

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

MINUTES OF MEETING
July 10, 2006

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its regularly scheduled meeting on July 10, 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 7:06 p.m. The minutes from the June meeting were reviewed and approved. Treasurer Winifred Stephenson was not in attendance so the treasurer's report was not presented or considered.

ANNUAL REPORT

Co-chairman Dean Woehrle told committee members that the 2005 annual report had been sent to the four county commissions, as required in the committee's bylaws.

STURGEON SPECIES

Co-chairman Woehrle began discussion on a recent proposal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to reintroduce sturgeon into the St. Marys River. He believes the USFWS may be interested in the committee spearheading the effort. He proposed forming an SMRMC subcommittee or work group to address the issue as it moves forward. Woehrle also said that a sturgeon population study had been conducted on the Suwannee River but he did not know its results.

Georgia Co-chairman Jim Wildes asked about the role of sturgeon in the ecosystem. Committee member Chip Campbell said that sturgeon do not have a keystone role but rather is an indicator species, noting the species' typical long life and low reproduction rate. Its disappearance is likely linked to a combination of overharvesting and habitat disturbance, among other factors.

Campbell said local stakeholders should provide input into long-term planning and community awareness about the proposed reintroduction effort. Wildes said that White Oak Conservation Center reproduction specialist Dr. Linda Penfold is very interested in the proposed project.

Woehrle and Campbell said they would attend the July 18 meeting in Jacksonville.

WEB SITE UPDATE

Co-chairman Woehrle announced that the St. John River Water Management District (SJRWMD) has purchased a new domain name, www.saintmarysriver.org, on the committee's behalf to replace the original domain name, which had lapsed and was acquired by an outside party. That party did not respond to repeated inquiries from Committee Secretary Melinda Granlund and other SJRWMD staff regarding the

committee's interest in reacquiring the domain name. Woehrle said he was pleased with the new domain name's similarity to the previous name. Noting that the new site is being updated before it becomes accessible to Web visitors, Committee member Chip Campbell pointed out that the committee's membership list needs to be updated on the site.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Bruce Foisy, with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Environmental Protection Division, provided information on coastal incentive grants to Co-Chairman Woehrle. The grants are awarded to coastal counties in an 11-county area of Georgia. While the committee would need a county sponsor and a cash or in-kind match, the committee may want to consider applying for funds for the annual river cleanup. Woehrle said he would review the information.
- Following up on the June meeting topic of White Oak's rice patties, Co-chairman Wildes said that the restoration of the rice patties is on the "backburner" for now. While there is interest, the conservation center has higher priorities at this time.
- Committee member Rick Walsh requested an SMRMC anti-pollution sign to replace one stolen from his area. Woehrle said he had two remaining signs and would provide one to Walsh.
- Referencing the committee's discussion in June about growth issues, Bruce Foisy introduced Jim Harris, program manager with Georgia DNR's environmental Protection Division. Harris said that 40,000 new homes are planned for 25,000 acres east of I-95 in Camden County. The homes will produce 9 million gallons a day of wastewater. While most of the treated wastewater will be reused for irrigation landscaping, treated effluent would be discharged into a wetland area during wet weather. There will be zero tolerance for nutrients, and the state will require wetland monitoring for a variety of parameters, including phosphorus, nitrogen, pH, conductivity, temperature and dissolved oxygen. A small pilot package plant would be built to observe potential impacts before the main plant is built. Upland timber harvesting has already begun. DNR staff in Atlanta are still reviewing the plan and have not taken a position as of this time. Harris said that Camden County is likely to have 60,000 homes built east of I-95 over the next decade. Committee members expressed concern, as they did in June, that rapid, uncontrolled growth could set precedents that could impact the St. Marys River.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.