



Works in Progress

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

Fall 2002 Annual Report Issue

Annual Perspective

Every year around this time, the Center takes stock of where we've been and where we're headed. This year our self-evaluation is especially significant because the Center has now been in operation for five years, long enough to have a bit of history, which gives our voice added authority and conviction.

But the Center's continued success depends on your support, and there are many challenges ahead that cannot be favorably resolved without your involvement.

As the Center's accomplishments mount, we take pride in our track record including a number of critical activities:

- Educating the public and decision makers about the capacity, condition, and importance of surface and ground water systems.
- Pushing for stronger safeguards through environmental stewardship, more effective planning, and better enforcement of existing regulations.
- Voicing compelling arguments about the long-term implications of current policies, and holding governmental agencies and elected officials more accountable to the public.

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Saturday November 2, 2002 See details and reservation form inside!

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There have been many individual instances where these activities took shape – proposed water withdrawals, major development projects, enhancement of state policies and program implementation.

Our emphasis has been on correcting deficiencies in the use of information so as to make better choices, or at least to prevent the most damaging ones, affecting the quality and productivity of coastal resources – natural, economic, and historic. And by doing so, we are working to make permanent improvements in decision-making processes that reflect a broad perspective of current and future interests.

It could be said that, like Dickens, we live in the best of times and the worst of times. These are the best of times because the public is increasingly concerned about the critical importance of the issues we are addressing. A prime example is the long overdue attention that water resources have been receiving in the media, in classrooms, and the halls of our courthouses and legislature.

We have been party to numerous meetings, both on the coast and in Atlanta, where urgent matters such as water quality, water supply, fisheries, and the use of science in making wise decisions have been deliberated. The Center has contributed position papers on water conservation and water management to statewide forums, we have made compelling presentations about coastal issues to the Board of Natural Resources, and we have been privileged to receive the recognition and support of numerous other organizations whose collaboration is essential to the success of such ambitious endeavors.

Witnessing so many gifted and disciplined individuals working together across Georgia for the common good is another powerful indication that these are indeed the “best of times”. But what makes their work, and ours, so essential is the other side of this menacing ledger. As a region, state, and nation, we face problems of enormous difficulty while lacking the reassurance that our institutions are up to the task.

*It was the best of times, it was
the worst of times, it was the
age of wisdom, it was the age of
foolishness . . .*

Charles Dickens - A Tale of Two Cities

Rampant growth in our five coastal watersheds, from here to Atlanta, Macon, Athens, and Augusta, continues to chew up and pave over land at an unprecedented pace. At the same time, state and federal funds needed to support enforcement of the laws that help keep the impacts of this growth in check are being cut. Economic

development programs still often pay little heed to the value of the very ecosystems that make lasting jobs and profits possible. Many individual cities, counties, and corporations continue to compete for resources and influence as if each can win at the expense of the others. And environmental permits are issued on a case-by-case basis with far too little evaluation of their long-term implications.

Despite the profound complexity of these issues, we believe that the Center’s work is helping to shift the odds toward favorable outcomes.

Gradually, people are coming to understand that we must all pay greater attention to the environmental consequences of our actions as consumers, voters, property owners, and employees. Concerned individuals are speaking out, expressing increasingly firm commitment to a sustainable coast. As more citizens participate in this process, we can look forward to a future with fewer problems and better solutions, reduced conflict and greater teamwork, and an enlightened self-interest based on the true value of shared public resources.

We challenge you to help us achieve this future by supporting the Center’s important work.

-- David Kyler, Executive Director

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