

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

MINUTES OF MEETING
November 1, 2021

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

Committee members in attendance by county:

Baker – Commissioner James Croft, Ed Barber, Danny Norton

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

Charlton – Commissioner James Everett, Merrill Varn, Chip Campbell

Nassau – Commissioner Thomas Ford, Earl K. Tindall, Dean Woerhle

Non-voting Members – Alice Vick

Others Present – Laurie Fowler, Jen Fabrick, Melody ?, Dan Roach, Kim Bednarek, Jordan Center, Todd Blaudow, Greg Sheppard, Emily Floore, 843-906-6548?

A quorum was present.

Presentation

Water Quality Priorities based on UGA Law Practicum Study of State and Local regulations that Affect the Water Quality of the St. Marys River (Septic, Stormwater, and Buffer) – Laurie Fowler

Septic Goals from St. Marys River Management Plan

- Establish consistent and adequate septic setbacks
- Encourage proper maintenance of septic systems within river corridor

Current Setbacks

- Baker– 75 ft (state only)
- Nassau– 100 ft (county overlay)
- Camden– 100 ft (county overlay)
- Charlton– 100 ft but only on portions (state only)
- No protection on tributaries unless they are above 400 cfs

Setback Recommendations

- Baker and Charlton pass 100 ft. overlay/ordinance with no drainfields on the entire main stem for uniformity (don't rely on state law)
- All counties add 50 ft. protection via overlay or ordinance for tributaries
- Encourage proper management
- Maintenance will be an ongoing issue, regardless of advances in technology and siting
- Need to solve maintenance issue before this becomes a health/environmental threat or extreme economic hardship for your citizens when they need to replace systems because of lack of maintenance

Maintenance Recommendations

- Follow Camden County's lead on addressing failing systems contributing to contamination of the river by pursuing 319 grants like the three-phase program on Horsepen/Temple Creeks

- Pass county ordinances requiring 5-year pump-outs regardless of ownership status - good start by Charlton then Camden where inspection required with change in name on electric/solid waste service note EPA now says that septic tank pumpouts are necessary to adequately inspect on site septic systems
- Investigate the potential for septic utilities, at least at the subdivision scale
- Reconstitute the “Septic Think Tank” and meet at least annually.

Stormwater/Buffer goals from St. Marys River Management Plan

- Promote consistent regulations on both sides of the river

Current Buffer/Stormwater Regulations

- Have massive amount of detail but no overall picture
- there is a good deal of confusion even between different departments of same county.

Buffer/Stormwater Recommendation

- Setup and convene meetings one or several of appropriate county staff across the jurisdictions to come to agreement on
- What programs are currently in place and how they work together (start w/ a strawman like during early stages of septic think tank process)
- Gaps in protection
- Potential strategies for addressing these gaps

Baker County members asked Camden County members how they had approached citizens hesitant about increased regulation. They responded that it had taken some citizens several years to come around on the 319 grant but that by phase 3, they had residents in a waiting line to participate in the program. By now it is perceived as an example of how the government can work for the benefit of the community and the river. On the septic inspection ordinance, they explained that they are not forcing anyone to remediate or pump out unless there is a change in the status of the name on the solid waste bill. Others pointed out that education must go hand in hand with regulation. Laurie pointed out that that there had been 25 people at the phase 1 BBQ so even early on there was a surprising amount of acceptance for the 319 grant. She also said that showing the cost benefit of periodic maintenance over replacement could be helpful. It was also mentioned that the septic utility fee is small and could help spread the cost of the required pump out to the overall health benefit of the community.

Commissioner Ford mentioned that another Nassau County Commissioner, Clint Farmer is in the septic business and would happily participate in any future septic think tank meetings.

Call to Order and Housekeeping

Following the presentation, the meeting was called to order at 7:56pm. The November agenda and October minutes were approved. The treasurer reported a checkbook balance of \$6540.43.

Old Business

Land Use (including public access)

Baker County – boat ramp no update, Shoals Park – the county is updating the rules and regulations to assist with continued issues of use. The county will begin mid-rotation timber harvest soon.

Camden County- no update on access at the Blue Bridge, Spaceport notification delayed until December.

Charlton County – Traders Hill- the BOCC will vote on contractor for improvements at Nov 4 meeting, no update on land acquisition surrounding Camp Pinckney access.

Water Quality

Horsepen/Temple Creek 319 – Jay Smith reported Scott Brazell is lining up another install with the contractor and they have completed 2 more installations. Phase 3 is up to a total of 7 completed.

NPDES permits- There is one pretreatment renewal (GAP050303) for indirect discharge into the Kingsland Wastewater Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) in St. Marys River basin in Camden County. The renewal is for Synergy Recycling, a facility that recycles oil from used oil filters. Alice Vick said that this is a standard permit for non-contact cooling water. The permit is administered out of Atlanta. The contact is Ashwini Tambe. The groundwater withdrawal permit for Twin Pines in Charlton County is still pending. Alice Vick is looking further into the permit for GDOT MS4 Permits but thinks it would only be right -of-way on the side of I-95.

Spanish Creek (Clay Branch)- Kelly Hill (GDNR-CRD) informed us October 27 that NOAA (CIG funding source) could not fund projects on private property and that we would need to look to other funding sources, specifically 319. Though the 319 grant process is considerably more difficult, it has the advantages of allowing us more time to apply (March as opposed to December deadline) and more federal funding for our time investment (60% as opposed to 50% match). Chip Campbell notified SMRK that Courtney Balling needed supplies to do the E. coli testing needed to apply for project funding. Courtney received supplies for 25 tests on October 27. She, Mark Williams, and Wesley Crews checked potential testing sites October 29 and were able to collect samples from ditches destined for Clay and Hatchers Branches. Both had E. coli counts exceeding specific criteria. Mark Williams will present the results of the sampling to the Homeland City Council November 11 and they will decide whether they are interested in moving forward with the grant application process.

Courtney needs an additional internship project for her PhD and will ask her advisor if she can use her Homeland work for internship credit. Doing so would allow her to spend significant hours helping design the project and write the 319 grant application. Such assistance would make it less likely to need to incur the cost of assistance from SGRC. Kelly Hill has said that she would review the grant application prior to submission.

Water Quantity (Flooding and Water Removal)

Nassau and Charlton County Stormwater- no updates

Georgia Water Council – no update

Federal, State and Local Regulations and County Comprehensive Plans

Update on No-Wake Zone Nassau County- Commissioner Ford said he would look into it and will get it settled at the next Commissioner meeting. It is on the agenda for November 8th.

Camden Co. Resiliency Plan- As Scott Pippin outlined, the centerpiece of the Camden Co. Resiliency Plan is an inundation map and emergency flood warning system. Scott Brazell is the county staff person assigned to the plan.

He said that Camden County has circulated a survey to gather flood information from citizens and has posted a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to work with the county to write the plan. Once the plan is drafted, it will be presented to stakeholders and public meetings. Jay will participate and report to the Committee

There are also two other related but separate grants for converting the old Georgia Power Building into a county Resiliency Center and for installing a public safety radio tower and associated infrastructure. Chuck White is the county staff person assigned to those projects. He said that grant has been awarded but the money has not yet been received. He has however begun talking with potential contractors and will post RFP's once the money is received. Those projects are scheduled to begin in the next three months.

Governing Documents- Camden and Charlton County BOCCs have both signed the revision of the interlocal agreement and it has been mailed to Nassau County. Commissioner Ford said he will work on this and take care of it at the November 8th Commissioner meeting. Varn reminded the committee that the document needed to be signed by the middle of December so that the committee could file for an EIN number. Baker County approved the plan and once Nassau approves and signs, it will be taken to Baker County for signatures.

New Business

Annual Report – The collated minutes were sent out in October and the committee members were asked to look it over, specifically areas indicated by red font and have final updates to Varn or Shelley by the next meeting. Commissioner Ford said he will get Varn info or have someone contact her regarding the Hilliard Water Treatment Facility. Jay Smith will provide a summary on the Camden Resiliency Plan. Chip will provide a SMRK summary.

Partner Reports

Riverkeeper- Emily Floore the new Riverkeeper attended the meeting.

SJRWMD – There are several vacancies at SJRWMD. Shelley will inform the committee when someone has filled Geoff Sample's position.

EPD – Alice informed the committee that Bruce Foisey had retired and the new District Manager is Beth Stevenson.

County Reports

No additional updates

Administrative

Covid response

A motion carried, with one abstention, to begin live meetings starting in December 2021. Thomas Ford said he has contacts with City of Callahan and could help facilitate the meeting location. He also suggested meeting at the new Farm Bureau Office. The in-person meeting scheduled for December 6th will be at White Oak; it is for SMRMC and SMRK board members only. Elizabeth King will work with Jay Smith to be sure there is a zoom link available for the public meeting.

File Storage

Google Drive currently allows for 15GB of data storage of which only 2GB are in use. The entire 2014-2021 file amount is currently 30 MB. The website holds 5GB. Therefore, all files will be stored in Google Drive and made shareable to those the committee decides. The current year agenda, minutes and presentations will be available to download on the website. The previous years will be linked by an embedded file to a shareable folder in Google Drive.

Public Comments

None

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41pm.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for December 6, 2021 at White Oak**