

St. Marys River Management Committee

P.O. Box 251 Folkston, Georgia 31537

MINUTES OF MEETING

March 1, 2010

The St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC or committee) held its regularly scheduled meeting on March 1, 2010, 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

Co-Chairman Dean Woehrle called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. The meeting agenda was reviewed and amended to include a discussion of the committee's administrative assistant and also sending a letter to the Environmental Protection Agency regarding the river's dissolved oxygen sag. The minutes from previous meetings (August 2009, November 2009, and February 2010) were reviewed and approved. The Treasurer's report indicated \$3,881.31 in the operating account and \$526.50 in the management account. There was discussion about which counties had contributed funding to the committee in recent years. County Commissioner Gordon Crews, Baker County, said he had a check for the committee from the county but that he forgot to bring it with him. He agreed to mail it. It was determined that Nassau County had not paid the committee in several years. Dean Woehrle, Nassau County, agreed to follow up with the county.

Funding for Committee's Administrative Assistant

The committee discussed whether they wanted to continue to retain the services of their current administrative assistant beyond the original four-month trial period. A motion was made, and approved, to continue funding the current administrative assistant on an at-will basis. Melinda Granlund, the administrative assistant, clarified that she would send the committee a monthly bill for \$175, plus whatever expenses may be incurred, such as mileage or copying fees.

Draft Protocol for Open Meetings

Geoff Sample, St. Johns River Water Management District, stated that he had submitted the Draft Protocol document to each of the county attorneys for review. He stated that none of the county attorneys were willing to offer any formal comments regarding the document.

A motion was made for the committee to formally adopt the Protocol; the motion was approved.

Presentation – The Environmental Protection Agency's Proposed Numeric Nutrient Criteria

Janet Price, Manager of Land and Water Resources with Rayonier Inc., gave a presentation to the committee about the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed numeric nutrient criteria for flowing lakes and waters within the state of Florida. She included slides from a power point presentation originally presented by Secretary Michael Sole of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Price's presentation included an explanation of the differences between "in-stream protection values" and "downstream protection values." (Under the current proposed numbers, downstream values are more conservative than in-stream values.) Price said the current proposed numbers have generated controversy because they are so

restrictive and some people have taken the EPA's formulas into question. Price stated that she thinks the current proposed numbers may be revised before the process is over.

There was committee discussion about how there are many different variables that can impact a water body's health/water quality, and that applying one numeric standard to numerous, diverse water bodies may not be the best approach.

Co-Chairman Chip Campbell, Charlton County, mentioned the letter to the EPA that he and Melinda Granlund, administrative assistant, had drafted. Granlund agreed to make a copy of the letter available to the committee members for additional comment before sending the letter on to the EPA.

Co-Chairman Dean Woehrle, Nassau County, expressed concern about all the water quality data collection that is done among the numerous agencies, in both Florida and Georgia, which he believes is not being adequately shared among the agencies. Chip Campbell addressed Woehrle's concerns and said the St. Marys River Water Quality Technical Meeting (held March 1 in Folkston, GA) was a positive step forward toward better communication among agencies.

Alice Vick, with the Georgia Environmental Protection Agency, stated that the different agencies that monitor the St. Marys River do not all use the same common standards for analyzing a blackwater system and she said the issue needs to be addressed by those agencies.

Technical Water Quality Meeting Update

Laurie Fowler, with the University of Georgia Schools of Law and Ecology, provided an update for the committee regarding the St. Marys River Water Quality Technical meeting that was held earlier in the day in Folkston, GA. She complimented the University of Florida students who organized the meeting and presented their findings. She said the number of agencies that participated in the meeting (5) was impressive and that the meeting generated much discussion and actual commitments about increasing and improving inter-agency communication and data sharing. She said that representative from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), including Mary Jo Bragan and Frank Baker, spoke of their interest in steering federal monies toward the protection and restoration of our river given the presence of an effective protection group, the St. Marys River Management Committee. Fowler stated that during the meeting the EPA and state agency representatives offered several recommendations for the SMRMC, including finding more volunteers to help with water monitoring data collection, placing water monitoring data on the committee's web site, and continuing to make the SMRMC's recommendations known to both agencies and elected officials.

Merrill Varn, Charlton County, stated that the EPA representative (Bill Melville) indicated that his peers in the TMDL division could provide research time to investigate the underlying causes of the dissolved oxygen sag present in the lower St. Marys. He also said that they could also dedicate some research time to producing a hydrodynamic model of the river and estuary calibrated with water quality parameters. He asked that the committee request this research in writing by April 15. He will pass the letter on to the appropriate people in his department. Varn pointed out that results of these studies are critical to the Fisheries Restoration Committee working to reintroduce sturgeon to the river. The calibrated model will not only assist the sturgeon project but will also allow the committee to make water quality recommendations that

are solidly grounded in scientific data. A motion was made, and approved, for Varn and Melinda Granlund to draft said letter and the committee will review it at the April meeting.

Charlton County Comprehensive Plan Update

Merrill Varn, Charlton County, passed around a marked up copy of Charlton County's draft comprehensive plan, which included the comments she was submitting to the county. Some of Varn's comments to Charlton County included referencing the SMRMC's Management Plan in the comp plan and also adding septic tank regulations to the plan.

Septic Think Tank / 319 Proposal Update

Trish Gramajo-St. John, with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), informed the committee that the Georgia 319 grant will be awarded on March 31. The University of Georgia is the applicant on the proposal and other project partners include both departments of Health in Camden and Charlton, SMRMC, TNC, FL DEP, USFWS, (GA) Coastal Regional Planning Council, UGA Marine Extension and others. If they are awarded the funding (\$785,000), the grant dollars will go towards further investigating impaired waterbody areas for fecal and other nutrient exceedances in the St. Marys basin with an objective of locating and replacing failing septic tanks (in Charlton and Camden Counties) and begin work to remediate the failing systems. Other project components entail holding stakeholder workshops to discuss the maintenance of septic systems and exploring community supported onsite sewage treatment and disposal system policies that could protect environmental and human health in the basin. Gramajo-St. John stated that the same members of the St. Marys septic working group are beginning work on a similar Florida proposal that would be submitted to FL DEP's 319 Program by the end of May and she would bring back a copy of the final application for the SMRMC to review prior to submitting.

St. Marys River Celebration – Cleanup

Co-Chairman Dean Woehrle, Nassau County, distributed site captain documentation for the upcoming cleanup (March 20). Jim Wildes, Camden County, stated that all cleanup volunteers must have a ticket if they wish to attend the White Oak Plantation luncheon following the cleanup. The luncheon will begin at 11:30 and there will be a sturgeon "touch tank" and information area at the luncheon.

Woehrle urged committee members to help seek funding to support the cleanup. Wildes stated that for the past two cleanups/luncheons, at least 350 or more volunteers attended the White Oak sponsored luncheon. White Oak is asking the SMRMC to pay \$5 per head for luncheon costs. Woehrle said he is continuing to raise money to help offset the luncheon costs.

Miscellaneous

Merrill Varn, Charlton County, suggested that the committee needs to begin preparing a budget so that the committee can plan for known, upcoming expenses (such as helping to fund the annual clean up and continuing to pay for an administrative assistant). Co-Chairman Chip Campbell suggested that a budget subcommittee be formed and asked that any members with budgeting or bookkeeping experience step forward to assist. Ken Hase, Camden County, offered to assist the committee with forming a budget.

Trish Gramajo-St. John offered to assist the committee with researching other possible funding options. Karen Chisholm, Camden County, agreed to work with Gramajo-St. John.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.