

St. Marys River Management Committee Reports
May 1, 2023

Attendees:

Baker: Danny Norton (FL chair), Ed Barber, James Croft

Nassau: Keith Tindall

Charlton: Merrill Varn (secretary), Chip Campbell (GA chair)

Camden: Jay Smith, Rick Frey, John Myers

Other: Courtney Balling (admin), Emily Floore (SMRK)

Housekeeping:

Reports began at 7:04. Quorum was not present.

Treasurer not present

Old Business

Land Use

- Baker County
 - Boat Ramp - no update
 - Shoals Park - no update
- Camden County
 - Blue Bridge Access - no update
 - Temple Creek Landing - no update
 - Spaceport - no update
 - Raydient Development - Administrator sent the comment letter asking the City of St. Marys whether they had passed the freshwater wetland ordinance which mirrors Camden's ordinance
- Charlton County
 - Camp Pinckney Land - The Charlton County Administrator, Hampton Raulerson, met with Wade Skipper from Alexander Land Co. May 1 to discuss the terms of the land donation agreement.
- Nassau County
 - A 70 house development is being constructed in Hilliard near air traffic control, but will be on city water and sewer. The new development by Winn Dixie in Hilliard is currently on hold.

Water Quality

- NPDES Permits – EPD is considering reissuing Camden Co. GAJ030751 for the land application of a maximum of 1.5 MGD of treated domestic wastewater water at Kings Bay to a dedicated Land Application System (LAS). Merrill Varn spoke with Brett Berry who is the program manager for the south unit and with Michael Derrick the compliance officer for the permit. The treated domestic wastewater was formerly used to irrigate both 286 acres of pine trees and a 281-ac golf course. Golf course irrigation requires that the water meet certain turbidity standards which the facility has not been able to meet over the past 5 years. There were no other violations. Kings Bay has dug a dedicated agricultural well to irrigate the golf course. As of November 9, 2021, the wastewater is only used to irrigate the 286 ac of pine. The effluent going into the LAS discharge system is tested and consistently meets EPD standards. There is no direct

discharge into the river. When asked about the ditches, Derrick explained: There are ditches throughout the area, but the proper spray application is designed to not saturate the LAS causing runoff to the ditches. The permit contains a statement, "Unless otherwise approved, no wastewater shall be applied when conditions are such that the applied wastewater will not be absorbed into the soil. In addition, no wastewater shall be applied via spray or drip irrigation when it's raining." The ditches are part of the stormwater conveyance system to channel water and prevent flooding throughout base property. Effluent flow is determined by base population and with current troop deployment, flow to the LAS is an average of .81 MGD, which is down from the 1.02 MGD before the water was diverted from the golf course. The LAS is designed to accommodate the full 1.5 MGD requested in the permit.

- Spanish Creek (Clay Branch project) – no news. EPD sent the grant to EPA in mid-March. EPD says EPA can take up to six months to return comments on awarded grants but that sometimes it is back within weeks. It just depends on the workload at EPA. Merrill Varn reminded Homeland that they could not count any work associated with the June 10 event as match unless the contract had been signed.
- Septic Tank Follow Up (bacteria) – Black River- nothing new: Deep Creek Plantation- Merrill Varn is working on finding a contact there. HOA info in Nassau co is out of date.
- E&S Spreadsheet (sediment) – Scott Brazzell talked with Katie Peay, Senior Stormwater Engineer, and she's been working on it. Needs to go to Sarah Little, County Manager in Baker County next
- GA EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting Strategy (N,P) - Florida continues to prioritize specific waterbodies for developing site specific TMDLs according to their 2022 framework available under supporting documents on their website <https://floridadep.gov/dear/water-quality-evaluation-tmdl/content/tmdl-prioritization-20>. According to this document, DEP will continue to focus on nutrients but will also pilot a consolidated approach to assess fecal indicator bacteria. Using the consolidated approach all impairments will be included in a single TMDL. Nutrients, on the other hand, will move from the current regional limits to more site-specific limits on certain prioritized waterbodies. Streams will be prioritized by the results of a combination of tests including total nitrogen, total phosphorus, stream condition index, linear vegetation survey, chlorophyll a, and rapid periphyton survey. There are separate prioritization methods for lakes and estuaries. Neither the mainstem of the St. Marys nor any of its tributaries are on the category 5 list for N, P, or FIB. Several waterbodies in the basin have been off and on the category 3 list over the years. Someone from Florida may want to follow.

Water quantity

- Four County Stormwater Management
 - Charlton County Map Layer - Merrill Varn called Elizabeth Backe (SGRC) to see if she could get to the bottom of delay. It turned out that SGRC had gotten new LiDAR and used it to develop county by county 6" contour maps but hadn't thought about Charlton when they did. Charlton is purchasing a hard drive on which to store the Charlton data. Michael Rivera in the SGRC GIS office is trying to get in touch with the UGA mapping group to find out where to send the hard drive. The eventual goal is to add the data to the SMRMC map that Grace and

Raquel designed so that the county can use it to make land use recommendations.

- Camden County Resiliency Plan - No update. Resiliency center construction continues
- Georgia Regional Water Councils
 - Both draft plans have been submitted for comment through May 15. SS drafted and reviewed entire plan at public meetings. Coastal appointed a subcommittee which met virtually; those meetings were not announced. The draft plans are available online at <https://waterplanning.georgia.gov/regional-water-plan>. In summary SS emphasized the small size of the watersheds and thus increasing importance of groundwater and the water quality challenges associated with trophic-weighted mercury, fecal coliform and low DO. The population is expected to increase by 4% by 2060 with the main economic drivers continuing to be agriculture and forestry. Recommended management practices included building new water storage lakes, regulating use of groundwater during times of low surface water flow, improving/upgrading wastewater treatment, and addressing non-point source pollution. Coastal emphasized the need to develop water supplies, wastewater treatment and infrastructure to support projected 50% population increase. The economic drivers will continue to tend toward trade, industry, government facilities, and tourism and away from agriculture and forestry except in northern portion of the region. Surface water will be needed to meet approximately 35% of the water need. Additional resource challenges will include saltwater intrusion in the Savannah and Brunswick areas, low DO in the Savannah River Harbor, and potential need to improve wastewater treatment in several watersheds including the St. Marys.
- NFRWSP 30 year water plan – no update

Regulation/Comprehensive Plans

- Nassau County
 - No Wake Zone - no update. Chip and Paul will follow up with Hupp.
- Charlton County
 - 100 foot overlay - has been submitted to municode but hasn't been uploaded to website yet

Administrative

- Annual report distribution - Courtney has confirmed delivery to Baker county

New Business

- None

Partner Reports

- SJRWMD – none
- Riverkeeper –
 - SMRK just did the 25th annual river clean up and 9.5 tons of debris were removed. There are concerns with dumping construction material in Camden county at Burrell creek. Public works is going to keep an eye on it. They added Okefenokee Pkwy to the river cleanup in Charlton. 430 people showed up across 4 counties. They're also going to partner with Charlton county to clean up tires on Stokes road on tire amnesty day.

- The port of Fernandina master plan has been finalized and cruise ships/hazardous waste transport is out.
- SMRK hosted GA EPD on a river/watershed tour. The water level was really low so they were able to talk about historic water levels and get local insight. EPD is going back and reworking water withdrawal models for Twin Pines permit after the trip.
- Florida representatives have reached out to organize an educational visit re: Twin Pines and that is being planned. There will be an informational presentation given to them.

- GA EPD - none

County Reports

-

Public Comment none

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50