



Coastal Advisory Committee
April 26, 2023
Location: SSEL
Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Charles McMillan. All Coastal Advisory Council (CAC) members, guests, and Coastal Resources Department (CRD) staff introduced themselves during round robin introductions. Jan Mackinnon introduced Shyathia (Shy) Duncan, CRD's new Grants Specialist who started with the agency in January 2023.

Old Business:

Meeting Summary January 13, 2023

No comments were made on the meeting summary.

Communications Committee, Stacia Hendricks

The committee would like to solicit members who would like to join. Contact Stacia Hendricks if interested.

Legislative committee, Scott Hendricks (via phone)

The Committee has continued tracking HB 748/370 and HB 517 and other items as they arise.

HB 370: A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 23 of the O.C.G.A., relating to quia timet, so as to provide a procedure for clearing title to coastal marshlands; to provide for legislative findings, purpose, and intent; to provide for definitions; to provide for in rem proceedings; to provide for presentation of abstracts to the State Properties Commission; to provide for service of process and filing of pleadings; to provide for special masters and trial by jury; to provide for restriction of properties for conservation purposes; to provide for rebuttable presumptions; to provide for decrees and recording of same; to provide for joinder; to provide for compensation of the special master; to provide for applicability; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes. **HB 370 did not pass.**

HR 519: A RESOLUTION creating the House Study Committee on Fishing Access to Freshwater Resources; and for other purposes. **HR 519 passed.**

HB 517 is a statewide bill which could limit coastal communities' ability to adopt higher standards including their attempt to make their communities more flood resilient. **HB 517 did not pass.**

Chairman McMillan asked if anyone has any insight on these pieces of legislation.

Membership Update:

Ms. Mackinnon announced that there were 2 openings on the CAC. This includes one opening for a citizen at large that Dorset Hurley vacated and one opening for an NGO that Ashby Worley vacated. We had received eight applications for the citizen at large position. The Commissioner has appointed Hyde Post, a Glynn County resident who has a lot of coastal experience and has sat on multiple boards. We will be putting out announcements to fill the one NGO position, as well as two state/regional positions that Ben Carswell and Ebony Simpson vacated.

Georgia Coastal Management – 25 years in and looking ahead....

BIL and Infrastructure Reduction Act, *Jill Andrews*

Approximately \$200 million will go to coastal programs for land acquisition, ecological restoration, planning and design projects via competition.

CRD has established a capacity building position using non-competitive BIL funds, which has been filled and the employee will start on May 1, 2023. Additional funds will be used to build a pipeline of competitive projects for future years.

Blue Carbon, *Jill Andrews*

Carbon sequestration is one of the marsh values, and this term "blue carbon" came along recently. It refers to the amount of carbon stored in coastal and ocean ecosystems and relates to offsetting carbon uses as it is becoming a new industry for carbon crediting. UGA is putting together a Blue Carbon Symposium as an add-on to the Georgia Climate Conference so various organizations can get on the same page with blue carbon involvement. Starting in October we have a CIG with a carbon scientist and law/policy expert to help dive into blue carbon from a sequestration point of view and determine how to move forward.

Clay Montague stated what was going on Sapelo Island in the 70s and 80s had a lot to do with this blue carbon topic, so we have research to do.

Ms. Andrews responded that we are thankful that we are starting to talk about it now before it becomes a management issue.

Chairman McMillan stated that he would like to review information presented at the Blue Carbon Symposium and suggested adding it to the next CAC agenda.

309 Strategy and Living Shorelines, *Jennifer Kline/Meghan Angelina*

The current 309 enhancement strategy was presented. Strategic planning occurred at the start of the 309 cycle (2021-2025), during COVID. Tasks of the current 309 include:

- Updating the shoreline change data to better understand erosion on the coast.
- Using shoreline change, fetch, sea level rise, and storm surge data in an Hazard Vulnerability Assessment for all coastal communities to recognize vulnerability hotspots
- Updating SLAMM
- Working with CVIOG to develop a Resiliency Academy for local governments starting in October 2023. The turnover at the elected official level is one of our greatest challenges. There is already an Environmental Leadership Academy, but this training will bring it down to the local level.
- Working with Zulu Marine, Inc., and Coastal Civil Engineering to develop standards and best management practices for living shorelines.
- Establishing an internal Shoreline Policy and Resilience Review team

One of the PSMs for this project is partnering with the City of Tybee on a Comprehensive Community Resilience Plan. A consultant will consider all their plans to complete an assessment to identify needs and gaps and provide suggestions of how to bring everything together. The 2025 Climate Conference will be held on the coast where you will hear more about the green infrastructure outcomes from this 309.

A photo monitoring initiative has been established through the Living Shorelines Workgroup to have a means of measuring success of living shorelines. Photos will be taken twice per year (April and October), at low tide, and from a point on the shoreline that can be repeated (taken from approximately the same location and height).

In partnership with SINERR, TNC and the St. Simons Land Trust, CRD hosted three living shorelines workshops for local governments, engineers/contractors, and the public in April 2023. The workshops for local governments and engineer/contractors were held at Crooked River State Park and consisted of an engineering presentation and breakout stations where participants could learn more about Georgia's living shoreline projects and materials that are often used. The public event, the "Living 4 Living Shorelines Expo," was held at Cannon's Point where guests could visit family-friendly stations to learn about living shorelines and coastal resources.

Alton Brown asked, "How many living shorelines are there in Georgia and have they been deemed successful?"

Meghan Angelina responded that it depends on who you ask and what habitats you are considering, but we have about a dozen living shorelines. Ms. Mackinnon added that in general, living shorelines have been successful and resilient during storms. At Cannon's Point, you could

see some battered *Spartina* along the shoreline after Irma, but the oyster reef that is part of the living shoreline protected all the *Spartina* located behind it. One living shoreline at Ashantilly on Sapelo Island needed maintenance due to storm activity and dock construction. But these challenges were specific to the site.

Stacia Hendricks added that one of the living shorelines on Little St. Simons Island was another pilot project on the Georgia coast. During Hurricanes Irma and Matthew, there was no notable damage even though there was tidal over wash. The fishing there has improved substantially.

Chairman McMillan added that he is happy that discussions and workshops are targeting engineers because that is the first step is designing these shoreline stabilization techniques and we will need to continue to demonstrate success to get them on board.

Clean Marina Program, *Kelly Hill*

This is the first year that we brought the Clean Marina Program back. This is a partnership between CRD, UGA, and GAMBA. It is a voluntary certification program allowing coastal Georgia marinas the opportunity to demonstrate their environmental stewardship through implementation of Clean Marina Best Management Practices (BMPs). Any interested marinas can apply in August 2023. We had ten applicants during this term. Seven of them have pledged, but one dropped out, so we have six marinas that are still going through the checklist to meet these best management practices.

LID inventory, *Kelly Hill*

The Coastal LID inventory, an ArcGIS application, that features an inventory of stormwater green infrastructure practices located on civic, public, commercial, and mixed-used properties, was updated in 2022.

NFWF Brunswick, *Kelly Hill*

NFWF awarded CRD funding through the National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF) to address compound flooding issues along Lanier Boulevard and adjacent wetlands, as well as Glynn Middle School property and the Habersham neighborhood. The project will kick off this summer in partnership with the City of Brunswick and the Board of Education to complete the design phase for the nature-based solutions that will enhance resilience for Glynn County communities in this area. There are hopes to apply for funds next year to construct these projects.

BRIC, *Kelly Hill*

CRD had been awaiting news on the outcome of a FEMA BRIC application for a couple of years. This grant has been awarded and will generate innovative simulations of coastal flooding for St Simons, LSSI, and Brunswick, and it can be used to see where enhanced dunes would be feasible and where hardened structures may be needed.

Coastal Stormwater Supplement (updating the “blue book”), *Kelly Hill*

CRD and UGA Marine Extension will work with specific advisory teams to update the 2009 document as it relates to design and research updates, municipal needs, and policy needs, and it will be changed into a digital format. A Needs Assessment survey will be sent out to coastal stormwater practitioners this summer.

CIG Cycle 26 Overview, Shy Duncan

CRD received ten pre-applications for Cycle 26 and all ten were invited to submit full applications. The CIG Technical Review Committee met in mid-March, and recommended eight of the ten, which were submitted to NOAA for approval (see table below). Six of the eight projects were submitted by UGA.

Applicant	PI	Title
Chatham County	Jackie Jackson	Reactive & Proactive Response to Climate Change: Chatham County's Code Analysis & Recommended Changes
City of Brunswick	J. Garrow Alberson	Rethinking Runoff - Phase II
UGA	Clark Alexander	Filling Critical Data Gaps in the Distribution of Sand Resources in State Waters to Enhance Coastal Management in Georgia
UGA	Jessica Brown	Stormwater Education Campaign Needs Assessment
UGA	Katie Hill	Marsh Migration and Blue Carbon: Scientific and Legal Research to Inform Coastal Management
UGA	Matthew Bilskie	Establishment of a Continuous Beach Observation and Real-Time Coastal Inundation Forecasting System (CO-IFS)
UGA	Thomas Bliss	Building Georgias oyster (<i>Crassostrea virginica</i>) management capacity through shell recycling and novel mound reef restoration
UGA	Nina Sassano	Exploring from within: A Living Shoreline Exhibit at the UGA Marine Education Center and Aquarium

Federal Grants, Jan Mackinnon

External grants received:

- BIL/CELCP – The Ossabaw Living Shoreline project will begin on October 1st and includes design, construction, monitoring, and outreach. It will be the longest living shoreline on the Georgia Coast at 1,320 linear feet. There are a lot of cultural resources at this site, and we will work with many partners including the Deputy State Archaeologist.

- National Coastal Restoration Fund (NCRF) – Southeastern Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) – CRD will be involved in a multi-state effort to assess culverts for the purpose of prioritizing the restoration of hydrologic flow and fish passage.

External grants applied for:

- America the Beautiful Challenge – If awarded, this will fund the restoration of McLendon creek in McIntosh County.

External grant partnerships:

- NCRF – CRD partnered on a grant that was submitted by the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia to construct and monitor a living shoreline at Honey Creek. The pre-proposal was due in April, and if invited, a full application will be submitted at the end of June.

Presentation:

Environmental Influences on Life and Labor in the Coastal Laboratory, *Buddy Sullivan*

The presentation focused on our natural resources in Georgia and their connection to culture throughout history. When people looked at their livelihood, they often turned to our coastal ecosystems, and people understood the uniqueness of the Georgia coast. Here are a few highlights:

- St Catherine’s Island was the largest Spanish settlement on the coast and a lot of religious artifacts were found here. Spanish missionaries used the waterways to interact and connect with others.
- Agricultural influence came from South Carolina. The colony of Georgia learned that they could grow rice based on the rising and falling of tides (tide flow rice cultivation). During outgoing tides, they would drain the fields and during incoming tides, they used gates to keep saltwater out so complicated hydraulics were used in the process.
- Having a saline atmosphere with porous soil was important for the development and success of sea island cotton which was a staple crop.
- Live oaks became important for the shipbuilding industry. There was a great demand for war ships, and many ships including the USS Constitution were constructed here.
- We still have tabby structures today which shows that the material is very durable. Tabby is based on natural processes that were close at hand - oyster shells were burned then mixed with water to be to act as a glue (the ash has a lime consistency). Tabby structures were built in layers.
- Trading towns, like Darien and Savannah, started to pop up along the rivers which led to them becoming leading port. St Mary’s was prosperous for being a marketing seaport. Brunswick became a leading seaport because it was located close to the railroad for further transport of goods. Timber became a huge industry. This was the lead lumber production for the country.
- Small shrimp boats were built along the coast and a shrimping tradition was born. African Americans were the proponents of this industry (1950-1980). Technology that went along with this, like ice machines and mechanics to trawl two nets at the same time, made the industry bigger and more profitable. However, several things hurt the shrimping industry like long cold winters and the rising cost of diesel fuel.

Other Announcements:

CoastFest, *Tyler Jones*

CoastFest was held in-person for the first time since 2019 on Earth Day, April 22, 2023. The set up at Mary Ross Park was a bit different than years past as there were exhibitors in two large tents, the CRD exhibit in the Farmers Market area, food trucks on the side street, and live shows in another tent. The DNR foundation funded the Hawg Trough exhibit. The attendance was estimated to be about 5,500-6,000 people. CRD will be polling partners to see if an April or October date works best for future CoastFest events and DNR leadership will make a decision based on this information. Tyler does not anticipate a CoastFest in October 2023.

Coastal Ecosystems Report Card, *Tyler Jones*

The 2022 Coastal Ecosystems Report Card was released on Earth Day, April 22, 2023. This is a communications piece that can be used as a resource by both professionals and the public to learn about current ecosystem conditions, while planning conservation actions. The information found within these report cards has easy transferability to most audiences by assigning number and letter grades to twelve *indicators* in the same way that number and letter grades are associated with various subjects on a student's report card. These indicators are used because consistent data is collected, the public can identify with them, and each of them can contribute to ecosystem health in Georgia. The number and letter grades for each indicator are based on data collected by subject matter experts at the GADNR's Coastal Resources Division and Wildlife Resources Division and they are ultimately determined by how this data relates to scientifically derived thresholds. Major takeaways from the 2022 Report Card include declines for blue crabs and bald eagles and the addition of conserved land to the Ceylon Wildlife Management Area. Decreased rainfall increases salinities and blue crabs may have moved away from DNR sampling sites toward areas of lower salinity. The decline in bald eagles may be associated with infections from highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (HPAIV).

Rachel Guy suggested that the decline in blue crabs could also be attributed to a parasite that affects them more frequently in high saline conditions.

After talking about blue crabs, Michael Blakely asked, "Why does DNR sample at the same stations?"

Jones replied that DNR wants to keep consistent sampling locations to observe changes over time.

Stacia asked if the bird indicators are based on adults or fledglings.

Meghan Angelina responded that she would get back to the group on the answer because they may differ for each of the three bird indicators. See below.

American oystercatchers –annual productivity (number of chicks per breeding pair)

Wood storks – weighted average of productivity (1.76 chicks/tracked nest)

Bald eagles – three-year nest success rate, number of occupied territories, number of young fledged per occupied territory, and number of young fledged per successful nest.

Clay Montague asked if there are surveys based on diadromous fish like shad and eel.

Mr. Jones responded that WRD fisheries conducts surveys for diadromous fish.

Coastlines, Tyler Jones

The feature article of *Coastlines* focused on living shorelines in Georgia. As part of the CRD exhibit at CoastFest, a diorama was constructed to show a 3D version of a living shoreline and its components. In partnership with SINERR, TNC, and the St. Simons Land Trust, staff members have recently hosted living shorelines workshops for local governments, engineers and contractors, and the public, as part of a USFWS grant.

Member Announcements:

No other member announcements

Chairman McMillan adjourned the meeting.