

St. Marys River Management Committee Minutes
April 1, 2024

Attendees:

Baker- Danny Norton (FL Chair), Ed Barber, James Croft (by phone)

Nassau- Keith Tindall, Bill Cochran

Camden- Rick Frey, Jay Smith

Charlton- James Everett (Commissioner), Chip Campbell (GA Chair), Merrill Varn (Secretary),

Other-

The meeting was called to order at 7:10PM. A quorum was present.

The Agenda was approved.

The Minutes from the March meeting were approved.

The Treasurer reported a balance of \$9691.04 as of March 31, 2024 and that Baker and Camden had not paid their dues. Bill Cochran was asked to call the contacts at Baker and Camden.

Land Use

Baker-

- Boat Ramp - The first of the phased bids will be opened at the Board meeting April 2, 2024.
- Shoals Park- The perimeter road has been completed and a new ranger hired.

Nassau- no news

Camden-

- Blue Bridge- no news
- Temple Creek- no news
- Raydient- no news

Charlton-

- Camp Pinckney land- The County Administrator sent the deed to Alexander Land Co.in late February but has not heard back.

Water Quality

NPDES permits- No new or renewing permits were introduced for Camden and Charlton County Georgia. Rayonier Advanced Materials has applied for a discharge permit for an ethanol generation plant; Ed Barber will report at the May meeting.

Spanish Creek (Clay Branch 319 Grant)- All paperwork for pumping/inspecting 29 tanks has been submitted. Pumping will start in April.

Septic Think Tank- no news

E&S spreadsheet- no news

On the Florida side, the counties need to add a 25ft construction buffer along the river. The new planner quit but James Croft and Ed Barber will check on the possibility of getting the buffer into the county building code.

Deep Creek Impairment (WBID 2196)- no news

FL TMDL Planning- Ed reported on his March 12 meeting with Kevin O'Donnell (FDEP). FDEP continues to monitor the St. Marys River but because the river is clean, there are no plans to write Basin Management Action Plans. They continue to follow mercury levels closely; there is no evidence that the high levels are caused by a discharge.

Georgia EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting- GEPD released the updated Strategy for Phosphorus. A motion was approved to send the letter encouraging GEPD to work with Georgia Department of Agriculture to require BMP compliance as terms of license for animal feeding operations, design a Friendly Landscape Program and model landscaping ordinances, and require athletic fields, including golf courses, to leave a 25ft buffer with reverse perimeter grading along riverine wetlands and isolated wetlands greater than one acre.

Water Quantity

Stormwater Management/Resiliency-

- Baker- no news
- Nassau- no news
- Camden- no news
- Charlton- Merrill Varn reported that she discussed with Hampton Raulerson the possibility of asking Charlton County to apply for a Coastal Incentive Grant to build vulnerability and stormwater infrastructure layers for the new county webmaps. At Hampton's request she also approached Drew Jones. The purpose would be to identify flood prone areas in hazard zones AE, B, and C which currently have no building regulations. Hampton will contact Kelly Hill at DNR in Brunswick.
- City Stormwater rehab- no updates

Georgia Water Councils- Coastal Water Council asked for an update from the committee at their April 18 meeting in Kingsland. Chip Campbell will present.

Regulatory/Comp Plans

Nassau County No Wake Zone- no report

Fishing Tournament/ Wanton Waste Regulations FL- no report

State Legislation- A legislative solution to the controversial 2023 HB 115 emerged in the final four hours of the last day of the 2024 session in the form of HB1172/SB 542. It was passed by

the Senate a few minutes after midnight and signed by Governor Kemp with a statement attached saying it applied only to navigable waters. The body of the law states:

The General Assembly finds that the state procured ownership of all navigable stream beds within its jurisdiction upon statehood and, as sovereign, continues to hold title to all such stream beds, except where title in a private party originates from a valid Crown or state grant before 1863.

The General H. B. 1172 - 1 - 24 LC 55 0233S/AP Assembly further finds that, by the common law, the citizens of this state have an inherent right to use for passage and for hunting and fishing all navigable streams from low-water mark to low-water mark. The General Assembly further finds that the public retained the aforementioned right even where private title to beds of navigable streams originates from a valid grant, but in such cases, the public's right is limited to only using such navigable streams for passage and for hunting and fishing.

Nothing contained in this subsection shall be construed to permit entry upon privately owned land adjacent to navigable streams.

The house also set up another study committee to iron out controversies in a future bill. The Southern Environmental Law Center and Flint Riverkeeper are actively working with state legislators. Rick Frey commented that the committee should more actively follow such legislation that could radically affect people who use the St. Marys River and volunteered to take on the task. Several members commented that our sunshine law constraints did not allow us to respond quickly and that state legislative work was more appropriate for the Riverkeeper.

Administrative

New Admin- Jenny Sweat was not able to attend the meeting because she was leading a canoe trip. Chip said that she is interested and hopes to attend the next meeting.

Annual Report- The report was emailed to all counties in January. Ed will present the Annual Report April 2.

New Business

County Projects- The committee discussed various options including signage with QR code linked to the webmap and cooperative efforts with the Riverkeeper.

Twin Pines- The revised Mining Land Use Plan and draft EPD permit are released with an April 6, 2024 deadline for public comment. The draft letter was shared. Ed will send his comments on the reclamation plan to Merrill to add before submitting the letter to GEPD.

Cumberland Sound Dredging- After brief discussion, the Committee decided that no comment was needed since the procedure was a repeat of the dredging carried out every few years and at least to date without reported environmental damage.

Partner Reports

SJRWMD- None

Riverkeeper- Currently, the Riverkeeper is spending all available hours on the response to the Twin Pines Permit and did not have time to respond to the river use legislation (HB 1172/ SB 542. Chip added that the Flint Riverkeeper has been very actively involved.

Committee Member Reports

None

Public Comment

None

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm

Next Meeting May 6, 2024 Callahan Fire Department