

*Minutes will be reviewed by SMRMC on November 2, 2020

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

MINUTES OF MEETING
October 5, 2020

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its' noticed meeting on October 5, 2020, via a zoom meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee members in attendance by county:

Baker – Commissioner James Croft, Ed Barber

Camden – John Myers, Elizabeth King

Charlton – Commissioner James Everett, Merrill Varn, Chip Campbell

Nassau –

Non-voting Members – Alice Vick

Others Present – Seth Wenger, Katie Hill

A quorum was present.

Presentation

Current Issues in Riparian Buffer Regulations by Seth Wenger and Katie Hill

Riparian buffers were used first in agricultural and forestry ~~to allow for filtration of for water quality purposes. And while the buffers provide soil for the runoff (full of containing~~ nutrients, metals, etc.) ~~to flow through and get cleaned before it makes it prior to reaching~~ the waterway. However, providing treatment for ~~water quality runoff~~ is not the only things buffers can do. Buffers serve multiple purposes including:

- Providing shade
- Supplying wood and leaves (important to aquatic ecosystems and food web)
- Stabilizing banks
- Protecting water quality
- Flood control
- Providing wildlife habitat

~~There are numerous considerations that go into in-~~ determining how wide a buffer should be. ~~?~~ The wider the buffer the greater the benefits, however you need to consider the trade-offs. In a literature review, it was discerned that buffers should not be less than 50ft wide. Anything less than that could be hard to keep the buffer in-tact.

~~Another issue is where to start the buffer. Some jurisdictionsjurisdictions use the mean high tide line. Georgia uses the wrested vegetation line (line where vegetation is forcibly removed by~~

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flow of water).

Some types of streams and wetlands can impact the protection of buffers with wrested vegetation. Sea level rise can impact these areas as well (septics, ground water, etc.)

Georgia has a 25-foot minimum buffer on all state waters and a 100 foot minimum buffer on major waterways (100cfs or more).

Things that need to be considered when developing ordinances for riparian buffers include:

- Overlay zone vs. free standing ordinance (the zone is a relatively easy way for buffers to get added because goes through planning dept but not as durable)
- Width (depending on your goals)
- Prohibited activities/Land use (maintain regulations, construction, septic systems, impervious surfaces)
- Exceptions (agriculture, forestry, grandfathered activities)
- Variances/flexibility (allow for situations in ordinances such as buffer averaging)
- Incorporation other programs (USDA programs and incentives)

Technical difficulties and no questions were posed.

Call to Order and Housekeeping

The meeting was called to order at 8:03pm. The September minutes were approved with the suggested corrections. The balance in the bank account was reported as \$7059.82.

New Business

University of Georgia law faculty member, Dr. Laurie Fowler, has agreed to include an analysis of the current status of regulations that protect the St. Marys River among the potential projects for her law practicum students in the spring of 2021. The major focus of the project will be on Charlton and Camden Counties but any Florida information SMRMC can provide for the Florida counties will be included. Fowler and her previous students Katie Sheehan (Hill) and Scott Pippin have worked with SMRMC on previous projects. For the Georgia counties, Fowler's students would:

- Review existing federal, state, and local laws and regulations,
- Review population and development projections,
- Interview key local government staff,
- Reference available maps (the practicum project would not be able to produce an ArcGIS map)
- Produce a report of their analysis

Product (Report):

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- a description of the measures that jurisdictions have in place to protect water quality
- an analysis of gaps in existing measures
- a menu of options to fill each gap

Fowler said that her students would not have the time, and possibly not the expertise, to accumulate layers for a GIS map but suggested that the UGA Geography Department may be able to include creation of a map as a student project in one of their classes. Dr. Marguerite Madden has indicated she would be interested and will present it to her students and be in touch. Madden has been sent a list of layers that Fowler would like to have for her students.

Chip Campbell said this was a good opportunity and emphasized that it was critical to include the two Florida counties as much as possible. Merrill responded that the Florida counties would be included on the mapping project and as much as time and information allowed for the law practicum policy project. Ed Barber pointed out that for Baker County recommendations via the Planning Department would be more likely to succeed than recommendations for stand-alone ordinances. He also wanted to know what information the students would be needing. Merrill responded that they would need any updates to the septic think tank spreadsheet as a result of 2018 guidance document and any regulations that the county had in place that would protect the water quality of the river. She also said she didn't have final information since the project was still evolving and could elaborate more at the next meeting.

Old Business

Land Use (including public access)

Commissioner Croft reported that [Baker County](#) awaiting permit from DEP for [Boy Scout Camp](#) boat ramp. The posts are set for the fence at the Shoals Park, but rain has delayed finishing fence installation.

John asked Baker county to consider "no wake zone" signage when building the boat ramp and Ed and Commissioner Croft said they would bring it up at a Board meeting.

Do to technical difficulties the meeting was not adjourned and no other updates were provided.

Water Quality

Horsepen/Temple Creek 319 Septic Project- no updates provided.

City of St. Marys 319 SHRIMP Project- no updates provided.

Spanish Creek Nine Point CIG Project- no update provided

NPDES permits- No update provided.

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Water Quantity (Flooding and Water Removal)

Four County Stormwater Management – no update provided.

Federal, State and Local Regulations and County Comprehensive Plans

Update on No-Wake Zone Signage Nassau County- John will speak to the county lawyer regarding the fee.

Partner Reports

Twin Pines update- No update provided

SJRWMD – No update provided

EPD – No update provided

Riverkeeper – No update provided

Administrative

Public Comments

The meeting ended at 9:15pm.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2020. Via zoom meeting**

DRAFT

