

Page 1: Cover: Title “Water Beyond Borders”

Page 2: Letter from RCI Chair

Page 3: Summary

Page 4: Regional Action Plan

 Actions: Interstate Cooperation

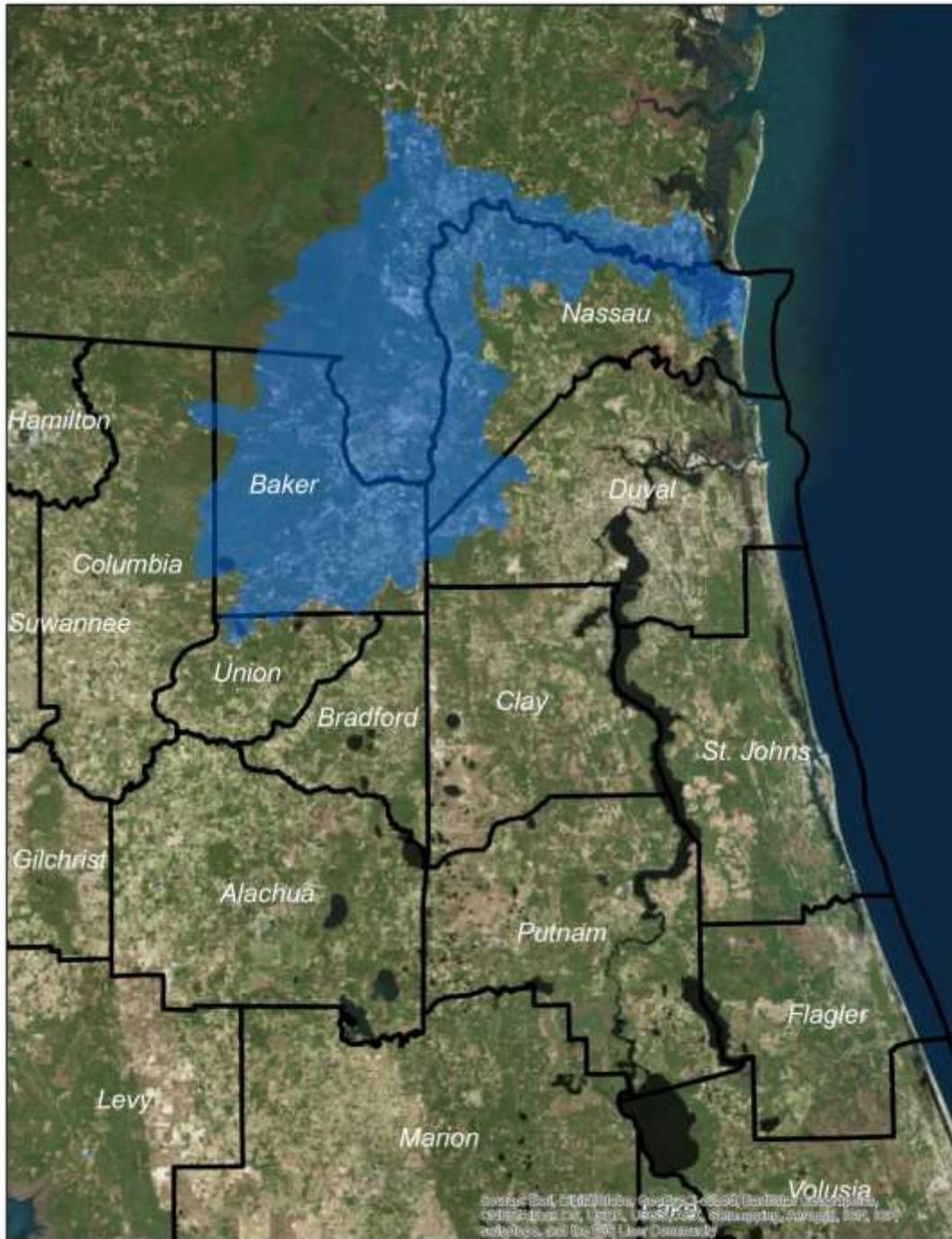
 Data and Monitoring

 Local Governments and Planning

Acknowledgements

 Presenters

 Participants (2 meetings or more)



Study Area: The Northeast Florida Counties of Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns and the St. Marys River Basin, located in Camden and Charlton Counties in Georgia.

Action Items:

Interstate Coordination

The Water Committee determined that an action plan that included the two states would have a unique ability to demonstrate that water issues are universal and boundaries need not be barriers. Willing communities can address water issues because they believe them to be important, regardless of location.

The St. Marys River presents an opportunity to focus on a river shared by two states that is not impaired, although like all rivers in areas with development pressures, it may be imperiled. Joint action now could maintain the health of the River. Best practices and lessons learned from our actions could prove a model for others.

We will:

- With the partnership of the St. Marys River Management Committee and the St. Marys Riverkeeper, the RCI Water Committee will CONVENE advocates, landowners, local governments, residents and businesses biannually. The meetings will include reports on water quantity and quality, and will provide an overview of relevant land use changes contemplated and enacted since the last meeting. They will also cover whatever issues the partners believe to be pertinent. A meeting summary will be produced and made available to the public and media.
- Draft a FLORIDA GEORGIA COMPACT. This document will outline the interstate cooperation that the Water Committee recommends in order to protect the St. Marys River. It will cover, at a minimum, water quantity and quality testing, data sharing, communication and policy. It will be provided to each state for consideration.

Data and Monitoring

The Water Committee found that a place exists to share data on water quality and quantity (STORET) but that its usefulness can only be maximized if the storage is supplemented by a structure that ensures that the appropriate sites are monitored, all the entities monitoring coordinate on timing, approach and results, and there is regular communication to discuss findings and next steps.

We will:

- Beginning with the St. Marys River, determine what sites are monitored, when, by whom, and for what. Post this information on a CLEARINGHOUSE. Determine what additional monitoring is needed, and whether current partners can do it.
- To the extent possible, STANDARDIZE water quality monitoring so that each site visit tests for as much as possible, using approaches that are agreed upon and will meet the needs of the testing agency and other partners.

- Use the impairment process as an opportunity to ensure the St. Marys does not become impaired. Instead, as the process identifies challenges, CONVENE the regulatory agencies and advocates to determine solutions. Make these known to the public and the media.
- Make the CLEARINGHOUSE regional, to include the entire Water Committee Study Area.
- As partners increase communication and efficiency, convene to consider whether there are BETTER WAYS to monitor water quality and quantity. Consider the SJRWMD's approach to MFLs and the USACE approach to Everglades performance, for example.

Local Government and Planning

The Water Committee did not find a local community with a Low Impact Development(LID) ordinance that it wished to recommend as a model for local governments considering such an ordinance. It did, however, hear that many communities have discussed the issue and made some good decisions that align with best practices related to water conservation and preservation of water quality.

We will:

- Review BEST PRACTICES that includes : Density and clustering bonuses being considered on Cumberland Island, Article 9 of the Camden County Uniform Land Development Code, the techniques used in Nocatee in St. Johns County, the LID handbook developed by the City of Jacksonville, and approaches and LID ordinances of other locations.
- Create a MODEL LID ORDINANCE suitable for the Water Committee Study Area.
- Assemble DATA on why LID makes sense economically. Use a cost benefit focus, and include benefits to communities using the Community Rating System and the potential for Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) water quality credits.
- DISTRIBUTE the model ordinance to all the local governments in the Study Area.
- ADVOCATE for consideration of the LID model ordinance, through an Op Ed, press release, and attendance at city and county government meetings as requested.

Acknowledgements

The Water Committee is grateful to the following regional leaders who did presentations to the Committee, providing vital baseline information to inform the recommendations.

- P. Scott Laidlaw, P.G., Chief, Bureau of Water Supply Planning, St. Johns River Water Management District
- John Myers, Esq., Co-Chair, St. Marys River Management Committee

The Water Committee found success by assembling smart, engaged and passionate citizens of the region to determine what was both right to do and doable in the Study Area. Largely, they found each other and brought their peers to the table. The Committee is indebted to the following extraordinary regional leaders:

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