

## Sabrina Robertson

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**From:** Aaron C. Bell  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 1, 2019 3:36 PM  
**To:** Michael Mullin  
**Cc:** Sabrina Robertson; Susan Gilbert  
**Subject:** Fwd: St. Marys River Management Committee recommends Boating Safety Zones in St. Marys River  
**Attachments:** Letter to Nassau BOCC re-boating safety.pdf

Aaron Bell  
District 2 Nassau County Commissioner  
C: 904-451-4094

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reprints*

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**From:** SMRMC Admins <stmarysriverinfo@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 31, 2019 2:19 PM  
**To:** Daniel Leeper; Aaron C. Bell; Pat Edwards; Tom Ford; Justin Taylor  
**Cc:** Dean Woehrle  
**Subject:** St. Marys River Management Committee recommends Boating Safety Zones in St. Marys River

CONTAINS EXTERNAL SENDER CONTENT: Do not open attachments unless you are expecting them and trust the sender.

- Technical Services

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Nassau County Board of Commissioners:

Recently, the St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC) has been reviewing the span of river along the St. Marys River that is shared by Charlton County Georgia and Nassau County Florida to identify locations that currently do not have established boating safety zones or speed restrictions. Three locations of concern have been discussed by the committee on the Nassau County side of the river. These locations are areas of high boating traffic, along with reduced visibility and maneuverability by vessel operators, and areas where swimmers are frequently encountered in the river channel. Please see the attached letter for details why the St. Marys River Management Committee is recommending action from the committee to increase boating safety at the three locations.

Thank you,

Shelley Beville

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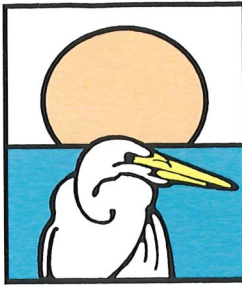
Administrative Assistant

St. Marys River Management Committee

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## St. Marys River Management Committee

Post Office Box 251 • Folkston, GA 31537

May 15, 2019

Dear Commissioners:

Recently, the St. Marys River Management Committee (SMRMC) has been reviewing the span of river along the St. Marys River that is shared by Charlton County Georgia and Nassau County Florida to identify locations that currently do not have established boating safety zones or speed restrictions. Three locations of concern have been discussed by the committee on the Nassau County side of the river, see attached map. These locations are areas of high boating traffic, along with reduced visibility and maneuverability by vessel operators, and areas where swimmers are frequently encountered in the river channel. The following paragraphs detail why the SMRMC has considered these three locations.

Georgia law OCGA 52-7-18 (f) and 52-8-8.2 (j) define in Georgia when and where boat and PWC (jet ski) operators should be operating at an idle speed. The areas defined in these two laws do not have to be marked by navigational aids and are the operator's responsibility to know. The following areas require all vessels to be at an idle speed when within 100 feet: any moored or anchored vessel, any vessel adrift, any wharf, dock, pier, piling, bridge structure or abutment, persons in water, or shoreline adjacent to a full-time or part-time residence, public park, public beach, public swimming area, marina, restaurant, or other public use area.

There is not currently a law in Florida that establishes areas of reduce or idle speed. Florida statute in Chapter 327.46 of Title 24, subsection (c), states that: Municipalities and counties have the authority to establish by ordinance the following other boating-restricted areas. The areas are further defined in paragraph 2, a through d: An ordinance establishing a slow speed, minimum wake, or numerical speed limit boating-restricted area if the area is:

- a. Within 300 feet of a confluence of water bodies presenting a blind corner, a bend in a narrow channel or fairway, or such other area if an intervening obstruction to visibility may obscure other vessels or other users of the waterway
- b. Subject to unsafe levels of vessel traffic congestion
- c. Subject to hazardous water levels or currents, or containing other navigational hazards
- d. An area that accident reports, uniform boating citations, vessel traffic studies, or other creditable data demonstrate to present a significant risk of collision or a significant threat to boating safety.

*The St. Marys River Management Committee is an intergovernmental entity of elected and appointed members from the four counties framing the river: Charlton and Camden, GA, and Nassau and Baker, FL.*

*The committee advises the four county commissions and provides a public forum on issues concerning the St. Marys River.*



Two of the three location of concern by the SMRMC are adjacent to areas where Georgia law has already established no wake zones. These two locations are Traders Hill Recreation Area and boat landing and the Camp Pinckney boat landing. Vessel operating in Georgia waters along these two areas are required to observe the idle speed regulations when within 100 feet of the item metioned in the previous paragraph. At first glance, it seems there would be no need for additional action in these areas, but Georgia waters only extend to the middle of the river.

Amenities that Traders Hill provides to recreational users are a public boat launch, a courtesy dock for boaters that extends approximately 50 feet from the bank into the river, and a popular swimming/beach area. It is very common for swimmers to swim across the river to the Florida bank to access rope swings. As a result, the swimmers can be very hard to see while in the water, especially when the operator is operating on a plane and also watching or distracted by other boaters utilizing the dock and ramp.

Camp Pinckney boat ramp is located in a narrow portion of river, approximately 50% less width in comparison to the width of the river immediately upstream and downstream a short distance, and is also slightly recessed into the bank and blocked by vegetation along the river bank. The recessed and blocked view can allow most boats being launched to be blocked from view and not visible until the disadvantaged vessel is in the river channel. There is also a popular swimming area slightly upstream from the ramp on the Florida bank in the Ralph Simmons State Forest. This is a popular location for boaters and swimmers to frequently travel back and forth between the two areas. Boats traveling up and down the river through this area, tend to operate at high rates of speed, given the overall width of the river in the general vicinity. As a result, once an operator observes the boat ramp or swimming area across the river, the vessel has traveled past one or both locations before the operator can react.

The third area is a popular sandbar that is located on the Florida bank of the river between Traders Hill and the railroad trestle. It is located in a blind curve and in a narrow portion of the river. The Georgia bank is lined with numerous deadfalls that have restricted the use of most of the river channel in the Georgia waters. During periods of low water levels, boats can only safely travel in the Florida half of the river. With an already restricted area that boats can travel in the river channel, especially during times of high use when boats are lined along the sand bar and swimmers are in the water, this creates a very congested area, along with reduced visibility of other boaters traveling in the opposite direction.

The SMRMC is requesting that consideration be made to add additional speed restriction zones in these three areas to increase the safety for boaters and swimmers in these locations. Although the responsibility relies on the operator of a vessel to safely operate his/her vessel, by adding these additional boating safety zones, along with placing visible navigational aids, the safety of all users of the river will be greatly increased. It will also increase the ability of law enforcement agencies that patrol our waterways to provide the level of safety all users of the St. Marys River expect.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Myers', with a stylized, cursive script.

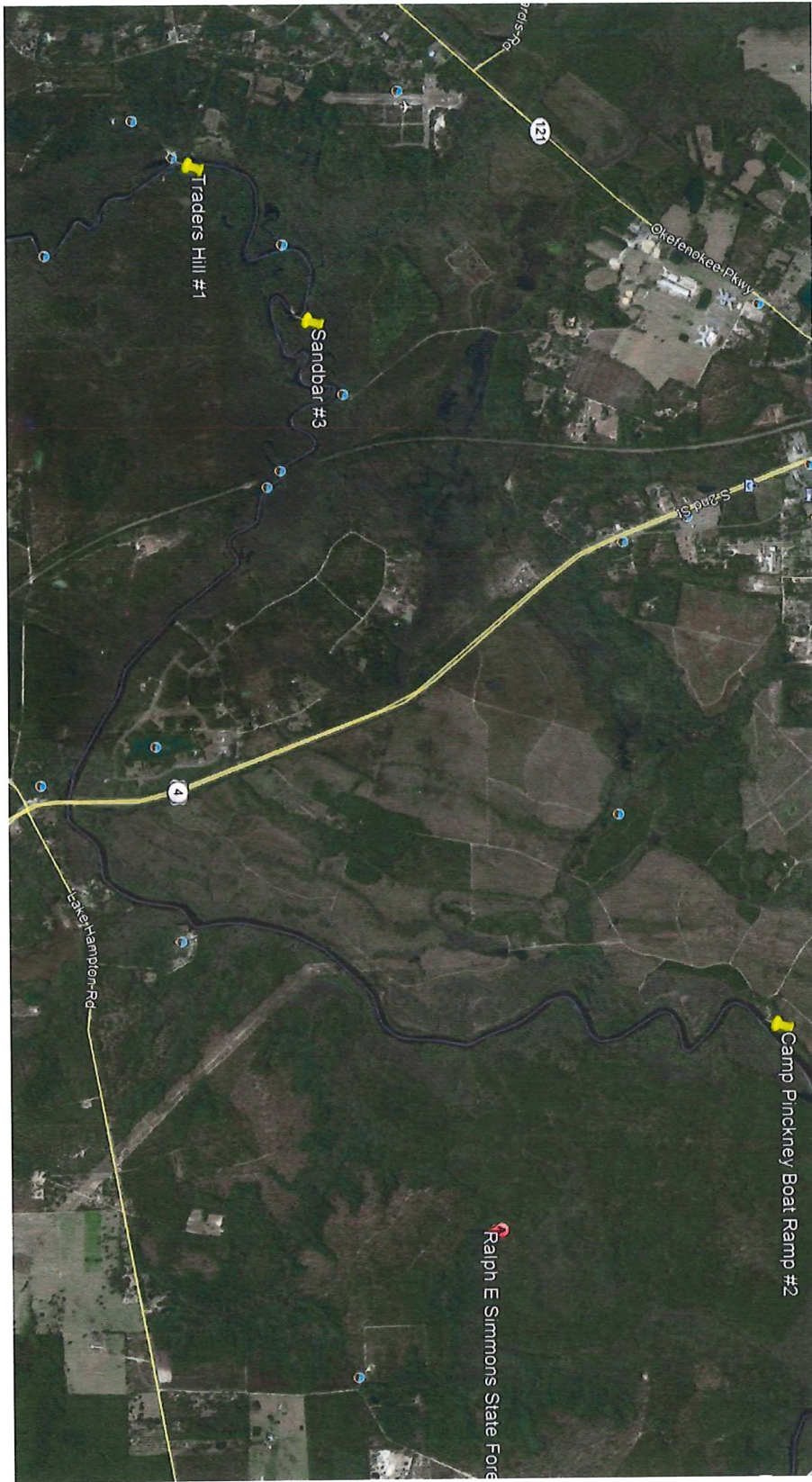
John Myers  
GA Chair SMRMC

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Earl K. Tindall', with a stylized, cursive script.

Earl K. Tindall  
FL Chair SMRMC

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