Second Bi-Monthly Report on Spanish Creek CIG

March 4, 2020

The Advisory Committee discussed the water quality monitoring program and made slight changes to the original sites based on information from EPD. The Charlton County High School team will do their winter samples at the end of February and again in late March. Four students will do the D.O. testing and collect the water samples for the fecal coliform testing. Up to 40 students will participate in the laboratory analysis to culture the samples and count bacteria colonies.

The Steering Committee discussed participation in the April 25 River Clean-Up. SMRK will provide the site captains, all materials, and a lunch at White Oak Plantation for participants. The county and cities need only provide participants. Members of the Advisory Committee will post notices on County school and County social media webpages to advertise the event.

GMC presented information about amount of rainfall that occurred in the same time period as previous sampling events. There was some coincidence of large rainfall events with spikes in fecal coliform counts but not all bacteria spikes aligned with runoff after heavy rain. The committee discussed other activities that might contribute to the fecal coliform spikes.

A list of potential non-point sources of fecal coliform contamination and low dissolved oxygen in the watershed that were identified by the committee include:

* Wildlife and domestic animals, including confined location near Long Branch and Spanish Creek
* Beaver dams, especially along Long Branch
* Debris and trash in ditches flushed during rain events
* Runoff from developed and urban areas
* Dumping at bridges
* Failing septic tanks
* Cattle where they have access to creek, but most have buffers between grazing area and creeks

GMC also reviewed pollutant sources from the 2002 TMDL Implementation Plan. One of the primary point sources was the discharge from the wastewater treatment plant in Folkston. This plant began disinfecting the wastewater with a UV system in 2005, so it is now likely a smaller contributor to the overall pollutant load as it was in the previous TMDL Plan.

GMC presented land use zoning, soils, and a number of other characteristics of the Spanish Creek watershed. The largest land use is agricultural/forestry at 91%; followed by residential at 3.5%. About 20% of the watershed is wetlands, with most being classified as “Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetlands.” About 15% of the watershed is in the 100-year floodplain of Spanish Creek, and 3% is in a groundwater recharge zone. The soils in this watershed are generally poorly drained and most of the area has a water table depth within 12” of the surface.

The first two stream sample events should be completed and analyzed by the next meeting in April, in order to present those preliminary results. GMC will also begin reviewing and discussing goals and management measures at the April meeting.