

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

MINUTES OF MEETING
November 6, 2006

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its regularly scheduled meeting on November 6, 2006, at the Farm Bureau Insurance office 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 months of August, September and October were reviewed, corrected and approved. Treasurer Winifred Stephenson presented the treasurer's report; the committee's main balance is \$9,653.34.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Co-Chairman Dean Woehrle explained the work of the nominating committee. He said the committee would like to create the position of Meeting Chairman, whose responsibilities would include planning and running the meetings, and also create a Program Chairman position, responsible for focusing on specific tasks of the committee. Woehrle said that he and Chip Campbell were willing to accept the Program Chairman position as co-chairs, and he stated that they would be responsible for heading up a Septic Tank Task Force. Woehrle explained that he and Campbell have already established relationships with county staff regarding septic tank issues, and he believes it is important to maintain the continuity of those working relationships.

Leadership nominations for the 2007 St. Marys River Management Committee were as follows:

Meeting Chairman: Jim Wildes
Program Co-Chairs: Chip Campbell and Dean Woehrle
Secretary: Rick Walsh
Treasurer: Winifred Stephenson

Rick Walsh moved to accept the nominations and the motion was seconded by Jim Wildes. The committee approved the nominations.

HOLIDAY PARTY

The annual SMRMC holiday party will be Friday, December 8, at White Oak Conservation Center. All county commissioners will be invited; committee member spouses are also invited. The meeting will start at 7pm, preceded by heavy hors d'oeuvres. Trish Gramajo will be contacting potential keynote speakers. The committee will participate in the Toys-For-Tots campaign. Melinda Granlund will work on the invitation and RSVP list.

GEORGIA WATER CONSERVATION PLAN

Committee member Merrill Varn led discussion of the committee's response to the Georgia Statewide Water Planning (GSWP) effort. Georgia lawmakers in 2004 mandated that the state develop a set of goals, policies and practices to conserve the quantity and quality of state waters. The state was tasked with formulating the plan, and the Fanning Institute was chosen to gather input from citizens.

The committee addressed parts One and Two of the plan at its October meeting. No comments were submitted on part Three of the plan, as it was not applicable to the committee. Part Four of the plan was addressed tonight (at the committee's November meeting).

Varn mentioned that only 20% of river miles in Georgia are monitored.

Winifred Stephenson led a brief discussion about pollution allocation trading. Committee members felt they needed more information about the issue to make informed decisions but agreed that point-source contributors should not be able to trade with nonpoint-source contributors. Members also felt that trading allocations should be limited to specific water bodies instead of applying it to an entire watershed.

Committee responses to questions from the Fanning Institute:

GENERAL:

Important issues and concerns regarding Georgia's water resources are: a huge lack of available data; no baseline data; septic tank concerns; need for better growth management; need for better management of discharge; and need for the ability to better control attempts to encroach on buffers. There is a need for a basin-wide perspective instead of a piece-meal approach. There is a need for information sharing between/across political boundaries.

TARGETED:

1. It would be desirable to have an "environmentally significant" water quality designation for the St. Marys River because it is a blackwater system with a low assimilative capacity. The committee feels that more protection is needed than that given to a river with a "recreational" designation.
2. There is a great need for increased monitoring along the river (both frequency of monitoring events and increased monitoring locations). Water quality monitoring should also include depth and water column testing.
3. Point-of-sale regulatory programs are needed to catch septic tank problems. Current septic tank standards need to be enforced.
4. Current nonpoint-source loading standards need to be enforced. Committee members expressed a desire that loading variances not be granted along the river corridor.

5. The state needs to begin enforcing its current water quality regulations before new ones are implemented.
6. Point-of-sale regulations or periodic inspections of septic tanks (if there is no sale w/in certain timeframes) are needed to ensure proper management of on-site sewage treatment. The state should encourage more use of reclaimed water and should consider the option of offering incentives to developers for reclaimed water systems.
7. There is a need for increased staff training about performance-based septic systems.
8. There needs to be more cooperation between Florida and Georgia with regards to the St. Marys River. The state of Georgia needs to declare that an integrated approach is a desirable thing and then go forth. Georgia needs to do more to learn who the river's stakeholders are.
9. The state's wasteload allocations should be approached on a river-by-river basis instead of basin-wide. The pros of a basin-wide approach are that it would be proactive. The cons of a basin-wide approach are that it would create jurisdictional issues (who is responsible for what?).
10. The state should try to avoid pollutant trading "outside the banks," i.e., don't trade between rivers; keep the St. Marys River separate. Pollutant allocation trading should be kept within a river system. Point-source contributors should not trade with nonpoint-source contributors. Keep trades within the state; don't trade between Florida and Georgia.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Chip Campbell asked if Mitchell Crawford, SMRMC member and Charlton County Commissioner, would call his counterparts in the other counties and encourage their attendance at the meetings. Dean Woehrle asked if Crawford would be willing to make such a request at the upcoming holiday party.
- Rick Walsh said he spoke with Stewart Stevens, who could be a potential speaker for the committee about sewage management. Walsh agreed to make arrangements to have Stevens address the committee at its January meeting.
- Chip Campbell distributed a letter that he submitted on behalf of the SMRMC to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources regarding a developer who was requesting a buffer variance that would allow the developer to build a bulkhead, dock and landing along 300 linear feet of the St. Marys River. Campbell's letter stated that the committee does not support the granting of the variance and that the committee requests a reduction in the size of the developer's riverbank "footprint." Jim Harris, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, mentioned that the state has decided that where a bulkhead is built, the state does not require

a buffer for that area. Campbell agreed to keep the committee apprised of the response from the state.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm.