

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Satilla Watershed Meeting

1. On May 12th, the US Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District hosted a kickoff meeting at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission building in Waycross, Georgia for the Satilla Watershed Reconnaissance Study.
2. Those in attendance were from the USF&WS (Robert Brooks, Strant Coldwell, and Sara Aicher); NWS/SERFC (Todd Hamill and Mark Love); GADNR (Todd Harris, Donald Harrison, Jennifer Kline, Cliff Lewis and Jeff Larson); GA Soil and Water Conservation Commission (Rahn Milligan); USDA NRCS (Rita Barrow); SGRC (Angela Bray); Seven Rivers (Eugene Dyal); Satilla Riverkeeper (Ashby Nix, and Mary Freund); Satilla River Board (Clay Montague); USACE (Deryck Solomon, Jeff Morris, Mary Richards, Bryan Robinson, and Monica Simon-Dodd)
3. Professor Montague presented problems in the Satilla Watershed from the perspective of the Satilla Riverkeepers as follows: Trash is in the river (volunteers help clean the river); Discharge of the sewage treatment; Water treatment upgrades are needed; there is a Superfund site; Illegal wetland development; Ground water contamination issue; Flash flooding – rapid rise and fall of water levels stress farm dams and some have failed; Discharge from industrial mining sites; Wildlife loss; Silviculture and agriculture runoff; and High mercury levels in Satilla River. The state has issued a consumption advisory. There is a need to identify the source of mercury; the white sandbars are overtaken by black willows; and there has been an invasion of new species not native to the Satilla River. Flathead catfish have been introduced & damaged the Redbreast Sunfish fishery.
4. There was a general discussion amongst the attendees. This discussion included that a non-Federal sponsor must be indentified during the first stage of the study, which is the reconnaissance (recon) study.
 - The group discussed how the on stream and off stream ponds affect the Satilla watershed. The group also discussed the impacts to the flow regime from the water surface impoundment.
 - There was discussion about the large floods in 1996 and 2009. Flash flooding stresses earthen dams. A lot of sediment from county dirt roads, especially in Brantley County washes into the watershed. Because the dirt roads are washing away, they are very problematic and the maintenance costs are high. Flash flooding causes pipes to blow out, and roads wash out, thus, causing people to be stranded during flash flooding. There are approximately 600 miles of dirt roads in the Satilla Watershed. In 1996, Brantley County had an especially high

flood year. The Eastern Brantley County floods rose quickly, and people had to be rescued. During that flood event, an ATV park was surrounded with water and the people had to be rescued. Brantley County is the main location for the flooding problems. DNR has maps of the in-land flooding and coastal flooding.

- There are some water quality and dissolved oxygen problems in the Satilla watershed.
- Silviculture is following the Best Management Practices (BMP).
- NOAA has 2 river gages on the Satilla River, one at Atkinson & Waycross and the other at Offer man. There are 5 USGS gages.
- Rural Ecotourism was also discussed. Rural counties are dependent on ecotourism. In recent times, the area has experienced droughts, and the recreational activities have suffered. Some of the counties in this watershed are very poor. It was stated: If we can develop the recreation, we can build the economy. Also the high mercury levels in the watershed were discussed. Fishing in this area is mainly for eating, not just recreation.
- “Watershed Witches” are a quick drainage for timber production and are man-made. These cause downstream issues.
- Droughts are also a problem for the coastal ecosystem. When there is a drought in Atlanta the Satilla Watershed is impacted by a decrease in the fresh water inflow. Inland issues affect the coastal areas. Bacon County has experienced drought conditions in recent times.
- There is saltwater intrusion in Brunswick. The USGS has maps available.
- There are some areas where ATVs drive, thus, de-stabilizing the bank
- At high flow the river is navigable and is declared federally navigable.