

**St. Marys River Management Committee**  
P.O. Box 251 Folkston, Georgia 31537

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**June 5, 2006**

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its regularly scheduled meeting on June 5, 2006, at the Nassau County Building in Callahan, Fla. Committee members and visitors in attendance are listed on a separate sheet. A quorum of members was present.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Co-chairman Dean Woehrle called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. The minutes from the months of March, April and May were reviewed and approved. Treasurer Winifred Stephenson presented the treasurer's report; the committee's main balance is \$9,689.19.

**FOAM/BARGE REMOVAL**

Co-chairman Dean Woehrle provided an update on the cleanup of the foam from the derelict barge in the Amelia River. It appears that one full side of the barge has rusted away, which resulted in the release of all the remaining foam trapped inside. The foam is now floating in the ocean and area waterways. The Keep Nassau Beautiful organization had raised money and signed a contract with a company to have the foam removed from the barge, but they can no longer utilize the contract as the foam is now gone from the barge. Keep Nassau Beautiful is attempting to organize cleanups to remove the foam that is continuing to wash up along the shorelines. An upside to the issue is that more people are becoming aware of the issue as more and more foam washes ashore. Woehrle told the Keep Nassau Beautiful coordinator to keep the money that the committee donated to the foam removal contract and use it however necessary. The barge is still remaining; there are no contracts at this time to remove it. The original barge owner went bankrupt and abandoned the barge.

**WEB SITE UPDATE**

Melinda Granlund, committee secretary and staff with the St. Johns River Water Management District (District), provided an update on the status of the committee's Web site. The District has attempted to make contact with the current owner of the [www.stmarysriver.org](http://www.stmarysriver.org) site but has not received any type of response. District staff have recommended purchasing a new domain name rather than waiting any longer for a response from the current site administrator. Once the new name is purchased and an account set up, Granlund will notify the committee members.

**WHITE OAK RICE PATTIES**

Co-chairman Jim Wildes introduced Lynn Provenza with White Oak Conservation Center (WOCC). Provenza is a naturalist with WOCC and discussed the former rice patties with the committee. There are 300 acres of rice patties on the WOCC property. The area is not being used actively for growing rice. Only a few rice patches remain; the rest has turned mostly to sawgrass. The canals are still navigable. WOCC staff have not been able to locate the locks yet due to high tide issues and deterioration of the area. The area is

passively managed, and there is discussion of more actively managing the property to promote increased waterfowl activity. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recently visited the site to discuss restoration options. There are several groups that wish to have the area opened for hunting waterfowl, but WOCC does not want to have any hunting on its property.

Provenza said WOCC is looking for funding partners to assist with restoration of the area. Woehrle, as chairman of the Nassau Soil and Water District, expressed interest in helping WOCC with the project. Suggestions were made to contact Ducks Unlimited and the Altamaha Waterfowl Management Group.

### **MEETING ATTENDANCE**

Co-chairman Woehrle suggested creating a phone tree to start encouraging more attendance at the meetings. Granlund passed out a roster of committee membership. Woehrle volunteered to contact the Baker County members; Winifred Stephenson agreed to call Nassau County members; Bob Merck, who was not present, was volunteered to contact Camden County members; and Chip Campbell agreed to contact the Charlton County members.

### **STURGEON SPECIES**

District staff Melinda Granlund provided an update on a recent effort to reintroduce the sturgeon species into the St. Marys River. The effort is being conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which will be holding future meetings to discuss the issue. Granlund agreed to keep the committee informed of upcoming meetings regarding the topic. Member Winifred Stephenson pondered whether this would give the St. Marys River more protection if there were a program in place to protect an endangered species.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Co-Chairman Woehrle discussed the increasing population growth in Baker County. He shared the statistic that a Development of Regional Impact currently being planned for the Macclenny area would double the number of students in Baker County.

Committee member Rick Walsh said he recently attended a meeting held by the Satilla RiverKeeper in which the RiverKeeper stated that within the next five years, there will be 20,000 new homes in Camden County. An issue was raised at the RiverKeeper meeting about how to treat the wastewater that will be produced by the new homes. Several options were presented, including spraying the excess effluent onto area marshes.

Committee members discussed whether the treated effluent would be sprayed on marshes or actually discharged into area swamps. Bruce Foisy, staff with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), said he was unsure whether a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit would allow a direct discharge into a marsh or swamp. Member Merrill Varn said a tree swamp would not be as effective as a marsh/grass swamp. There was concern that even though this doesn't directly affect the St. Marys River, it could set a precedent that could affect the St. Marys in the future. Foisy said DNR would be responsible for issuing the permit for whatever method is

selected. Foisy said Camden County has been surprised by the growth and doesn't currently have the infrastructure available to handle the growth. The wastewater in the area is currently handled by private entities.

Trish Gramajo, with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), mentioned that Jennifer Hart has resigned her position with TNC and is now working for the Florida Division of Forestry.

Gramajo said that Florida Department of Environmental Protection has adopted the verified list of impaired waters for the Group 4 basins (including the Nassau-St. Marys basin), for which total maximum daily loads will be established. A basin management action plan will be issued in the future. Gramajo said she would send out a link with the current information.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.