



Board of County Commissioners

P.O. Box 99/200 East 4th Street • Woodbine, GA 31569

Phone: (912) 510.0464 • Fax: (912) 576.5647 • www.camdencountyga.gov

November 28, 2016

Georgia Water Coalition
c/o Ms. Dana Skelton
Executive Director, Georgia Rivers Network
126 South Milledge Avenue, Suite E3
Athens, Georgia 30605

Dear Ms. Skelton,

Through various media outlets, Camden County has become aware of your efforts to disparage Spaceport Camden and the economic development efforts of the Board of County Commissioners. Since your organization failed to contact anyone associated with Camden County about this project before defaming it in the media, you have missed several critical facts that I intend to clarify for the record.

First, Spaceport Camden is still a pending project. No space related activities are currently taking place in Camden County and no company or organization associated with Spaceport Camden is emitting effluence into any stream, river, creek, marsh, wetland or any other body of water in Camden County. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Office of Commercial Space Transportation is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the environmental impacts of a proposed commercial space launch site (known as Spaceport Camden) in Camden County. This EIS is required by and conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Seeing as Georgia Water Coalition and Georgia Rivers Network frequently rely on the National Environmental Policy Act to advance their objectives, I must assume you have some confidence in the ability of the legislation to protect the environment.

This brings me to my second point; Camden County did not simply provide one-sided environmental information to government regulators. Rather, the Camden County Board of Commissioners as an additional layer of transparency, created an environmental subcommittee of the Spaceport Camden steering committee to ensure all relevant environmental issues are identified and presented to the FAA for inclusion in the Environmental Impact Statement. This subcommittee is headed by Dr. Clay Montague, who has over thirty (30) years experience as a professor and coastal systems ecologist in the Department of Environmental Engineering Sciences at the University of Florida. Members include many of the organizations with whom you, yourself are affiliated, such as the Satilla Riverkeepers, the St. Marys Earthkeepers, the Georgia Conservancy and One Hundred Miles. All said, this subcommittee submitted 402 environmental questions for the FAA to consider in the Spaceport Camden Environmental Impact Statement. This is the pinnacle of environmental due diligence and completely ignored by your organization.

“Award-Winning Government”

STEVE L. HOWARD
County Administrator

JOHN S. MYERS
County Attorney

WILLIS R. KEENE JR.
Commissioner, District 1

CHUCK CLARK
Commissioner, District 2

JIMMY STARLINE
Commissioner, District 3

GARY BLOUNT
Commissioner, District 4

TONY SHEPPARD
Commissioner, District 5

Finally, the most glaring and discrediting aspect of your inclusion of Spaceport Camden as a “dirty dozen” is the fact that the proposed spaceport location is a former industrial pesticide production site. A site that without intervention, may result in future risk to the environment. The environmental and economic benefits of the project will be numerous. Spaceport Camden is envisioned as the catalyst that will lead to: economic revitalization, reduced blight, job creation, reduction in environmental and safety risks and protection of thousands of acres. In fact, a key member of the Spaceport Camden project team is renowned redevelopment expert Gerald Pouncey. Mr. Pouncey previously served as the lead environmental counsel for the Atlantic Station project, a \$2 billion award winning smart growth project that remains the nation’s largest brownfield redevelopment. Camden County is also working with Tetra Tech, Inc. on environmental matters such as management of stormwater runoff, soil and groundwater contamination. Tetra Tech has been ranked #1 in Water by Engineering News-Record magazine for 13 years in a row. This company is also ranked #1 by Engineering News-Record magazine in Environmental Management (e.g. pollution prevention). Tetra Tech helps provide effective treatment of stormwater and is known for its innovative watershed protection approaches. Camden County and Tetra Tech, Inc. will develop and implement a plan, reviewed and approved by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, which will protect the waterbodies adjacent to the Spaceport. The plan will be developed after the input from the public and the federal and state agencies on the environmental impact statement is received and understood.

The Georgia Water Coalition knows that without investment, the land earmarked for Spaceport Camden will most likely lie stagnant and result in an even greater threat to the ecosystem. It is not only disingenuous but seems to contradict your organization’s stated goals when you publically attack projects that will result in significant environmental gains and allow for a better community through redevelopment of used land.

Given the immense amount of data discrediting your conclusion that Spaceport Camden is anything other than a steward of the environment, we believe both an apology and retraction are in order. Continuing to publish information you know is not fact based is libelous. The Camden County Board of Commissioners and the citizens who anxiously await the economic opportunities and environmental benefits offered by Spaceport Camden look forward to your apology.

Sincerely,

Steve L. Howard, MPA, ICMA-CM, CPM, CPPO
County Administrator

cc: Board of County Commissioners
County Attorney

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