

Saint Marys River Management Committee Report
October 2, 2023

Attendees:

Baker-

Nassau- Bill Cochran (Treasurer), Paul Lore

Camden- Scott Brazell

Charlton- James Everett (Commissioner), Chip Campell (GA Co-chair), Merrill Varn (Secretary)

Other- Jenn Hogan (Charlton guest)

A quorum was not present; no business was conducted.

Land Use

- Baker- no report
- Camden- no report
- Charlton-
 - Camp Pinckney land- County Attorney has written the deed and sent it to Alexander Land for their review.
- Nassau- The Atlantic Seafood building is going to be replaced. Paul is following to be sure that public access to the river is maintained. The current layout often restricts boat launch access. A boat repair facility is being built at the mouth of Egan's Creek. Debris from the salvage yard previously on the site has been cleaned up. Paul will look into plans for the new facility. Two hotels are also planned. The Port of Fernandina has added historic district restrictions to three parcels of land that they plan to sell to pay legal fees incurred over the past several years.

Water Quality

- NPDES permits- no new or renewing in Camden or Charlton
- Courtney sent the position letter concerning the Georgia Department of Natural Resources proposal to amend the Rules of Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division: Rule 391-2-3-.02, Regulation of Upland Component of a Project.
- Spanish Creek- The Project Steering Committee met September 19. Bobby Canipe gave the committee a brief introduction to soil types in the Homeland area and said that the project should focus on systems nearest Clay Branch south of Bowery where soils are extremely permeable and thus provide little filtering, along ditches emptying directly to Clay Branch, and on Nature Trail subdivision where soils are less permeable and promote ponding and runoff after rain events. The committee decided on an approximate target area based on his suggestions. The city will provide detailed boundaries at the next meeting. The Riverkeeper will scope out sampling sites and confer with EPD on sampling plan approval. The October 7th volunteer training event was discussed and delegated to a subcommittee. Lisa Nettles, November 4 Founders Day chair, attended the meeting to discover the committee's needs for the event.
- Septic Think Tank- no report

- E&S spreadsheet- Scott Brazell reminded the committee that the spreadsheet results had indicated that Florida lacked a minimum buffer to protect the river and that Georgia did not adequately regulate N and P. He will look into specific language that could be added to the River Corridor Ordinances for the two Florida counties. The committee will continue to encourage Georgia to match the N and P criteria used by Florida for the St. Marys since it is a boundary water.
- FL TMDL Planning- no report
- Georgia EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting- Comprehensive Nutrient Strategy- Merrill contacted Tyler Parsons for an update. He said developing nutrient criteria for lakes and estuaries is one of the hardest things they do and there are no criteria yet. EPD has been having a lot of internal discussions and outreach about nutrient management policy with other states. In September they released the [Roadmap for Developing and Updating Nutrient Reduction Strategies](#). It can be found on the Wastewater Permitting Strategies webpage at <https://epd.georgia.gov/forms-permits/watershed-protection-branch-forms-permits/waste-water-permitting/permitting-strategies>. The updated Roadmap continues to focus on point sources of nutrient reduction. Nitrogen NPDES and RPA strategies are slated to be released for comment in spring 2024. The Phosphorus NPDES and RPA were slated for summer and fall 2023. Merrill will follow up with Tyler Parsons to find out when P permitting strategy will be ready for stakeholder comment. The roadmap also says that in fall 2023 EPD will update the plan to adopt numeric nutrient criteria. Merrill will ask Tyler when the P numeric criteria will work their way into the 303 listing process and what the plans are for N numeric nutrient criteria. Chip will get on the distribution list to receive notifications. EPA has fast tracked numeric nutrient criteria and Georgia's schedule is to complete the project by the end of 2025.

Water Quantity

- Stormwater Management-
 - Baker- no report
 - Camden- The Resiliency Plan lists Flea Hill as the second highest priority in the county. Scott will check with Planning and Development and with the county grant administrator to see if any opportunities are available for repetitive loss mitigation. There is one remaining property that needs to be addressed. He said that county residents are advised annually of FEMA grants available for elevating structures or for property buy back. Rick Frey will contact St. Marys to get a stormwater update. Someone needs to contact Kingsland.
 - Charlton- The county needs to ask SGRC to add river corridor and aquifer recharge areas to the story map before it can be used to assist with building permits.
 - Nassau- The drainage project at Alachua and 2nd Streets continues. Paul will get a stormwater update from Andre Desilet. Merrill has contacted Katie Peay.
- Georgia Water Councils
 - Suwannee Satilla- Chip Campbell attended the September 27 meeting. He reported that most of the meeting focused on the reconstruction of Lake Beatrice,

the water supply for Fitzgerald Georgia. There were also two presentations about potential seed grant projects. John Quarterman presented a sampling plan to narrow causes of E coli impairments on the Willacoochee River. ABC presented a plan for an education and outreach portal (?) for BMPs for small river/creek front landowners. (Chip will provide more info).

- Coastal- see September minutes
- NFRWSP- The draft plan was presented at meetings in Palatka and Lake City and is available online. Comments are due by October 6. The final plan should be approved by the board at their December meeting. Growth models indicated an increased need of 138 MGD by 2040. Various water conservation projects, including decreased limits on renewing Consumptive Use Permits and increased use of reuse water (2023 FL Senate Bill 64), will provide a savings of 154 MGD by 2040. FL SB 64 encourages utilities to eliminate non-beneficial surface water discharges. There was some concern about saltwater intrusion in Nassau County. There are no plans to withdraw water from the St. Marys in the 2040 plan.

Regulatory/Comp Plans

- Nassau County No Wake Zone- Merrill and Paul will discuss recent progress on ordinance and Paul will be in touch with Brandy Carvalho In the Nassau County Commissioners Office.

Administrative

- Chip Campbell will continue looking for someone to replace Courtney Balling as Administrative Assistant. She resigns effective October 31, 2023. James Everett will approach Charlton County about naming Jenn Hogan to replace Russell Barber as an at-large Charlton County representative. Delbert Shelton is also interested.

Partner Reports

- SJRWMD- The Keystone Lake Recharge Project is underway and floodwater should be diverted from the creek to the lake in 2025. A coalition has been formed to identify minimum flows and levels for the Suwannee River in Florida.
- Riverkeeper- Camden County and its partners, including the SMRMC, received a Clean 13 Award from Georgia Water Council for the Horsepen/Temple Creek Project. The Riverkeeper nominated the project. Julie Haigler, grants administrator for the county, completed and submitted the application. The Sturgeon Project continues. EPD has requested more work on the Holt model for the Twin Pines Project. The Riverkeeper is hosting a Low Country Boil fundraiser October 21.

Committee Member Reports

- Bill Cochran asked if the committee knew anything about regulation of fishing tournaments on the river. He said that fish were not released until all were lined up on the ground and the largest x number to be weighed were selected. He thinks there is a good deal of mortality.

- Merrill suggested that the committee begin thinking about projects on which to spend the county dues. It might be possible to cooperate with the Riverkeeper and the various county governments to design and install signage about boating manners (e.g. trash, speed, invasive species) at all the public boat ramps. She asked if any flathead catfish had been reported in the St. Marys. They are numerous in the Satilla and have recently been reported in the Ogeechee.

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