

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

MINUTES OF MEETING
May 4, 2009

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its regularly scheduled meeting on May 4, 2009, at the Nassau County Building, in Callahan, Florida. Committee members and visitors in attendance are listed on a separate sheet. A quorum of members was not present.

Call to Order

Committee co-chairman Dean Woehrle called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. The Treasurer's report indicated \$6599.26 in the operating account (with a bill for \$1000.00 not yet paid to White Oak Plantation for the lunch following the river cleanup in March) and \$526.50 in the management account.

Old Business

Chip Campbell had some questions regarding the projected cleanout of Thomas Creek. Walter Fufidio, Nassau County planning director, explained that this is a high priority item and a consulting firm has already been engaged. The project is actually a de-snagging, involving removal of debris, rather than a channelization operation. Campbell commented that, according to the experts, such an operation would best be performed in the fall, rather than the summer, to minimize ecological damage to the stream.

Septic "Think Tank" Report

The second meeting of the Septic Tank subcommittee met earlier today, chaired by Laurie Fowler (UGA environmental lawyer). Committee member Merrill Varn's questionnaire has been distributed to the entities involved, but not all responses are in yet.

Roxanne Groover, Florida Onsite Wastewater Association (FOWA), commented that we would all be a lot better off to manage septic systems already in place, rather than simply grandfathering in existing systems that are operating poorly, and only dealing with new systems as they are installed. FOWA recommends pump-outs every three to five years; and this program would only cost the homeowner approximately \$11.00 per month. She also pointed out that 24 inches of vertical (soil) separation is necessary to allow removal of fecal impurities.

The consensus of subcommittee members seemed to be that a significant percentage of existing septic systems are operating poorly, if not actually failed.

Fufidio pointed out that our efforts should be focused on the St. Marys River and its wetlands and tributaries; the subcommittee will present options to the committee, so we can choose the best recommendations to make to the counties.

Varn questioned whether our recommendations would apply to property not yet platted, versus not yet built. It was stated that the interpretation of the two Florida counties is that nearly all of Nassau and most of Baker are already platted. Steve Nance pointed out that most plats do not include septic locations, so new recommendations could still apply.

New Business

Laurie Fowler announced that the University of Florida and the University of Georgia would present their findings to the committee at the June meeting.

Chip Campbell announced the Atlantic Sturgeon Repopulation committee would meet on May 12.

Dean Woehrle announced that the Georgia DNR would hold a Comprehensive Statewide Water Planning meeting in Douglas on May 6.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 P.M.