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Works in Progress

Summer 2013

Advocating responsible decisions to sustain coastal Georgia's quality of life.

221 Mallory Street, Suite B Saint Simons Island, Georgia 31522 Voice: 912.638.3612

Message from the Executive Director – “Sixteen Years and What Do You Get?” **Results!**

As we celebrate our 16th year of coastal protection in Georgia, please consider some highlights of the Center’s accomplishments — achieved thanks to the generous help of members, donors, and foundations:

- ✓ Brought a fresh, holistic perspective to the discussion of Georgia’s coastal issues – to improve the accountability of decision-making affecting coastal Georgia’s future.
- ✓ Won court victories protecting
 - Tidal marshes • Marsh hammocks • Estuaries
 - Marsh buffers • Beaches & dunes.
- ✓ Prepared *The State of the Coast Report*, the first and only comprehensive assessment of coastal Georgia’s development trends, conditions, threats and challenges.
- ✓ Defended Jekyll Island State Park by:
 - Advising against unwise shorefront development
 - Promoting science-based conservation consistent with state and federal laws.
- ✓ Published numerous opinion columns in major newspapers to defend coastal Georgia against:
 - Offshore drilling • Water mismanagement
 - Special-interest exploitation of natural resources and taxpayers.
- ✓ Protected water quality, water supply and habitat by:
 - Opposing mercury-polluting power plants and
 - Advocating conversion to clean sources of energy that will curb the wasteful misuse of valuable natural resources, especially river-flow essential to coastal ecosystems.
- ✓ Hosted public forums on critical issues that are pivotal to the region’s future – such as:
 - climate change and storm surge • coastal development
 - harbor deepening • expanding the use of solar and wind energy in Georgia.

These achievements have been accomplished thanks to the financial support of concerned individuals, families, businesses, and foundations.*

To enable the Center to continue our important work, including our new “Marsh Matters” campaign (see box at top right), your help is essential.

As development continues, **the Center’s efforts will be needed more than ever to protect coastal recreation, conservation and property values.** By working together to address these daunting challenges, we can defend and improve our coastal quality of life.

Your tax-deductible support is greatly appreciated!

~ David Kyler

“Marsh Matters”

Our new marsh protection campaign

The Center is developing a public awareness and advocacy campaign aimed at improving Georgia’s marsh protection. This campaign will strengthen support for reliable marsh protection by extending the reach of our message about the value and vulnerability of marshes.

We will also intensify the tracking of activities that threaten Georgia’s marshes and enforcement of the laws that regulate them. Court actions will be taken as needed to correct problems identified.

More about our new program will be released in the coming months.

Inside this issue:

- Harbor project – pork-barrel vs. wise spending
- Jekyll Island – master plan sparking disputes
- Climate change – sea-level rise looking worse
- Nukes at Vogtle – cost overruns, public burden
- Center plans for the future of our coast



Center hosts public forum on coastal development issues.

*Note: Special thanks to the **Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation** and **The Sapelo Foundation** for their vital support.

Savannah Harbor Project

Despite Center action in federal court going back to 1998, a May legal settlement reached in South Carolina by green groups focusing on water quality impacts of the harbor project doesn't address our foremost concern: the overt absence of any comprehensive assessment of port needs throughout the Southeast – almost certain to cause billions in wasted tax dollars squandered in deepening too many ports, while doing vast damage to coastal resources.



Although analysis of world-class ports shows that well-located deep-water facilities can best serve as shipping “hubs,” enabling many smaller regional ports to thrive as distributional “spokes,” this approach has been dismissively rejected in the Corps assessment of the Savannah project. Moreover, Savannah's upriver location lacks the multi-directional access essential to the function of a hub port, which ocean ports have.

“Port projects appear to be a well-entrenched form of pork-barrel spending,” says Center board president, Steve Willis. Few in Congress seem willing to consider a more rational way of deciding which ports to deepen and which to leave at current depth, because being reasonable could mean forfeiting a chance to bring hundreds of millions of dollars in Federal pork back to the home district, regardless of actual public benefits. This Congressional back-scratching causes enormous waste by awarding, cumulatively, billions of tax-dollars for unwarranted, sub-optimal projects.

The Center board and staff will continue advocating a more responsible method for evaluating port development that will save tax dollars and prevent avoidable risks to valuable coastal eco-systems.

Jekyll Island boundary issue stirs debate

When the Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) set out to update its master plan last year, few foresaw that exploring legal details applicable to the barrier island state park would generate so much debate. There are two essential reasons for this dispute.

First, a task force assigned to the issue of interpreting the how a 1971 law would apply depends on knowing the size of the island. The so-called 65-35 law limits development of Jekyll to no more than 35% of the “land area above water at mean high tide.”

Accordingly, changes in total island area will result in revised limits on development. Based on extensive analysis of mapping and data sources, after numerous meetings the task force concluded that Jekyll was already well beyond its 35% limit. Last fall, the task force adopted recommendations reflecting that all future development would have to be limited to the footprint of existing developed areas.

Then, in April, both a steering committee for developing the master plan and the public were told that the task-force report had been sent to the Georgia Attorney General (AG) for “routine legal review.” Suspicious when the JIA stone-walled them about the details, concerned members of the steering committee and task force filed an open-records request, only to discover that a JIA staff critique, condemning the task-force recommendation, had been secretly added to task-force recommendations sent to the AG.

This covert analysis contradicting the task-force position asserted that the island was much larger, making as many as 600 more acres eligible for development. That assertion rests on an interpretation of “land above water at mean high tide” to include high tidal marsh within the island's boundary. Yet state and federal laws are very clear that tidal marshes are water, not land.

On June 27th a ruling from Georgia's AG was released. Since it supports positions that conflict with science and logic, a court case is likely. Legislative action is also probable as a result of the AG opinion. The ruling, which supports marshes being classified as “land,” could also weaken marsh protection under state law.



Marsh near Jekyll Island

Source: Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island

Climate Change – Outlook Worsening

According to the Center's executive director, David Kyler, recent research suggests that sea level will rise significantly more than previously predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC is the renowned group of scientists that has become the official source of such forecasts.

Kyler also says other impacts caused by global warming will be more severe than forecasted earlier, some of which will further accelerate warming rates.

These views were shared with members of the Sierra Club's "coastal group" at talk Kyler gave at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography on Skidaway Island. In his remarks, he referred to recent information about several factors that are adding to global warming – indicated by ongoing research worldwide. These factors have not been included in climate modeling being done by the IPCC.

Of particular significance is a report issued by the United National Environment Program (UNEP) in 2012, *Policy Implications of Warming Permafrost*. Quoting from the report, Kyler said, "all global climate projections... are biased on the low side relative to global temperature...."

The Center's executive director explained that the UN report makes it clear that computer modeling used as the basis for all IPCC analysis was 'frozen' in 2009 for climate change assessment reports to be issued in 2013 and 2014.

The neglected information, including the UN report on permafrost, has enormous implications for climate-change and a range of impacts: sea level rise, crop loss, wildfires, ocean acidification, and species extinction.

Locking down the computer model many years before related assessments are completed makes the IPCC forecasts perpetually misleading.

"Without this crucial information applied in the model used to predict climate impacts, the public is being lulled into a false impression that the issue isn't urgent, and – as a result – political action needed to address the causes of increasing temperatures is being weakened and delayed," Kyler warned.

"By being overly cautious in corroborating global scientific studies, the IPCC is failing to keep decision-makers and the public current on extremely important trends that directly threaten both our economy and environment."

Sea-Level-Rise "Adaptation": NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT

Georgia and other coastal states are investing in a variety of activities aimed at 'adapting' to rising sea level. While it is important that coastal areas prepare for higher oceans and more destructive storm surges caused by global warming, focusing too much on this reactive agenda can subvert more essential actions targeting the causes of climate change. Recent presentations by UGA and DNR staff have left the false impression that rising seas can be accommodated without any need for taking other urgent steps. Such messages subvert the political resolve that's essential to timely support for policies that will reduce the causes of perilously rising temperatures.

Vogle: Wasteful profits, public burden

Since the Center's last report on nuclear power, cost overruns at Georgia Power's Plant Vogtle have continued rising – now well over one billion dollars above cost estimates provided when the Public Service Commission (PSC) approved the facility in 2009.

Beyond specific costs at Plant Vogtle, the public and the PSC seem to be woefully unaware of the chronic pattern of enormous expenses incurred in building, operating, and shutting down nuclear power plants. Every single nuclear plant built since 1966 has had overruns well above 100% and many absurdly higher. (See table below.)

Ironically, Georgia Power continues to justify the plant to the PSC, recently reasserting that the power produced by it will be "cheap and clean."

Contrary to that claim, nothing could be more untrue: In fact, nuclear power is BOTH expensive and dirty!

Under Georgia law, cost overruns result in guaranteed profits for Southern Company of more than 11%. This means that poor cost-control actually gets rewarded, which is hardly an incentive for the company to minimize costs.

Moreover, when all impacts are tabulated, studies show that nuclear power actually has a significant carbon footprint. This includes the construction and dismantling of nuke plants, as well as mining, processing, and storing radioactive fuel.

Billions of tax dollars have been spent for research that, after more than a half-century, has failed to find a safe way to store dangerous nuclear waste, which remains extremely toxic for thousands of years. Tax funds also pay for costly liability insurance, without which there would be no nuclear industry.

CONSTRUCTION STARTS		AVERAGE OVERNIGHT COSTS*		
YEAR INITIATED	NUMBER OF PLANTS ^a	UTILITIES' PROJECTIONS (THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS PER MW)	ACTUAL (THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS PER MW)	OVERRUN (PERCENT)
1966-1967	11	612	1,279	109
1968-1969	26	741	2,180	194
1970-1971	12	829	2,889	248
1972-1973	7	1,220	3,882	218
1974-1975	14	1,263	4,817	281
1976-1977	5	1,630	4,377	169
OVERALL AVERAGE	13	938	2,959	207

Source: Union of Concerned Scientists

P.S. Don't forget about the Water-Energy Connection.

Plant Vogtle evaporates about 40 million gallons a day cooling the two existing reactors now in use. The amount of water turned into steam taken from the Savannah River will double if the expansion is completed. In spite of the power industry being the biggest water consumer in Georgia, **energy producers are exempt from state water-conservation requirements.** In effect, this is yet another hidden cost of Plant Vogtle, secretly transferring funds from citizens and residential energy consumers to Southern Co. stockholders.

We're preparing for the future of our coast- please join us!

Announcing the Center's Planned Giving Program

Background and Explanation

In light of changing financial conditions, new tax laws, and the need to stabilize Center operating funds, the board of directors decided to create a "planned giving program."

Recent changes in the U.S. tax code have affected incentives for giving to charitable groups. In addition to reinstating higher tax rates on high earners, taxes on capital gains have increased and limits on deductions that can affect higher income groups have been restored.

Many Center members and donors who want to support our work defending the quality of life in coastal Georgia now have new options.

The Coastal Georgia Legacy Society

To honor those who have made major donations to the Center of \$5,000 or more, we have created the Coastal Georgia Legacy Society. Members of this distinguished group will be invited to special events and asked to participate in coastal issue conferences, where they will have opportunities to provide valuable guidance on important Center positions and activities.

Anyone meeting the donation threshold is eligible, including regular members and friends, as well as Center board - members, staff, and volunteers. Confidentiality of society member information will be honored. Currently there are fifteen members of the CGLS.

The choices provided under this program include:

- (1) Estate bequests that can cut estate taxes,
- (2) Deductible gifts made directly from income retirement accounts (IRAs), and
- (3) Deductible contributions of income generated by investment accounts.

Estate Bequests

To direct how your net worth is used after death, estate plans should be used to create or modify your "last will and testament." A will can be legally changed at any time prior to death by the individual owning the estate. Bequeathing funds for a charitable group like the Center is a thoughtful way to prolong the benefits of your commitments, providing valued support after you are no longer around.

As an example, one major donor has rewarded the Center in his will by dedicating a substantial portion of his sizeable estate to supporting future work of the organization. After his death, when this bequest is received, the Center will create an honorary endowment in

his name that will be used to generate operating revenues in perpetuity. We urge others to take similar bequests.

It should be pointed out that even if your estate will not be subject to Federal taxes, some states impose their own estate tax. There is no minimum donation requirement, and you can always revise your decision later.

Gifts from Retirement Accounts

Transfer of funds from a retirement account can be made directly for up to \$100,000 if you are over 70-and-a-half years old. Any withdrawal that is transferred to a charitable group like the Center is exempt from income tax and is not constrained by itemized-deduction limits.

Note that some wealth transferred to non-charitable beneficiaries – including family members – before or after your death, may be taxable. In contrast, funds dedicated to a charitable group are all directed to your intended purpose without being diminished by taxes.

Beneficiary designation forms should be used to direct such transfers. They should also be used in making donations from life insurance policies that you may wish to devote to charitable support.

Gifts from Investment Accounts

Similarly, you can decide to divert a portion of income generated by your investment account(s) to the Center. Generally, tax savings would be greatest for those funds produced by capital gains, since the applicable Federal tax rate has been increased. Income from such sources can be shared with the beneficiary under certain set-ups.

For more information and advice on such contributions, including completion of "beneficiary designation forms," we suggest that you consult your qualified financial or tax advisor.



Let's evolve together.



Covering Coastal Georgia's Natural Heritage...
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