

St. Marys River Management Committee Reports

July 7, 2025

Attendees:

Baker - Commissioner Ronald Mann, Danny Norton (FL Co-Chair)

Nassau - Paul Lore (virtual)

Camden - Commissioner Ben Casey

Charlton - Chip Campbell (GA Co-Chair), Merrill Varn (Secretary)

Other - Claire Feazel (SMRMC Admin), Cori Hermle (SJWMD, virtual)

- The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m. A quorum was not present; reports were received but no business was conducted

Old Business/Reports

Land Use (including public access)

Baker -

- Boat Ramp - A Request for Proposals (RFP) was completed. On track to issue a contract by the end of August
- Shoals Park - No update in July
- Development Projects - No update in July
- Maple Set Recreation Area- Improvements at John M. Bethea State Forest, the upper most access point to the river

Nassau -

- On Island
 - Brett's Waterway Cafe and Intercoastal - Discussion about seawall - potential for \$4 million in funding to assist with construction. Desire to not build it in segments
 - Boutique Hotel - Plans are dependent on the construction of the seawall
 - Bioethanol plant - No update in July
 - Beach re-nourishment - continuing into the Summer season
 - Atlantic Seafood Property - No update in July
 - Port of Fernandina land - No update in July
 - Public Access - No update in July
- Mainland
 - Townhouse Development - No update in July

Camden -

- Blue Bridge - Mediation anticipated to begin soon; had to be rescheduled
- Raydient Development - Taylor Morrison has begun construction on *Esplanade at St. Marys*, a residential subdivision and golf course - concern remains surrounding adequate water retention on site
- Temple Creek - Boardwalk and Trail are under construction

Charlton -

- Charlton Camp Pinckney County Park Boat Ramp - No update in July
- Raydient - No update in July

Water Quality

- NPDES - No new or renewed permits in Camden County or Charlton County
- Spanish Creek 319- Septic system repairs remain on hold until October. In the meantime, monthly water quality sampling is continuing. As expected during the summer months, E. coli levels are rising. The St. Marys Riverkeeper is scheduled to conduct eDNA sampling later this week to support ongoing monitoring efforts. Riverkeeper is currently working on the design of

the Q8 newsletter, which is on track for distribution by the end of July. In addition, a new round of free pumpout services will be offered to households in the Nature Trail area to support septic maintenance and reduce environmental impact.

- Septic Think Tank - Project is currently on hold, but there is still a need to do septic tank maintenance talks with any HOAs on both the Florida and Georgia sides of the river and its tributaries. There is a need to improve communication and education to help property owners understand septic tank maintenance needs and issues
- E&S spreadsheet
 - Florida requires a 25' buffer for wetlands, but not for surface waters. The committee continues to work towards a 25' construction buffer for Florida
 - Georgia does not have Nitrogen and Phosphorus (N/P) regulations
 - Committee members Cassie Turpin and Merrill Varn were given a site tour of the new Esplanade Golf Course by the project architect. During the visit, they observed that numerous ponds have been excavated, with erosion control fencing installed along all wetland areas. The excavated soil is being used to grade the entire property, directing runoff toward the ponds and away from both the wetlands and the river. All ponds are interconnected through underground piping, with two designated discharge points located in wetlands at a significant distance from the river. The architect was not aware of any specific water quality testing requirements related to the discharge. Cassie will follow up to determine whether testing is required and ensure appropriate measures are in place.
 - Tim Hiers, of White Oak Conservation, is still working on Best Management Practices (BMP) for golf courses.
 - Educational flyer for landscapers - No update for July
 - Shared with Ace Hardware for distribution in Charlton County
 - Shared with Ace Hardware and Hometown Feed & Seed for distribution in Camden County
- FL TMDL Planning - No update in July
- Georgia EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting - No update in July
- Folkston Wastewater Treatment Plant - Contracts have been signed for equipment. The facility should be operational by December 2026 and complete in 2027

Water Quantity

- Four County Stormwater
 - Baker County - Vulnerability study still in progress
 - Nassau County - Applied for a grant to assist with resiliency planning/BLM Maps. The Vulnerability Study done by the Balmoral group will be sent to the Board of Commissioners in March - No update for July
 - Camden County - Resiliency Operations Center open and operating
 - Charlton County- Vulnerability and Stormwater- EPD's Base Level Engineering Map is completed and is being uploaded to the online viewer. Updates are slowly being added to the St. Marys River Watershed - No update for July
- City Stormwater rehab -
 - Folkston Stormwater improvements - No update for July
 - Macclenny - No update for July
 - Updates needed for Hilliard, Kingsland, and St. Marys
- Georgia Water Councils - No update for July

Regulatory/Comp Plans

- Nassau County No Wake Zone - One application complete and other applications are still in progress - No update in July
- Baker County Comprehensive Plan - Consultant is working on a plan
- Charlton County Comprehensive Plan - Draft plan is complete, but a meeting to discuss it has not yet been scheduled
- Fishing Tournament/ Want Waste Regulations FL - No update in July

Administrative

- 2024 Annual Report
 - Presented to Baker County - February 18, 2025
 - Presented to Camden County - February 18, 2025
 - Presented to Charlton County - February 20, 2025
 - Presentation to Nassau County pending

County Projects

- Boating Safety signs at Boat Ramps
 - Approval received from both GA-DNR and FWC
 - Suggestion made to add all four county names/seals, along with SMRMC, on each sign - 2' by 4' made of metal
 - AB Signs has added all county seals and the SMRMC logo to the signage and will print the first three signs.
 - Need members to submit to their counties for review before printing and installing signs
 - County Manager Sara Little is contact for Baker County
 - Chairman Ben Casey or County Administrator Shawn Boatright are the contacts for Camden County
 - Working with Committee Member Russell Barber for Charlton County sign
 - Nassau County has approved

New Business

- No new business in July

Partner Reports

- St. Marys Riverkeeper (SMRK) - No update in July
- St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) -
 - EP Grant portal is open for water quality and resilience grants. The portal is open July 7-September 1
 - SJRWMD feasibility study is moving ahead. Looking for plans related to water quality
 - Low rainfall may have contributed to a fish kill near White Oak Plantation
 - SJRWMD working on a report, analyzing data sets related to water quality. Looking for trends. Hope to publish by end of summer 2025

Committee Member Reports

- The Conservation Fund purchased the Twin Pines property, approximately 7,770 acres. At this time, there is not an official timeline or next steps identified.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Next Meeting August 4, 2025 Callahan Fire Department