

\*Minutes will be reviewed by SMRMC on April 12<sup>5</sup>, 2021

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

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**March 1, 2021**

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its noticed meeting on March 1, 2021, via a Microsoft TEAMS due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee members in attendance by county:

**Baker** – Ed Barber

**Camden** –John Myers, Elizabeth King, Rick Frey

**Charlton** – Commissioner James Everett, Merrill Varn, Chip Campbell

**Nassau** – Keith Tindall

**Non-voting Members** – Geoffrey Sample

**Others Present** – Shelley Beville, Katherine Fredrica Christie, Charles Joshua Rewis, Dan Roach, Anna Laws SMRK, J. Scott Pippin, Jen Fabrick, Jordan Center, Kim Bednarek, Meloday Bura, Rob Brown, Katie Sheehan Hill, Steve Shurter

A quorum was present.

**Presentation**

**Water Quality Regulation in Georgia - J. Scott Pippin**

The main vehicles for water quality regulation in Georgia are the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (GSMM) and its Coastal Supplement, the Manual for Erosion and Sedimentation Control in Georgia, and various EPD rules, specifically septic siting, that stem from the Georgia Planning Act.

The stormwater and erosion and sedimentation manuals are often called the Blue Book and the Green Book. The Blue Book is the rules manual resulting from the Georgia Water Quality Control Act, which is the state law which enforces the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). The origins of the CWA lay in the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948. The modern CWA was passed in 1972 and revised in 1987 to include as stormwater via the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit. The enforcement of this act is shared by the state (eg NPDES permits, including the MS4 permit) and federal (eg 404 dredge and fill permits) governments. MS4 permittees are required to adopt the Blue Book; permittees in the 11 coastal counties are also required to adopt the Coastal Supplement. Municipalities not having high enough populations to require an MS4 permit for storm sewers may, but are not required to, adopt the Blue Book and the supplement.

The Green Book is the manual that describes how to comply with the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act, which has no federal predecessor. It is enforced at the state (Environmental Protection Division) and county (Local Issuing Authority) level. The state statute regulates land disturbance activities of greater than 1 acre with certain exceptions which are regulated by their own approved Best Management Practice Manuals. The Erosion and Sedimentation Act also mandates 25 foot riparian buffers on all state waters with wrested (removed by water flow) vegetation, which is described in the Green Book. Local governments may and often do enact stricter requirements.

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The Georgia Planning Act directs any local government that receives money from the state to adopt a plan to protect 100' buffer along any rivers with a flow of 400cfs in their bounds. This includes regulating the siting of septic systems within the buffer. Septic tanks but not drainfields are allowed within the buffer. The plan is adopted and enforced locally.

### **Call to Order and Housekeeping**

The meeting was called to order at 7:26pm. The March agenda and February minutes were approved as amended. The treasurer delivered the report via email.

### **Old Business**

#### ***Land Use (including public access)***

Baker County Boat Ramp is waiting for USACE approval.

#### ***Water Quality***

**Horsepen/Temple Creek 319** No updates

**Spanish Creek Nine Point CIG Project-** Rob Brown of Goodwyn Mills and Cawood (GMC) presented the recently completed Spanish Creek Watershed Management Plan. The plan, which was funded by a Coastal Incentive Grant from NOAA via the Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division, will allow Charlton County to apply for Section 319(h) grant funding from Georgia EPD to remediate fecal coliform impairments on Spanish Creek. Brown pointed out that, during the grant year, EPD added impairments on Long Branch and Clay Branch within the watershed. Match for the grant was provided by partnerships which staffed sampling and citizen input.

Charlton County High School students and faculty became qualified as samplers for the Adopt-A-Stream program and worked under the supervision of Anna Laws, the St. Marys Riverkeeper. Their work showed: (1) high levels of E. coli were correlated with rainfall events and wet periods, (2) the Folkston Wastewater Treatment Facility was not a source of contamination, and (3) two sources of contamination were human and either wild or domestic swine.

A Citizen's Watershed Advisory Committee (WAC), on which several SMRMC members served, worked with the GMC contractor to produce 21 best management practices (BMPs). The top five BMPs included: enforcing illegal dumping regulations, restricting access of livestock to waterways, educating the public about littering and proper waste disposal, implementing long-term water quality monitoring, and educating property owners about septic system maintenance. The WAC identified the short-term goal of continuing the Adopt-A-Stream E. coli sampling, with a focus on Clay Branch, and pursuing grant funding for intensive eDNA sampling. For grant pursuits, it was recommended to implement the public education BMPs for septic system maintenance and proper waste disposal as match. Two other short-term milestones for the higher priority BMPs include identifying priority sites and interested property-owners for BMPs to restrict animals/livestock from accessing waterways, such as streambank fencing and establishing buffers, as well as holding a litter law enforcement training.

Abbreviated final report summaries will also be presented to Charlton County, and the cities of Folkston and Homeland. Brown will make the full presentation at a virtual meeting of Georgia Coastal Resources Division (the granting agency) March 24<sup>th</sup>; it will be available as a recorded lecture. Link will be provided on website of contact Administrative Assistant for the link.

**Clean Water Act Lecture-** As part of Laurie Fowler's UGA Environmental Law Practicum Class, two lectures on the Clean Water Act and Georgia's water quality protection laws will be take

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place on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and March 17<sup>th</sup> and will be available as recorded lectures. Shelley will have the link.

**NPDES permits-** There were no individual permit renewals or applications in the St. Marys river basin.

#### ***Water Quantity (Flooding and Water Removal)***

**Nassau and Charlton County Stormwater-** The Nassau County Board of Commissioners has directed their Stormwater Engineer, Katie Peay, to revise Ordinance 99-17 to address volume sensitive areas, downstream capacity, long term maintenance of stormwater structures as well as to quantify phrases such as unreasonable impact and remove outdated language. Several of the volume sensitive areas are in the river floodplains. We asked that unreasonable impact also include water quality as well as water quantity especially where fecal coliform was a potential pollutant.

Charlton County is discussing addressing volume sensitive areas loosely based on regulations recently introduced in Nassau County. Charlton County is looking into determining the location of the volume sensitive areas by overlapping existing layers of the UGA Interactive Map with a LiDAR-based 1 ft contour layer that they add. They are working with the Southeast Georgia Regional Commission and the UGA Center for Geospatial Research to add the layer.

#### ***Federal, State and Local Regulations and County Comprehensive Plans***

**Update on No-Wake Zone Signage Nassau County-** It was confirmed that no fee will be required. Dean will move forward with the application.

#### **New Business**

***Annual Reports to Boards of Commissioners-*** The Annual Report needs to be presented to the County Board of Commissioners for each county.

Camden - scheduled for 3/16 BOCC

Charlton - presented February 4, 2021

Nassau - Dean will present by March 30, 2021

Baker – Ed will talk to James Croft it is on the March 13<sup>th</sup> BOCC agenda.

***Governing Documents-*** Interlocal Agreement discussion. The Committee discussed requested changes from Charlton County, St. Johns River Water Management District and committee members. The changes will be merged and re-presented to the committee at the next meeting for approval and then presentation to the BOCCs for their consideration.

#### **Partner Reports**

***Riverkeeper*** – Anna Laws and Steve Shurter discussed the River Cleanup which is scheduled for April 24<sup>th</sup>. The site captains have been contacted. There will not be an after-event party as in other years, due to COVID, but there will be prizes/souvenirs handed out by site captains. Anna

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also asked for some assistance from the committee in getting the counties to assist with trash pick-up at locations that do not have dumpsters. John Myers said he would reach out to the BOCC and James Everett said he would bring it up to Ronnie Pollock.

Anna also brought up the reclassification of the St. Marys River as a recreational river- primary contact. The support package is due June 30<sup>th</sup>. The river was previously classified as fishing. As part of the current Triennial Review, fishing may be expanded to include other secondary recreation activities such as boating, kayaking, and canoeing. Reclassification as primary contact would better reflect the actual use of the river for swimming and for recreational use year-round. A motion was made for the committee to write a letter of support for the reclassification and furthermore to send letters to the BOCCs providing information and requesting the BOCCs write letters of support for the reclassification. The motion passed and Chip, Rick and Merrill will work on drafting the letter.

**UGA**- No update provided.

**SJRWMD** – No update provided.

**EPD** – No update provided.

#### **Administrative**

None.

#### **Public Comments**

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43pm.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2021 via TEAMS meeting\*\*