

St. Marys River Management Committee
68 Kingsland Dr., Suite B ATTN: SMRMC
Folkston, GA 31537-2872

MINUTES OF MEETING
January 17, 2022

Due to COVID-19 resurgence, the St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) postponed its noticed meeting of January 3, 2022, at Callahan Fire Department to a January 17, 2022, Zoom call.

Committee members in attendance by county:

Baker – Ed Barber, Danny Norton

Camden – Commissioner Ben Casey, John Myers, Elizabeth King, Jay Smith, Rick Frey

Charlton – Merrill Varn, Chip Campbell

Nassau – Commissioner Thomas Ford, Earl K. Tindall

Technical Advisors – Douglas Conkey (SJRWMD)

Others Present Shelley Beville (SMRMC Administrator)

A quorum was present.

Call to Order and Housekeeping

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm.

The agenda was approved. The December minutes were approved with edits (removing the second occurrence of Emily Floore and Dan Roach in the list of attendees and correcting several typos).

The treasurer reported a checkbook balance of \$6540.43. The treasurer noted that John Myers had not been able to obtain an EIN because of problems with website and prohibitive hold times. As a result, she asked for guidance on sending letters of earnings again in 2022 (see under new business).

Old Business

Land Use (including public access)

Baker County – boat ramp no update, Shoals Park – no update.

Camden County- no update on access at the Blue Bridge. Ben Casey reported that Temple Landing boat ramp needs extensive work. John Myers suggested that GO FISH funds may be available.

Spaceport – FAA signed the Environmental Impact Statement and Launch Site Operators License. The next step is land acquisition on which the county has an option. On December 11, 2021, a temporary restraining order and permanent injunction were filed in Superior Court to prohibit the purchase of the property. The superior court hearing was held January 11, 2022, and the county is awaiting judgement. A petition was also filed in probate court to require a referendum on the purchase of the land.

Charlton County – Bids were awarded for the RV electrical upgrades and septic repairs however the start date has been delayed until March due to backorder on supplies. Bathroom building renovations are out for bids.

Camp Pinckney no update.

Water Quality

Baker and Nassau- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Division of Water Restoration Assistance Nonpoint Source Management Program launched a new website,

gsi.floridadep.gov, to provide a resource for elected officials, the public, and consultants and engineers to examine case studies, technical guidance and information about funding offered by DEP for green stormwater infrastructure.

Horsepen/Temple Creek 319 – One additional system has been replaced. Rick Frey asked if SMRK had started the water sampling in that area again. Chip Campbell said he would check with Emily Floore and report at the next meeting.

NPDES permits- There were no new or renewed NPDES permits in the St. Marys River Basin in Camden or Charlton counties. Douglas Conkey (SJRWMD) said he would research how Florida provides that information.

Spanish Creek (Clay Branch)- Courtney Balling (MAREX) did two series of water quality tests on ditches in Homeland. As a result of the tests, Homeland City Council decided to consider applying for a 319 grant for a project similar to Horsepen Creek. A meeting between the City Council and Scott Brazell of Camden County is being arranged. Courtney Balling has agreed to help write the grant. The application deadline is April 30, 2022.

The Folkston water pollution control plant treatment facility (WPCP) holding ponds are located very close to Clay Branch a branch of Spanish Creek. When the federal government discontinued the contract with the prison for holding of detainees held by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency, the budget for the City of Folkston was thoroughly disrupted. One of the shortfalls was payment of the loan portion of the USDA 25%/75% grant/loan the city had received to do a full update of the WPCP. Folkston considered returning a portion of the money and doing only a partial rehab of the facility but ultimately decided to return all the money and reapply for a 50%/50% grant loan from the state through an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The city hopes for an award decision by the end of January.

Because the current WPCP is in poor condition, it is only allowed to treat 85% of full capacity. However, because the ICE facility is not operating, the WTF has low inflow so is running at 83% capacity.

Water Quantity (Flooding and Water Removal)

Nassau and Charlton County Stormwater-

Nassau- Legal and development interests have reviewed the revisions for the stormwater ordinance and it was presented to the Board of Commissioners January 10, 2022. The only substantial change was in triggering water quality requirements for lots on island. Originally, additional permits were required when total impervious surface exceeded 20%. That was revised to trigger permits when any build-out exceeded 250 sq ft. It is scheduled for a February 14, 2022, vote by the Nassau County Board of Commissioners. Lots on island are outside the purview of SMRMC.

Charlton- University of Georgia Geospatial Research Center predicts they will have the topographic layer the county needs for making stormwater decisions populated and loaded to the interactive map by the end of January.

Georgia Water Council – Meetings on plan revisions should start in the second quarter of 2022.

Federal, State and Local Regulations and County Comprehensive Plans

Update on No-Wake Zone Nassau County- Mike Mullin emailed Merrill Varn that the county needed additional information as per the ordinance. Merrill forwarded the July email with the applications and asked what additional information was required. She has not received a reply. Thomas Ford will follow up with Mike Mullin.

Camden Co. Resiliency Plan- No updates

Governing Documents- A signed copy of the Interlocal agreement has been given to all counties Board of Commissioners.

New Business

Letters of Earnings- The committee approved the treasurer again sending letters of earnings rather than 1099s.

Annual Report – After extended discussion of details of recommendations for further protecting the water quality of the river, the committee voted to approve the annual report with the addition of a disclaimer at the beginning of the presentation section. Merrill Varn and Ed Barber will work on the language. Points made during the discussion included: the switch from 75 to 100 ft septic setback must be defensible, Chattahoochee Corridor has undisturbed buffer and impervious surface setbacks which survived a court challenge, developers could be allowed variance for narrower buffers if the buffers were of higher quality, Baker County is the next area to be developed and a large percentage of the county drains into the St. Marys River, and the committee’s role is to carry out the management plan which clearly prioritizes consistent bank to bank legislation and suggests 100ft setback.

Members were reminded to schedule presentations to their respective Boards of Commissioners.

Nominating Committee- Danny Norton, Keith Tindall, and John Myers presented the 2022 slate of officers Florida Chair- Danny Norton, Georgia Chair- Chip Campbell, Secretary- Merrill Varn, and Treasurer- Elizabeth King. The slate of officers was approved. With no additional nominations from the floor, the same slate was elected. The committee thanked outgoing chairs John Myers and Keith Tindall for their many years of service in the leadership role.

Partner Reports

Riverkeeper- Chip Campbell reported that Emily Floore had “hit the ground with both feet running”. She has done the new riverkeeper training and is also certified by Adopt-A-Stream for water quality sampling. SMRK had held a joint event with the Georgia River Network this past weekend.

SJRWMD – Douglas Conkey, the new Government Relations representative for SJRWMD, introduced himself and discussed his goals for working with local counties and communities to improve regional water quality, water supply, natural system restoration, and flood protection. He reminded members that the current window for applying for cost share projects is Jan 4- Feb 18. Both Baker and Nassau Counties qualify for reduction of match through the Rural Economic Development Initiative. He added that the district wide cost share program has more money available but there are some local restrictions. In addition, local governments can use their other grants such as ARPA to help fund their end of the cost share thus leveraging two sources of money. Doug said that he is already working with Nassau County and the City of Macclenny and has reached out to the Town of Hilliard.

Based on large population increase in central Florida, SJRWMD is working on the revision of the current Water Supply Plan. Douglas Conkey will present updates as they become available but said that it would likely be later in the year.

EPD – No update.

County Reports

Baker- no updates

Camden- no updates

Charlton- no updates

Nassau- Keith Tindall said that he was still concerned about the impact of development in the Hilliard area on the water quality of the river. He was especially concerned about a project behind Winn-Dixie

with 6 lots per acre. Merrill Varn said that she had contacted the town of Hilliard about doing a presentation and had been referred to the waste management supervisor, who had not responded. She said she would also try contacting FDEP to see if a speaker was available from their wastewater division.

Administrative

Covid response

The Callahan Volunteer Fire Department has been secured for in-person meetings beginning in January 2022. Shelley will send them the meeting dates for 2022.

File Storage

The files have been transferred to Google Drive for storage; Shelley is working on setting up the different levels of sharing that the committee wanted.

Presentations

Merrill Varn asked for input on presenters. She was asked to contact IFAS for a talk on Agriculture BMP's. She will also contact FDEP for talks on the Green Stormwater Infrastructure website and on the Hilliard Waste Water Treatment Facility.

Calendar

Committee members are reminded of the meeting schedule approved in December: Jan 3, Feb 7, Mar 7, Apr 4, May 2, Jun 6, Jul 11, Aug 1, Sep 12, Oct 3, Nov 7, Dec 5. The committee voted to hold the February meeting via zoom due to the current resurgence of the COVID-19.

Staff

Shelley notified the committee that she needed to resign as administrative assistant and that she had two potential candidates for the position. Merrill Varn said that Courtney Balling was also interested. The committee thanked Shelley for her seven years of excellent service.

Public Comments

None

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27pm.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2022 via Zoom.**