

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

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**June 1, 2009**

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its regularly scheduled meeting on June 1, 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 present.

**Call to Order**

Committee co-chairman Chip Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M. The Treasurer's report indicated \$6,788.18 in the operating account and \$526.50 in the management account. Minutes from the May 5, 2008, April 6, 2009, and May 4, 2009 meetings were approved.

**New Business**

Tom Ankersen (University of Florida College of Law) introduced the program entitled "Adaptive Management for a Secure Future," authored by Suzanna Blair, Mackenzie Ezell, Hollie Hall, and John November, all from the University of Florida. This report was produced as an interdisciplinary effort and summarized the biophysical, social, economic and legal landscape of the St. Marys watershed. Following the explanation of the physical characteristics of the watershed by Ms. Blair and Ms. Hall, Mr. November assessed current management efforts and made recommendations for taking an Adaptive Management approach in the watershed. The full report can be found at [www.law.ufl.edu/conservation/resources/pdf/stmarys.pdf](http://www.law.ufl.edu/conservation/resources/pdf/stmarys.pdf).

Quotes from the report are italicized below.

The scientific portion of the presentation (Blair and Hall) summarized the physical (geologic, ecologic, water quantity and water quality) aspects of the St. Marys River. It was noted that different agencies (Florida DEP, Georgia EPD) use different parameters to assess fecal contamination. It was also noted that sufficient data for the majority of river segments does not exist for many of the parameters used to assess water quality. *"Assessment of the methods used for data collection showed that a major management weakness is the lack of cooperation between agencies. A major first step in taking an Adaptive Management approach in this watershed is for all of the agencies to agree on what they are going to measure and use the same methods to do so. To take this a step further, we recommend only USEPA approved methods be utilized to allow for nationwide comprehension and comparison of data."*

John November reviewed current management practices and made recommendations for an Adaptive Management approach. This includes an *"effective monitoring program to be established to coordinate the two states' efforts to include harmonizing TMDL's as well as coordination of water sampling methods, location and timing,"* as well as adoption of EPA approved laboratory procedures. 100-foot buffers prohibiting all development were recommended throughout the entire stream. Mechanisms for increased interstate cooperation in

management efforts were discussed. A continuum ranging from a simple “memorandum of understanding” between the Florida DEP and the Georgia EPD, to a contractual “interstate compact” with federal oversight was presented. The benefits and possible framework of the interstate compact were discussed.

*“The implementation of Adaptive Management requires a clear set of goals to be set for the future state of the river. These goals must be decided on by federal, state, and local authorities, as well, and arguably most importantly by the local stakeholders and users of this ecosystem. With constant, effective and coordinated monitoring the path towards these goals can be followed or changed if that is required. To accomplish this most effectively an interstate agreement, which could be a compact, that guides the future use of water and land use in the watershed, is recommended. We believe that the St. Marys has nearly all the tools in place to accomplish this. The St. Marys River Management Committee...would undoubtedly be one of the most important and effect(ive) means for facilitating the formation of an interstate agreement or compact.”*

Chip Campbell started discussion by stating his belief that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is the only interstate agreement that would have a chance of adoption by both states. Merrill Varn stated that she felt we should set the bar higher – an MOU may not be the best we can do.

Alice Vick (Georgia EPD) said much of the sampling in the river could be done by volunteers through the “Adopt a Stream” program. Bruce Foisy (Georgia EPD) stated that the Georgia EPD is in the process of bringing their testing methodology into line. He also said that the SMRMC can plug into regional water councils, as the comprehensive Georgia state water plan is being developed. The St. Marys River falls under two councils: Coastal Georgia and the Suwanee/Satilla councils. It was pointed out that SMRMC has two friends involved with regional water councils: Joe Hopkins and Gordon Rogers.

Teresa Crawford said she took two items home from the report: water testing and land use/urban sprawl. She felt it was perhaps better not to go to the state level and lose local input.

Tom Ankersen said the committee needs to try to raise awareness of the river and its issues in the local community. Dean Woehrle suggested a meeting between all stakeholders to facilitate communication; the agencies involved should include Florida DEP, Georgia EPD and county commissioners. He suggested White Oak Plantation as a possible site.

Campbell stated that the SMRMC can’t really proceed any further without county commissions’ approval. Ms. Blair and Ms. Hall stated that the time to get SMRMC ideas incorporated into the Georgia state water plan is now, while the plan is being formulated.

Mike Bell (Rayonier) suggested that better water quality data might be the major issue that SMRMC should focus on. Tom Ankersen said we need to get the heads of Florida DEP and Georgia EPD together to harmonize data collection.

Heath Rauschenberger (U.S. FWS) stated that the sturgeon repopulation project may help with data collection and focus interest on the St. Marys River; they are working in parallel with SMRMC on data collection.

Woehrle and Campbell made a joint motion asking for consensus to go forward in arranging meetings with heads of Georgia EPD and Florida DEP and county commissions for the purpose of coordinating testing methods (also times and locations) and improving interstate communication. The motion was passed without dissent.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M. The next meeting will be July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009.