



CENTER FOR A SUSTAINABLE COAST

2022 Year in Review

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Throughout 2022, the Center continued to serve a prominent role in raising public awareness on critical environmental issues, primarily the climate crisis and its remedies. We also remained committed to efforts using the law to protect coastal Georgia's environment. Most notably, the Center hosted an exceptional public forum on climate change, clean energy, and new federal funding available for making the urgently needed transition to reduce heat-trapping fossil-fuel emissions. The event launched the Center's Climate Action Campaign.

LEGAL ACTIONS

Sea Island Spit – The Center is among a group of organizations collaborating to monitor the impacts of a project altering the beach and movement of sand on the south end of Sea Island. Funds for the three-year monitoring project were provided through a settlement on our legal action against Sea Island Acquisitions. The Center will administer the funds on behalf of all three groups to secure the services of a well-qualified coastal geologist who will investigate and evaluate how the project is affecting nearby shorelines and wildlife habitat.

Frederica Road Realignment – Historic Christ Church and Glynn County reached an agreement for Frederica Road to be shifted away from the church and built through scarce freshwater wetlands on St. Simons Island in order to provide additional parking. After the Center's request for a preliminary injunction to stop construction was denied—enabled by a Corps permit issued without a public hearing—the road was completed. Dozens of mature trees, including live oaks, were removed to realign the road.

Cumberland Island Private Dock – The Center has resolutely opposed the construction of a private dock permitted illegally by the Corps of Engineers in 2016. The dock is intended to serve a proposed 10-house subdivision, in direct contradiction to the application filed with the Corps, which stated that only one house would be built. Development of the parcel—adjacent to Sea Camp where many overnight visitors stay—blatantly contradicts a Land Protection Plan developed for the island by the National Park Service, as well as the legislation that established Cumberland Island National Seashore, which states that “the seashore shall be permanently

preserved in its primitive state.” The Corps approved the dock without public notice using an unsubstantiated claim for an exemption from the environmental review process for projects that face no public opposition. The Center is now suing for the dock permit to be revoked.

Favorable Precedent Set – The Center and others sued after wetlands were illegally filled for landscaping at Sea Island Inn on St. Simons Island. The district court dismissed the case after finding the plaintiffs suffered no harm, but the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that decision by determining that filling the wetlands diminished the aesthetic and recreational values enjoyed by a Center member who participated in the case.

ADVOCACY

Center staff and board members had over two dozen letters regarding critical environmental issues published on the opinion pages of Georgia newspapers and online media outlets. In addition to advocating action on climate change, which was the priority in most of our letters—to-editors published in 2022, the Center collaborated in protecting other resources regulated under state and federal policies.

Georgia Power IRP – The Center filed comments with the Georgia Public Service Commission on Georgia Power's controversial Integrated Resource Plan in July. Our comments are posted on the Center's blogsite at www.southatlanticbytes.blog. In December, our commentary opposing a controversial Georgia Power rate increase, proposed to support the IRP, was posted by several regional policy media outlets.

Endangered Right Whale – During the year we sent comments to the National Marine Fisheries Service about the perilous plight of the endangered Right Whale, advocating proposed restrictions on vessel speed in offshore areas where fatal strikes are likely.

Wetlands Protection – The Center co-signed a letter to Congress underscoring the importance of protecting wetlands by defending the revised definition of “waters of the U.S.” language in the federal Clean Water Act. Because of wetlands' vital role in providing wildlife habitat, flood protection, and water filtration, it is critical that they are reliably safeguarded using all means available, above all rigorously enforcing the Clean Water Act.

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CLIMATE ACTION CAMPAIGN

Recognizing the imperative of climate issues in light of the mid-term elections, the Center launched the Coastal Climate Action Campaign during the summer of 2022. The campaign is focused on the urgency of building support for actions needed to achieve the ambitious goal of reducing emissions of heat-trapping gases by half within eight years. The 2030 target, adopted by the U.S. government, is based on scientific research warning that unless this fast pace of emission reductions is achieved, escalating temperatures are likely to cause catastrophic impacts—including loss of essential food supplies, devastating drought and flooding, extinction of species, and the collapse of essential natural life-support systems. The most effective means for reducing these emissions is the rapid conversion from using fossil-fuels to clean sources of power, primarily solar and wind.

Using dedicated funds raised from loyal Center supporters, the Center organized a public forum in Savannah, held on October 13, 2022. We began the initiative in August by inviting the Union of Concerned Scientists to provide a guest speaker covering an array of climate issues. Soon after UCS agreed to participate, it was announced that Congress had passed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), providing an estimated \$370 billion in federal funding and tax credits for installing clean energy equipment, battery storage, power-distribution infrastructure, and making related energy efficiency upgrades.

The timing of the IRA made our forum even more critical because the new federal support would boost incentives for making a speedy transition to a clean-energy economy. Accordingly, we entitled our forum, "Climate Change, Clean Energy, and the Inflation Reduction Act" and developed a program of speakers to cover the broad array of inter-related issues encompassed. Securing use of Savannah's Cultural Arts Center enabled speakers at remote locations to participate in real-time, on-screen.

Highlights of the presentations include:

- Predictions are ominous, with some three months of intolerable heat in Savannah by 2100.
- It is vital that heat-trapping emission-cutting targets are reached to avoid these conditions.
- The IRA provides a diverse array of financial assistance to residents, homeowners, small businesses, and others to reduce emissions.
- Scientific evidence eliminates any other explanation for the cause of rising temperatures.
- Even small rises in atmospheric 'greenhouse gases' can produce ruinous, prolonged effects.
- The climate problem has become a climate crisis largely because of billions of dollars spent by fossil-fuel companies and others to spread disinformation, delaying action for decades.
- Instead of portraying the transition to clean energy as a burdensome cost, it should be viewed as a prime investment that will produce unprecedented benefits shared by everyone.
- With diligent, timely actions, needed transition to a clean-energy economy can be achieved.

A video recording of the forum is being edited and will soon be available.

We urge you to learn more about Center activities on our Facebook page, blog, and website.

Your generous support is essential to our ability to protect Georgia's coast.





CENTER FOR A SUSTAINABLE COAST

*Advocating responsible decisions
that sustain Coastal Georgia's
environment & quality of life*

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