

St. Marys River Management Committee Minutes

September 8, 2025

Attendees:

Baker - Danny Norton (FL Co-Chair)

Nassau - Bill Cochran

Camden - Commissioner Ben Casey, Jay Smith, Cassie Turpin

Charlton - Chip Campbell (GA Co-Chair), Commissioner James Everett, Merrill Varn

Other - Doug Conkey (SJWMD), Claire Feazel (SMRMC Admin), Glenn Hull (Charlton County Administrator)

- The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m. A quorum was present.
- The September Agenda was approved.
- The May minutes were approved.
- The June, July (with corrections), and August reports were accepted.

Old Business/Reports

Land Use (including public access)

Baker -

- Boat Ramp - A Request for Proposals (RFP) was completed. No update in September
- Shoals Park - No update in September
- Development Projects - Project was not annexed into the City of Macclenny, but may become a project in unincorporated Baker County
- Maple Set Recreation Area- Improvements at John M. Bethea State Forest, the upper most access point to the river. No update in September
- Reynolds Bridge - connection between northeast Baker County, Florida and southwest Charlton County, Georgia is currently closed. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is in the beginning stages of work towards reconstruction of the bridge. Charlton County Administrator Glenn Hull shared that Charlton County has been asked for a construction easement

Nassau -

- On Island
 - Brett's Waterway Cafe and Intercoastal - No update in September
 - Boutique Hotel - No update in September
 - Bioethanol plant - No update in September
 - Beach re-nourishment - No update in September
 - Atlantic Seafood Property - No update in September
 - Port of Fernandina land - No update in September
 - Public Access - No update in September
- Mainland
 - Townhouse Development - No update in September

Camden -

- Blue Bridge - No update in September
- Raydient Development - Taylor Morrison has begun construction on *Esplanade at St. Marys*, a residential subdivision and golf course - concern remains surrounding adequate water retention on site. It may be possible to obtain storm water plans
- Temple Creek - Boardwalk and Trail are under construction; no update in September
- Sheffield Island Development - A development has been proposed for the Sheffield Island area in Camden County. The developers are asking for the area to be annexed

into the City of Kingsland. Both the city and county have issued statements about the proposed development. City of Kingsland Planning Commission tabled action

Charlton -

- Charlton Camp Pinckney County Park Boat Ramp - Waiting on grant funding to proceed
- Raydient - The Refuge, featuring 12 lots ranging from +/-20 to +/-45 acres along the St. Marys River, has been advertised as “coming soon” from Raydient Rural. This is near the Atlantic White Sturgeon protection area

Water Quality

- NPDES - No new or renewed permits in Camden County or Charlton County
- Spanish Creek 319 -
 - Homeland reported that adequate funds were available in late July to repair an additional septic system. Due to the location of gas and electric lines, the drainfield did not meet code requirements; however, the health department issued a variance. Additional repairs are scheduled for September and October.
 - Monthly water sampling continues, with E. coli numbers rising as is typical during the summer months. Joe Waas, the new community science lead, has assumed responsibility for sampling. He conducted eDNA sampling at two sites in late July, with results still pending from the laboratory.
 - A joint effort by Homeland and SMRMC volunteers distributed the Q8 newsletter. A second free pumpout invitation was also distributed to Nature Trail addresses. As a result of this outreach, one resident requested a tank pumpout and indicated he would speak with his neighbors.
 - The Q9 newsletter will feature an invitation to Founders Day on one side and pumpout schedule information on the other.
- Septic Think Tank - Project is currently on hold, but there is still a need to do septic tank maintenance talks with any HOAs on both the Florida and Georgia sides of the river and its tributaries. There is a need to improve communication and education to help property owners understand septic tank maintenance needs and issues
- E&S spreadsheet
 - Florida requires a 25' buffer for wetlands, but not for surface waters. The committee continues to work towards a 25' construction buffer for Florida; No update for September
 - Georgia does not have Nitrogen and Phosphorus (N/P) regulations; No update for September
 - Tim Hiers, of White Oak Conservation, is still working on Best Management Practices (BMP) for golf courses; No update for September
 - Educational flyer for landscapers - No update for September
 - Shared with Ace Hardware for distribution in Charlton County
 - Shared with Ace Hardware and Hometown Feed & Seed for distribution in Camden County
- FL TMDL Planning - No update in September
- Georgia EPD Comprehensive Nutrient Permitting - No update in September
- Folkston WasteWater Treatment Plant - Pender Lloyd, Folkston City Manager, reported that construction has begun on the new system, which will increase capacity to 1.25 MGD. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2026, with some final installations potentially extending into the first two quarters of 2027. The current facility has a capacity of 1.0 MGD.

- The GEO Group is in the process of converting the D. Ray James prison facility to expand ICE capacity, bringing the total population to approximately 2,800–3,000 individuals. When both the prison and ICE facility were previously at capacity (3,000), the city's treatment facility was processing 0.75 MGD.

Water Quantity

- Four County Stormwater
 - Baker County - Vulnerability study still in progress; No update for September
 - Nassau County - Applied for a grant to assist with resiliency planning/BLE Maps. The Vulnerability Study done by the Balmoral group will be sent to the Board of Commissioners in March; No update for September
 - Camden County - Resiliency Operations Center open and operating; No update for September
 - Charlton County- Vulnerability and Stormwater- EPD's Base Level Engineering Map is completed and is being uploaded to the online viewer. Updates are slowly being added to the St. Marys River Watershed; No update for September
- City Stormwater rehab -
 - Folkston Stormwater improvements - No update for September
 - Macclenny - No update for September
 - Updates needed for Hilliard, Kingsland, and St. Marys
- Georgia Water Councils - Meeting dates have been announced for later in September. Information shared with Georgia members

Regulatory/Comp Plans

- Nassau County No Wake Zone - One application complete and other applications are still in progress - No update in September
- Baker County Comprehensive Plan - Consultant is working on a plan; No update for September
- Charlton County Comprehensive Plan - Approved by Board of Commissioners and submitted on July 17, 2025
- Fishing Tournament/ Want Waste Regulations FL - Lower participation noted this season, but want to continue to review with the upcoming Crappie fishing season

Administrative

- 2024 Annual Report
 - Presented to Baker County - February 18, 2025
 - Presented to Camden County - February 18, 2025
 - Presented to Charlton County - February 20, 2025
 - Presentation to Nassau County pending

County Projects

- Boating Safety signs at Boat Ramps
 - Approval received from both GA-DNR and FWC
 - Suggestion made to add all four county names/seals, along with SMRMC, on each sign - 2' by 4' made of metal
 - AB Signs has added all county seals and the SMRMC logo to the signage and will print the first three signs.

- No wake information signs have been installed at Traders Hill, Camp Pinckney, and Temple Landing. The Florida sign PDF has been provided to Nassau and Baker Counties. The Division of Forestry and SJRWMD have approved installation of the sign.

New Business

- Discussion regarding the procedure for signing letters of support for local government partners without specific approval at a meeting. Local government partners are differentiated from third-parties or NGOs.
 - Allows the Florida and Georgia Co-Chairs to sign a letter of support for local governments. Letter will be ratified at the next meeting
- Approved sending a letter to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Georgia Coastal Management Program (GCMP) Draft Section 309 Assessment and Strategy for 2026–2030
 - Comments include:
 - Coordinate with other agencies doing similar plans to avoid redundancy
 - Add non-riverine wetlands to Charlton County
- Appoint Commissioner Alyson McCullough to represent the SMRMC on the Northeast Florida Regional Council's Regional Resilience Action Plan

Partner Reports

- St. Marys Riverkeeper (SMRK) - No update in September
- St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) -
 - Water First Project - 40 million gallons/day reclaimed water - piped out to Lake City - 14 year/\$1 billion project
 - Regional projects appear to be the new choice for recharge projects
 - Senate Bill 180 - Emergency Management Bill that allows for certain development rules to be challenged due to “more burdensome” or “more restrictive” rules

Committee Member Reports

- Charlton County - “Alexander Land” property is being considered for a possible “Agrihood” development - 4,000 acres

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Next Meeting October 6, 2025 Callahan Fire Department