



**IN
THIS
ISSUE**



- ▶ **Promoting Environmental Criteria For Economic Development** >
- ▶ **Clean Air Now Campaign and U.S. Energy Policy**
Page 2
- ▶ **National Study Reports on American Public's Environmental Views**
Page 3
- ▶ **Marine Aquaculture Potential in Georgia** Page 5
- ▶ **- Georgia Conservation Voters**
 - **Altamaha River BMP Demonstration Project**
 - **Coastal Decision Makers Workshop Announced**
Page 6
- ▶ **Coastal Georgia Greenway: Project Update**
Page 7
- ▶ **Membership Application**
Back Page

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Promoting Environmental Criteria For Economic Development

Center for a Sustainable Coast Partners with Conservation Research Institute and Georgia Conservation Voters

A partnership among Georgia Conservation Voters (GCV), the Conservation Research Institute (CRI) and the Center for a Sustainable Coast (CSC) has developed criteria to guide the One Georgia Authority and other public investments in rural economic development. The strength of the partnership comes in the geographic spread and broad range of missions of the partnering groups.

The initiative began more than a year ago, when the Center's executive director, David Kyler, drafted proposed environmental criteria to be used in state-assisted rural economic development, and forwarded them to Sam Collier at GCV/CRI for comments. Since then, Collier has augmented and expanded the criteria with additional considerations, which Kyler enthusiastically supported.

Georgia Conservation Voters is the political arm of Georgia's conservation and environmental movement, endorsing and supporting candidates who will protect Georgia's air, water and wildlife habitat (see article in this newsletter, "Don't Get Mad, Get Political"). Conservation Research Institute (CRI) is the educational partner to GCV, providing training on political skills and public education about environmental issues and their relationship to economic prosperity.

CRI and GCV intend to partner further with the Center in educating coastal citizens on these issues. CRI's ability to do this received a boost with a new Turner Foundation challenge grant, and CRI is now seeking matching funds to begin the project. The partner organizations plan to hold a workshop on environmental aspects of economic development sometime next year.

The first executive briefing on the Environmental Criteria for Public Investment in Economic Development took place in June in the Georgia Capitol. Sam Collier, GCV Executive Director and CRI President, briefed Lt. Gov. Mark Taylor on the criteria during a three-hour briefing on water issues. The Lt. Governor, who chairs the One Georgia Authority, was receptive to the concept of environmental criteria.

One particular area that caught Taylor's attention was the idea that preference points be given for projects that use existing, abandoned buildings in town centers rather than new construction on the fringe that would disturb natural areas, exacerbate traffic and further the decline of the downtown. Investment in water efficiency was another key issue that received interest during the briefing. This option was presented as an alternative to costly new reservoirs, which do not "make" water and in fact lose water due to evaporation.

The CSC/CRI/GCV partnership will continue, as GCV begins to make this an election issue for candidates. A Coastal Lobby Day at the Capitol is planned on January 31, the morning after the Georgia Environmental Council's Legislative Reception.

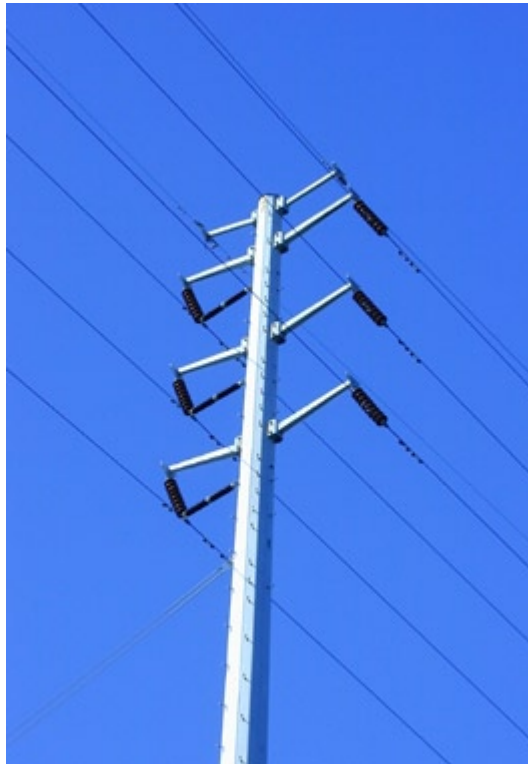
For more information, please contact Sam Collier at 404-522-8144, or sam@ProtectGeorgia.org or call David Kyler at the Center (912-638-3612), susdev@gate.net.

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CLEAN AIR NOW CAMPAIGN & NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

The Center has again partnered with the Georgia Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) in Atlanta, Georgians for Clean Air, and the Georgia Airkeepers Campaign in the Clean Air Now Campaign, an effort to correct air pollution problems caused by 'dirty' power plants that burn coal to produce electricity. To help in this campaign, the Center circulated copies of a prepared statement addressed to Governor Barnes asking him to induce the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to enforce all federal and state laws by ensuring that all Georgia's power plants comply with air quality standards. After collecting signatures for the statement, Center staff forwarded the originals to Georgia PIRG, which presented thousands from around the state in a meeting with Governor Barnes.



Nationally, the Bush-Cheney Energy Plan was translated into a Congressional bill (HR 4), and on August 2nd, the U.S. House of Representatives passed this controversial piece of legislation by a vote of 240 to 189. Of the bill's many flaws, perhaps the most glaring are its measures to support coal-burning power plants and nuclear energy, both of which are environmentally risky and ultimately expensive to the public – in terms of health costs and environmental damage. Instead of directing federal funds to the development and application of practical, safe, and efficient wind and solar technologies, the bill channels billions of dollars toward subsidy of coal, oil, and nuclear power. Moreover, HR 4 fails to impose much-needed restrictions on toxic plant emissions, including mercury, that continue to threaten the public health and our environmental quality.

Georgians for Clean Energy has a comprehensive report and assessment of

HR 4 on their website (<http://www.cleanenergy.ws>), and they advise that the entire bill and related amendments can be seen by going to the website <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

WHY CLEAN AIR IS IMPORTANT TO COASTAL GEORGIANS

Clean air is essential to protecting water quality and human health. Microscopic particles of solid pollutants in emissions released from the stacks of power plants and other industries travel hundreds or even thousands of miles before settling to the surface of land and water bodies.

Mercury, a very toxic pollutant released by coal-burning power plants, accumulates in fish, which are consumed by humans. There are now at least 100 fish consumption advisories in Georgia (half of these on the coast), and most of these warnings are due to mercury contamination. [Note: We are convinced that with more complete sampling and assessment in Georgia, there would be a far greater number of fish consumption advisories.]

Gases in these emissions, like sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide, combine with chemicals in the atmosphere to produce acid rain, which can be highly destructive to vegetation. Loss of vegetation, in turn, can devastate wildlife habitat and add to soil erosion, resulting in polluted waterways from sediments in stormwater runoff.

Emissions can also be very harmful to the respiratory systems of humans and wildlife. PIRG reports that more than 1,600 Georgians die prematurely due to power plant pollution, and another 240,000 suffer asthma attacks because of this source of air pollution. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable to bad air.

You can help improve energy policy:

With HR 4 now in the Senate, we urge you to call, email, or fax Georgia Senators Max Cleland and Zell Miller asking them to:

- (1) oppose this bill in its current form,
- (2) promote the measures featured in the Clean Power Act (S. 556) and the Clean Smokestack Act (HR 1256), or
- (3) simply replace HR 4 with S. 556.

Senator Cleland's phone number is 202-224-3521; his fax is 202-224-0072.

Senator Miller's phone number is 202-224-3643; his fax is 202-228-2090.

Please share your feedback with us at the Center by calling (912) 638-3612.

National Study Reports on American Public's Environmental Views

Findings have interesting implications.

It is easy to lose perspective in the day-to-day details of our lives. Between making a living, maintaining a household, meeting family and social obligations, and 'self-maintenance' (eating right and getting enough exercise, 'downtime,' and sleep), it may seem there is little time left for us to take in the "Big Picture." But to make progress and to be sure we are moving in the right direction, periodically we need to take stock of how we are doing.

In the environmental field we are fortunate in having several excellent sources of help in doing this. Granted, the assistance provided is on a national scale, lacking in details about distinctions in local and regional issues, as well as the public's views on them. But to help us understand what the American public knows about environmental issues, how they feel about such matters, and what they are doing to take action, a recent report of the National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF) provides a superb foundation. Plus, NEETF has been conducting public opinion surveys on environmental education and environmental issues long enough to be able to shed some light on how things are changing.

In their report, NEETF reveals some encouraging and some not-so-encouraging findings. First, it is gratifying to know that a vast majority of Americans remain resolute in their support of a healthy environment. By various measures, between 2/3 and 3/4 of adults say they hold environmental issues in high priority, and they overwhelmingly support more environmental education for our children, with 95% supporting it. This has been a consistent result of the survey over four years.

Another interesting finding is that 78% of Americans believe that environmental laws and regulations either do not go far enough (46%) or have achieved about the right balance (32%).

Only 15% of respondents believe that regulations and laws go too far. This fact is in stark contrast to the impression often gathered by observing public discussion of legislative and budgeting proposals being considered by local and state government in Georgia. .

[Editorial note: This may be (1) an example of politicians being several steps behind the public in their perception of priorities, (2) a result of the disproportionate influence of well-financed lobbyists who oppose environmental controls for narrowly defined, short-term business interests, or (3) a combination of both.]

Of the natural resources the public is most concerned about protecting, water and air are given the highest ranking. Fully 70% of respondents believe that water protection laws and regulations don't go far enough, and 63% believe air pollution is inadequately controlled. Lower ranked, but still significant, are concerns about improving protection for natural areas (habitats), with 50% believing more should be done, and wetlands, where 44% said that regulations and laws should go further. When analyzed by region of the nation, the South presented a strong position overall, reflecting the national averages.

[Editorial note: The survey makes no distinction between inadequate enforcement of existing laws and regulations, compared with inadequacy of the laws or regulations themselves. We believe that a large part of the public's perception of insufficient environmental protection is a result of poorly enforced laws, not due to defects in the laws or regulations. This means the Center holds that the public's views on insufficient environmental safeguards are significantly influenced by patchy sampling/monitoring, insufficient or technically inaccurate assessment, understaffed or under-trained field enforcement operations, and/or

Ninth Annual Report Card on Environmental Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behavior Highlights of Survey Findings

Survey Item	Yes	No	Don't Know
● Should environmental education be taught in schools?	95%	3%	2%
● Do you think environmental protection and economic development can go hand-in-hand?	63%	25%	13%
● The condition of the environment will play an increasingly important role in the nation's economic future.	89%	9%	2%
● Environmental Laws & Regulations --			
Have not gone far enough	46%	n.a.*	7%
Have about the right balance	32%	n.a.	
Have gone too far	15%	n.a.	

* "No" is not applicable in these items, since this was a multiple-choice question.

Source: Compiled by the Center for a Sustainable Coast from data gathered and analyzed by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (May 2001).

politically compromised or otherwise weak follow-through by enforcement authorities. We do, however, recognize the need to strengthen certain state and federal environmental laws and regulations.]

What is rather confounding is that there appears to be little change in the public's nominal understanding about basic environmental principles and issues since the survey was first conducted in 1997. According to the report, despite extensive efforts by many public institutions and non-profit organizations over the past few years, results from administering a simple 12-point quiz reveal virtually no change in the public's comprehension of environmental issues. These scores show barely more than 50% of the answers being correct and only 32% of those taking it even passed the quiz. This result may also reinforce the public's strong belief in the value of environmental education for school children, but such motivation is uncertain.

However, these findings are at odds with the public's self-assessment in the survey, which showed they believe themselves to be fairly knowledgeable (59%) or to have "a lot" of knowledge about environmental issues (11%).

The upside is that, given the large majority support for environmental causes, it would seem that effective education could achieve substantial results – in terms of support for better monitoring and enforcement, funding for protection of natural areas, wildlife, and water quality, and general political backing for policies and funding needed to safeguard natural resources.

Another encouraging indicator is that a significant majority of the public feels that environmental quality and economic progress go hand in hand – a question that wasn't asked in prior surveys. An impressive 89% of those in the multiple survey groups agreed that "the condition of the environment will play an increasingly important role in the nation's economic future." This means that most people do not believe it is necessary to risk degrading or destroying public resources in order to achieve advancements in job-creation and affluence. This would also seem to imply that we are on the right track here at the Center through our efforts in promoting the concept of sustainability – balancing the interests of this and future generations to achieve greater compatibility between business, the health of our communities, and the quality of our environment.

It is clear from this report that environmental education must remain one of the Center's foremost priorities. To assist us in this important endeavor, we welcome your suggestions, financial contributions, and help as a volunteer. If we are to effectively

manage the mounting demands of human activities within the limits of natural resource systems over the long term, we must prepare the next generation to assume this awesome responsibility. Environmental education is essential to this task.

The Center encourages you to look at the report, which is available at the NEETF website, www.neetf.org where it may also be downloaded. For those without access to the Internet, copies of the report may be obtained by writing the Foundation at 1707 H street, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20006-3915, or by calling them at (202) 833-2933.

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With Sympathy and Resolve

The Center hopes our members and other readers are doing as well as possible in the aftermath of the horrific events of September 11. We also trust that your family and friends are safe and able to cope with these tragic circumstances. We express our deepest sympathy to all who suffered losses from the terrorist attacks. Like other Americans, we share in your profound grief, but are comforted by renewed gratitude for the blessings offered by others - near and far, living and dead, present and past.

With the greatest respect for those now gone, and to honor their memory, we pledge our continuing commitment to 'stay the course' in confronting the issues we face in coastal Georgia. While we recognize and fully support the Nation's immediate focus on issues of security and related matters, important environmental concerns remain, which require our vigilance and action. Accordingly, we urge you to remain involved, ready to help our coastal communities meet the many challenges ahead.

Marine Aquaculture Potential in Georgia

By Dr. Randall Walker, Director

School of Marine Programs Marine Extension Service University of Georgia

[Editor's note: There are great opportunities for expanding coastal Georgia's nature-based economy through the careful development of aquaculture businesses – raising, processing, and marketing fish and shellfish products using well-managed facilities as controlled habitats. Like other types of nature-based businesses, to be successful and sustainable, these endeavors must be compatible with the natural resource systems upon which they depend. The following article presents an overview of some important steps toward the realization of this promising potential in coastal Georgia.]

It is well recognized by most scientists and fisheries management personnel that the vast majority of America's, as well as worldwide, fisheries are in serious decline due to overfishing, mismanagement, and continued destruction of freshwater, brackish water, and marine habitats. As demands for edible fish and shellfish continue to increase, many state and federal agencies now consider aquaculture as the mechanism for the future production of the nation's seafood.

Marine aquaculture has been slow in coming to Georgia, but the potential for expansion is virtually limitless. As explained in the forum Exploring Marine Recirculating Aquaculture (sponsored by the McIntosh County Chamber of Commerce) held on August 30, 2001, in Darien, marine aquaculture can provide an economic basis for many of our coastal communities. For example, in Cedar Key, Florida, many fishermen lost their way of life when a ban on the use of fish nets was enacted by the Florida Legislature. With state support through training programs, fishermen were taught clam farming. Last year, sale of clams from the Cedar Key area topped \$15,000,000. In addition, clam farming has spawned other businesses that cater to the clam farmers such as clam hatcheries or clam bag manufacturers.

In Georgia clam farming is relatively new with 10 farms in operation, all in McIntosh County. The University of Georgia Marine Extension Service with support from Georgia Sea Grant and the Sapelo Foundation helped to start clam farming in Georgia. With funds from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Marine Extension Service is currently developing tidal powered clam nursery systems for growing small inexpensive seed clams up to a field planting size. Two commercial clam farmers will each receive a clam nursery system, while one marina operator will receive a third system.

The Marine Extension Service has also developed the soft-shell crab industry in Georgia. Currently 44 plants are in operation, most set up by aid from the University. These simple recirculating systems generate approximately \$750,000 per year for the fishermen. Present efforts by the Marine Extension Service are investigating the potential of black sea bass culture for sale in the lucrative sushi markets. Little is known about rearing this species. The Marine Extension Service is conducting experiments to determine the optimum biological parameters required to rear this fish species. The University is working with Gary Kinard of Georgia Aqua Farms to establish a recirculating fish growing system for operation in McIntosh County. It is the University's belief that a recirculating fish system, when operated correctly, can provide an environmentally friendly business opportunity for all of coastal Georgia.



Don't Get Mad, Get Political!! The Georgia Conservation Voters

First, you see the heroic legislator who champions clean air and water, but gets in trouble at election time and is defeated. Then, you see the anti-environmental legislator who gets returned year after year to the Capitol, with nary a peep about his votes against our health, air, water and wildlife. If you care about environmental issues, you start to get mad, then someone suggests you get political... perhaps unsavory, but quite necessary.

Georgia Conservation Voters (GCV) was formed last year as the political arm of the environmental and conservation movement in Georgia. GCV serves that role because it is crucial to the success of conservation work, yet most environmental groups are not set up to endorse and support candidates for office, which requires separate classification by IRS.

GCV is helping the conservation community articulate and promote an agenda to educate decision-makers on how to protect our environment. It then lobbies in the state legislature in support of that agenda. At session's end, GCV issues a scorecard publicizing how legislators voted.

At election time, GCV's candidate questionnaire measures candidate support for the shared agenda and, coupled with research into incumbents' voting and committee work and other research considerations, GCV then endorses a slate of pro-environment candidates.

GCV follows up this endorsement with campaign support for (or on behalf of) high-priority candidates. Once new relationships have been built through this process, GCV goes back to the agenda and seeks support for it through legislation, and the cycle repeats.

GCV works statewide. Their primary constituency is the organizations setting the agenda and doing the work to protect Georgia's environment. These organizations and the tens of thousands of Georgians who are concerned members of these organizations now have a political arm. This strategy helps us strengthen our combined political muscle.

For more information, contact Sam Collier, Executive Director of Georgia Conservation Voters, at 404-522-8144, or

sam@ProtectGeorgia.org. View the 1999-2000 Legislative Scorecard and endorsements on our web site, www.ProtectGeorgia.org.

COASTAL GEORGIA RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL LEADS PROJECT TO HELP CLEAN UP ALTAMAHA RIVER TRIBUTARIES

By Donald F. White,
Project Coordinator/Coastal RC&D Council Staff Director

The Coastal Georgia RC&D Council received approval of a \$362,000 Clean Water Act (319) grant application from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. Partners in this proposed project include The Nature Conservancy, Seven River and Pine Country RC&D Councils, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the Coastal, Satilla River, Altamaha, and Ogeechee River Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

The Councils will implement agricultural 'best management practices' (BMPs) on demonstration farms in each sub-watershed to reduce the nutrients contributing to low dissolved oxygen levels in 4 impaired tributaries which negatively impact the Altamaha River: Oohoopee River, Mushmelon Creek, Turnpike Creek, and Penholoway Creek. All are listed on EPD's 305(b) list of "Rivers and Streams not supporting designated uses." The criteria known to be violated is dissolved oxygen. Based on current analysis, poor water quality in these four tributaries is the most significant nonpoint pollution threat to the Altamaha River. There are many documented rare and endangered species which depend on this habitat.

Beginning in Spring 2002, the Districts will demonstrate the agricultural BMPs to other farmers in the watershed to encourage wider voluntary adoption. NRCS will provide survey and design assistance to the farmers. The Nature Conservancy will carry out a public education program and initiate annual community-based programs to clean up and remove solid waste from stream crossings in each sub-watershed. For more information about the project and how to apply the BMP process in other places, please call Don White at (912) 876-6485.

McIntosh SEED Plans Coastal Decision Maker Workshop

The McIntosh SEED Environmental Task Force will host a Coastal Decision Maker Workshop in McIntosh County on October 23rd. The workshop, "Make the Connection: Economic Development and Environmental Awareness in Coastal Georgia," reflects the strategies of McSEED, focusing on the importance of environmentally-compatible economic and community development.

The objective of the event is to encourage informed decision-making concerning the use of natural resources and the promise of economic development in Coastal Georgia. Featured

speakers will discuss topics including coastal natural resources, rural economic development, sustainable building practices, nature-based businesses, and land use planning and growth management,

The workshop will be held Tuesday, October 23, from 10am to 3pm, at the Sapelo Island Visitor's Center in Meridian. Registration is free. Catered lunch included. Call McIntosh SEED at 437-7821, or email Ann Mason, McSEED Environmental Task Force Chair, at amason@darientel.net for registration information.



Coastal Georgia Greenway: Project Update

Imagine...you are traveling south on I-95, and you have the opportunity to step away from your car and travel on foot, bicycle, or horseback through coastal Georgia. You wind through arches of live oak trees as you discover pristine marshes, pine forests, and historic sites, on your way to an almost hidden small café where you enjoy a delicious southern-style lunch. Does it seem too good to be true? The Coastal Georgia Greenway, well into the planning phase, offers these opportunities and more.

A series of public meetings continues to give the public opportunities to discuss the Greenway's plans for a 450-mile trail network providing alternative modes of transportation that will link coastal Georgia towns to major natural, recreational, educational, and historic sites. As Jo Hickson, Project Director, recently commented, "These events are so vital to the project's success. People attending the meetings can see the detailed maps and plans, they can raise questions and voice concerns, and they can offer their suggestions for improvements."

A recent meeting in Hinesville addressed alternative routes for the proposed multi-purpose trail in Liberty County that would include an equestrian trail. People in attendance discussed the pros and cons of the two suggested routes and proposed a third alternative. All comments were recorded and are being thoroughly evaluated before a final decision is made. At present, further public meetings are scheduled as follows.

Public Meetings to Review Detailed Design of County Demonstration Projects Coastal Georgia Greenway (times and places to be determined)

McIntosh County Trail

60% plan completion – January 30, 2002.

Bryan County Trail

30% plan completion – November 15, 2001;

60% plan completion – January 15, 2002,

Chatham County, Truman Linear Park Trail

30% plan completion – May 30, 2002;

60% plan completion – July 16, 2002.

The Coastal Georgia Greenway is the first state coastal trail plan in the Southeast, extending from the South Carolina border to the Florida state line. It meets the criteria of the East Coast Greenway, proposed by the East Coast Greenway Alliance, to stretch from Maine (and Canada) to Key West, Florida. Georgia's trail will offer opportunities for environmental education and enhanced outdoor recreation, as well as economic benefits through expanded tourism business.

The project is administered by a Steering Committee with representatives from all six coastal counties and four non-profit organizations. The Center is a founding member of the Steering Committee and has provided administrative and funding assistance for the Coastal Georgia Greenway since the project's master plan was completed in 1997. The master plan was prepared by the Coastal Georgia Land Trust using federal funds administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation.

The Steering Committee is actively seeking financial contributions to be used as matching funds toward additional grant assistance for designing and building the Greenway. All contributions are tax deductible. Anyone interested in supporting the project, as a contributor or as a volunteer, is encouraged to call the Center at (912) 638-3612 or Jo Hickson at (912) 236-0845.



Center for a Sustainable Coast

*Conserving Our Natural Heritage
... Investing In Our Children's Future*

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221 Mallory Street, Suite B, St. Simons Island, GA 31522



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