



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION

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Coastal Advisory Council
February 20, 2025
Location: SSEL
Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions:

The Winter Meeting was called to order by Chairman John Hunter.

Jan Mackinnon introduced Tyler Cooper-Kolb as the Marine Biologist/GIS Specialist starting March 17. Mr. Cooper-Kolb will be transitioning from his NOAA Coastal Management Fellowship over the next few weeks while also completing his fellowship project over the next two years.

Old Business:

The Fall 2024 meeting summary was provided to all CAC members and there were no additions or changes.

Committee Reports

Communications Committee- *Hyde Post*

Mr. Post reported that the Communications Committee has been building on results of the survey initiated by Stacia Hendricks, looking to change the structure of CAC meetings to give members a deeper understanding of the inner workings of CRD. One suggestion was that a deeper dive into one of the CRD focus areas during Spring and Fall meetings would give ideas of what is working and what the challenges are. Coastal Hazards was one area that members were interested in learning more about and as a result, today, Jennifer Kline will be providing an update on this subject. CAC members should look for a follow up survey to get more information from members.

Mr. Post stated that what Ms. Kline presents today will aim to fill knowledge gaps related to Coastal Hazards. This effort will not replace the annual staff updates but given that those presentations are limited by time, there is hope that diving deep would pay some dividends.

Legislative Committee – *Shawn Jordan*

Mr. Hendricks inquired if his status as Co-Chair of this committee is still current given his recent election to Chair-Elect of the CAC. He asked if there was anything procedural that needed to be done related to holding concurrent positions. Ms. Mackinnon responded that nothing procedural needed to be done. She would record this change on the CAC Committee list.

Mr. Shawn Jordan acknowledged that additional members would be helpful to the Legislative Committee in tracking bills of interest to the CAC. Mr. Jordan stated that committee members look to state representatives and talk to them about bills of interest while also talking to NGO's that track legislation. Mr. Jordan proceeded to update the Council on current bill of interest.

- **House Bill 117** – *Food service establishments; require notification of the country of origin of seafood items*; the bill passed the House and was tabled in the Senate.
- **Senate Bill 43** - *Bona Fide Conservation Use Property; the maximum acreage to qualify for assessment and taxation*; the bill was read and referred in the Senate.
- **House Resolution 97** - *Conveyance of certain state-owned property*; this resolution is believed to be, in part, focused on Wally's Leg, Glynn County, for a proposed mitigation bank; the resolution passed the House.
- **House Resolution 100** - *House Study Committee on the Cumulative Impact of Pollution on Economic Development and Growth*; the resolution did not make it out of the House.
- **HB 287** - *Environmental Protection Division; Environmental Advisory Council; update reference date to standards, rules, and regulations*; line 92 speaks to commercial fishing licenses with shellfish endorsement and master harvester permit or harvester permit; the bill passed the Senate.

Discussions ensued regarding the bill pertaining to crown grants. Mr. Jordan stated there are questions about ownership. Ms. Andrews stated that every year the State Properties Commission (SPC) puts together all properties owned by the State. The State is negotiating a settlement agreement for Wally's Leg to include that the land will be restored regardless of ownership. This is a routine practice with the SPC and Attorney General's office but the first in Glynn County. CRD staff work hard to facilitate an understanding between both parties.

Mr. Hendricks stated that we will circulate a list of current members of the Legislative Committee and then put out an invitation for new members. It is important to notice and act on bills as they come out very quickly, so we need more people to assist with this.

New Business:

News from the Hill (including legislation CRD is watching) – *Jill Andrews*

Georgia Legislation

- **HB 287**- *Environmental Protection Division; Environmental Advisory Council; update reference date to standards, rules, and regulation*; Ms. Andrews spoke to the intention of the new commercial "crew" license for master shellfish harvesters. This legislation is responsive to a shellfish industry's request. It creates two new commercial licenses which allow for multiple shellfish harvesters to operate under one master harvester who has purchased a crew license for either up to 10 harvesters or an unlimited number of

harvesters. These two new licenses provide convenience and efficiency to master harvesters who struggle daily to maintain a workforce.

- **HB 117** – *Food service establishments; require notification of the country of origin of seafood items*; the bill passed the House and was tabled in the Senate; CRD was hoping that seafood labelling would get down to the state level as an endorsement for GA shrimp but as written, it does not.
- **HB 443** – *Game and fish; fees for reef and migratory fish endorsements*; the goal is to get better data on offshore species and how they come into GA; the bill passed the House and was tabled in the Senate.
- **HB 115** – *Department of Natural Resources, certain notice upon registration of a vessel*; This bill relates to the registration, operation, and sale of watercraft, and provides for the performance of unattended vessel checks; authorizes restitution to the Department of Natural Resources for the cost of removal, storage, and disposal of abandoned vessels; this bill is trying to retrieve boats before they sink but does not have a provision to remove vessels already sunken; the bill passed the House and was tabled in the Senate.
- **SB 135** – *Coastal Island Preservation Act*; relates to general provisions regarding parks, historic areas, memorials, and recreation, so as to restrict development of residential structures on certain coastal islands; the bill was read in the Senate.

News from DC

Ms. Andrews reported that NOAA and CZM are still running. Our federal partners are back in the office now and the new NOAA Administrator, Neil Jacobs, was named and met with excitement as to his experience with the agency during the first Trump administration. We would be ill-prepared if we didn't expect some funding cuts going forward. We are working with our Coastal States Organization friends in DC who recommend we reach out and share success stories. Budget requests go in March 15, now is the time to do that. During the first Trump administration, we sent out letters. Ms. Andrews reminded the CAC, if you see something coming from us, we cannot advocate for ourselves on the hill, but we can give you talking points.

Regarding executive orders, Ms. Andrews stated that some are trying to fast-track permits. There is also a bill from Representative Kiley (CA) that was introduced that would, in part, amend the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) to expedite important coastal activities, including national security initiatives, critical infrastructure development, and disaster mitigation and recovery efforts. Removal of the Federal Consistency provision in CZMA is the strategy to expedite above. Recall, Federal Consistency allows state programs to review federal projects to ensure adherence to state laws and the protection of state resources. A most visible example is when GA did not recognize summer dredging by the US Army Corps of Engineers due to impacts to sea turtles. Federal Consistency allowed for a negotiation between the state and the federal government.

Dock Stakeholder Committee

Ms. Andrews offered some brief remarks Dock Stakeholder Committee. The Committee of approximately 15 folks are going through how CRD approves private recreational docks.

Currently CRD has been operating under guidance from 2005 but are now operating under a rule with a practice which is legally defensible. CRD will be going back into rule making after hosting a Town Hall. In the early summer, CRD will be bring the rule back to the DNR board.

Shellfish rule making

Temperature control is the focus of the shellfish rule making process. CRD commissioned a scientific study on summer harvest to determine the risks of harvesting shellfish in summer/warmer months. Summer harvest is being addressed with an abundance of caution, addressing time and temperature controls from the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Agriculture.

The study found that 2 hours is the safe time between taking the oyster out of the water and putting it into a cooler for temperature control to manage *Vibrio*. Part of the question is “what type of cooling system”? Will ice keep the *Vibrio* at bay or are refrigerated systems on boats needed? The worry about ice is concerning if the ice shocks and kills the animal. More research is needed and UGA is conducting supplemental studies this year to get more details. Ms. Andrews stated that summer harvest is 2025 is the goal – there are 2 oystermen growing presently that would like to harvest this summer.

Ms. Andrews reminded the Council that the oyster industry is a 3-legged stool held up by the Department of Agriculture (DoA), CRD and Law Enforcement Division (LED). CRD manages the animal from the reef to the dock, LED is responsible for enforcing the time/temperature control window. If product is out of the water for more than 2 hours, it must go back in the water for at least 2 weeks. Once the product hits the cooler, the DoA takes over. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversees the human health aspects of shellfish harvest. If Georgia reports illnesses, the process will be evaluated by FDA to determine where things are going wrong. Our neighbors to the south in Florida have a 3-hour window. They did their own validation study and they harvest daybreak to 10am. If they are do no use ice, harvest must be before 10am and in the shade. If they use ice, they can harvest any time of day.

CAC Vacancies

Mr. Hunter stated there were 2 positions that needed to be filled on the CAC – one Environmental NGO (vacancy by Charles McMillan) and one Citizen at Large (vacancy left by Buddy Sullivan). An announcement was put out through CRD’s GovDelivery system and 22 qualified applications were received for Citizen at Large and 4 qualified applications for NGO. The Executive Committee will have a call on who can move forward. The Executive Committee has vacancies as well with Charles and Buddy’s resignations. Please let Mr. Hunter or Ms. Mackinnon know if you are interested. We will send out a list of current committee members and vacancies.

Presentation – Georgia Coastal Management Program by *Jennifer Kline*

Hyde: slide of hazards, what about catastrophic rain events, how are you approaching that?

Jennifer: increasing capacity where we can, Kelly works a lot on that. Already worked into current community specific plans for DRRP, Ha

Matt: work that we are doing- we are working with Fort Stewart on coastal flooding, rainfall and developing maps with compound flooding similar to FEMA maps.

Christi- great target audience with revolving local officials. How can CAC work to help take the work you are doing and have some role in our own communities to share with others?

Jen: the county has their association and municipalities have their association; we are still trying to figure out how to best get plugged in with all of them. We had resounding support from our class to see more recognition and were willing to write letters to support certificates. I think that recognition will help.

Shawn: can confirm my commission has already given me Appendix A.

Hyde: how can we make the information more available to the public so they can be picked up by the media?

Jen: most efforts are posted on our website. We are working on a public survey to see how they best receive information and once we receive that we can push that out. And the general public is welcome to the Climate Conference.

Other Announcements:

- Clean Marina – *Kelly Hill*

Four coastal Georgia marinas have been recently certified under the Georgia Clean Marina Program. This national program recognizes marinas that reduce or eliminate the pollution of waterways during daily marina operations. Awards were given to Savannah Yacht Club, Belle Bluff Island Marina, Safe Harbor Bahia Bleu, and Hinckley Yacht Services to recognize their commitment to being environmental stewards through the implementation of Clean Marina Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Marinas can apply to the program each fall and work with program partners throughout the year towards meeting their certification goals. More information is available online at www.GeorgiaCleanMarina.org.

- CABANA (Coastal Aquatic Barrier Assessment and Analysis) – *Jaynie L. Gaskin*

May 2025 marks two years of the culvert and aquatic barrier assessment surveying road-stream crossing structures in coastal Georgia. The goal of this project is to survey all barriers in the eleven coastal counties and develop a prioritized list of culverts for hydrologic restoration and wetland habitat improvement. Thus far, the field team has assessed over 1000 sites across six counties. Coastwide, we have identified 2,000- 4,000 potential barriers that remain to be surveyed, and we hope to complete the assessment in the next two to three years. Prioritization and restoration planning are taking place concurrently with the surveys. We continuously share what we learn with GDOT, local governments, and other relevant coastal stakeholders.

- Cycle 28 CIG – *Shy Duncan*

I am pleased to announce that CRD received 19 pre-applications back in December, including 9 from local governments and 10 from research institutions.

In January, staff met to prioritize and select from these applications, and we requested full applications from 12 applicants. The deadline for submitting full applications was February 7th, and we are happy to report that all 12 full applications have been submitted. The CIG 5 meeting is scheduled for March 11th.

This year, we are excited to introduce a couple of new reviewers: Scott Coleman and Scott Hendricks will join the review team, alongside John Hunter, Steve Vives, and Jill Andrews.

We were particularly thrilled to receive the 9 pre-applications from local governments. We aim to maintain momentum with our local government service areas, and I am currently working on a new schedule to continue building these relationships and I look forward to building new connections along the way.

- Resilience Partners Survey – *Tyler Cooper-Kolb*

I am delighted to announce that I will be transitioning roles at CRD from my current position as NOAA Coastal Management Fellow to the GCMP GIS Specialist in mid-March. As the GIS Specialist, I will continue my fellowship project to produce a Resilience Strategy and Implementation Plan for CRD staff. A survey intended for Georgia Coastal Management Program partners, including CAC members, is in its final stages of development and will be distributed to partners soon. This survey will directly inform the development of the strategy and plan to enhance resilience outreach and communication efforts performed by staff.

- 309 Assessment Survey – *Meghan Angelina*

Thank you to those who took the 309 Assessment survey. Every five years, NOAA encourages states to conduct self-assessments of their coastal management programs to determine problems and enhancement opportunities within each of the nine enhancement areas provided by NOAA.

- We received 12 responses.

- Participants were asked to rank the 9 enhancement areas according to high and low priorities for the Georgia Coastal Management Program.

- Coastal Hazards and Wetlands were ranked the highest and all respondents ranked these 2 enhancement areas within their top 4 choices, so it was a unanimous response. Phase assessments are currently being conducted by staff, and we have used your feedback of the different components of coastal hazards and wetlands as support.

So, we thank you for your feedback and taking the opportunity to take action on this important step in developing our 5-year strategy.

Additional Updates from CAC Members:

Mr. Tony Robinson introduced Ms. Rachel Thomson of Glynn Environmental Coalition, to announce a new annual fundraiser. Ms. Thomson shared the following sentiments: we wanted to bring this into our program but also make something that is program affiliated, we have our Safe Seafood Outreach Initiative to educate fisher people on safe sea food consumption in Glynn County. Previously we partnered with the Department of Public Health for a fishing derby in Glynn County. We came up with the idea to plan a fishing tournament and plan to partner with others on CAC who might want to be involved. If you are interested in helping us, let me know and we will start with planning meetings. Not sure if it will be there, might be planned for earth day next year. Goals are to have annual fundraiser and also have impact on community and promote our Safe Seafood Program. Thank you for letting me share this.

Ms. Mackinnon reported that CoastFest will be held Saturday, March 22, 2025 at Mary Ross Park from 10am – 4pm

Mr. Hunter concluded the meeting.