Phosphorus (N/P) regulations; No update for June
- FL TMDL Planning - No update for June - Need to identify someone to take lead on this project. There is a need to identify the baseline for N/P
- Georgia EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting - No update for June
- Folkston WasteWater Treatment Plant - No update for June - 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 for June

Water Quantity

- Four County Stormwater
 - Baker County - Working to schedule presentation from Fara Ilami at an upcoming meeting
 - Vulnerability Assessment still in progress - adding section on possible funding sources
 - 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 for June
 - Town of Hilliard - working on Vulnerability Study - No update for June
 - Camden County - County has begun work on stormwater grant, but waiting on progress update - No update for June
 - 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
 - Work in-progress by Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division (CRD) and St. Marys Riverkeeper may help with Vulnerability Assessment
 - Will consider this to be on hold, but there is a call in to the Charlton County Administrator's Office
- City Stormwater rehab -
 - Folkston Stormwater improvements - No update for June
 - Macclenny - Nearing completion of Phase II and anticipate applying for Phase III - No update for June
- Georgia Water Councils -
 - Suwannee-Satilla Water Council Meeting highlighted the ongoing concerns about data centers

- Coastal Water Council - No update for June

Regulatory/Comp Plans

- Nassau County No Wake Zone - Currently on hold - No update for June
- Baker County Comprehensive Plan - Two Public Hearings are scheduled for this summer
- Nassau County Comprehensive Plan - Currently in progress - community visioning sessions have taken place throughout 2025 - No update for June

Administrative

- No administrative discussions in June

County Projects

- 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 - No update for June

New Business

- The existing online mapping tool, available on the SMRMC website, is currently down due to an issue with an update from ESRI. Committee voted to contract with student workers at UGA, the original authors of the map, to update the ESRI interface
 - Additional discussion regarding engaging UGA to complete ongoing maintenance for the tool, but no decision was made

Partner Reports

- St. Marys Riverkeeper (SMRK) - No update for June
- St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD)
 - The area is now in a Phase III Extreme Water Shortage - worse drought since 2000
 - Special Requirements are in place due to the low levels of the Floridan Aquifer
 - Need to change habit patterns to encourage using less water

Committee Member Reports

- No reports for June

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Next Meeting July 6, 2026 Callahan Fire Department