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Mindy Egan

# Works in Progress

*Conserving Coastal Georgia's Natural Heritage,  
Investing in Our Children's Future*

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Summer 2010

## THE BIG SPILL—Costs and Consequences of Our Energy Choices

*Can we learn from both facts and mistakes?*

*In the aftermath of the BP disaster, it's disturbing to hear that many Georgia's officials continue insisting on more offshore drilling. This is a travesty, and not just because of the ominous prospects for the Atlantic coast in light of the great harm done to both the environment and economy of the Gulf. Equally troublesome is the persistence of doctrinaire, delusional views about our energy future, when clear thinking is so critically needed in formulating public policy.*

*Most stunning is the stubborn resistance of many decision-makers to basic facts about oil and other conventional forms of energy. Many falsely presume that America has enough oil to make a difference in both price and the goal of U.S. energy independence – which we definitely do not. By spreading this capricious fantasy, our leaders are perpetuating the public's confusion about energy issues, fueling political discord, and obstructing urgently needed policy changes.*

*As if serving the profit-making interests of petroleum companies, many officials stridently demand actions that could not possibly achieve claimed public objectives. Until the public has a more realistic grasp of the realities of our energy options, no significant policy progress is possible.*

*With the hope that facts and rationality may yet prevail, we present our following editorial – widely circulated among local and regional newspapers in Georgia.*

### **Time to Face the Realities of Oil**

*This editorial was published as a guest column in The Atlanta Journal Constitution on July 11, 2010.*

In spite of overwhelming facts, wishful thinkers still call for more drilling off our coastline. Senator Isakson and at least one candidate in Georgia's race for governor insist that we need to get more domestic oil, wherever it may be, so that we can end dependence on "foreign dictators" who control our energy supplies.

Unfortunately, that goal cannot possibly be reached, no matter how much drilling is done within our borders – onshore and offshore – *unless we cut our use of petroleum by more than 75%*. Due to the immense quantity of oil consumed in the U.S. compared with the relatively small amount from all our domestic sources of supply – *both existing and yet-to-be-tapped combined* – as long as we depend so heavily on petroleum, the U.S. will be at the mercy of foreign suppliers.

Not only will offshore drilling fail to serve the goal of American energy independence, but for similar reasons it will not help reduce price at the pump either. Under Congressional testimony, experts recently stated that the amount of additional oil to be tapped from new offshore oil wells would – at most – bring a savings of 3 cents a gallon, and no sooner than 10 to 15 years from now when such oil could possibly become available.

Those arguing in favor of more offshore drilling fail to grasp some of the most essential facts about supply and demand for oil as a globally traded commodity:

- The U.S. has less than 5% of the world's total remaining supply of petroleum, while using about 20% of it.
- The price of oil is determined by the amount available around the world compared with total global demand for it at any given time.
- Given limited supplies and growing worldwide demand, the price of oil will be rising and amounts remaining will be declining relative to global use.

Therefore, there are only two ways for the U.S. to reduce energy costs and to achieve energy independence.

- ✓ Drastically decrease use of oil by converting to mass transportation and patterns of development that enable people to be less dependent on motorized travel.
- ✓ As rapidly as possible, transfer to using other forms of energy which are not constrained by supply. The most obvious and abundant sources are wind, solar, geothermal, and tidal energy, all of which can be used to produce electricity. For ground transportation, this would mean converting to the use of electric vehicles and intensifying research in development of new battery technology.

The real costs of various energy sources also deserve closer examination.

We often hear claims about how ‘cheap’ oil and nuclear power are relative to the renewable sources such as wind and solar. By contrast, consider analysis done by the International Center for Technology Assessment. They found that if all hidden costs were tallied – including U.S. military protection of access to oil fields in the Mideast, medical expenses for treating respiratory diseases linked to burning petroleum products, federal tax credits to oil companies (*some \$35 billion annually*), and environmental protection (even prior to the BP disaster) – the price per gallon of gas would be \$12 above the current amount. Imagine paying \$14.50 a gallon at the pump!

In other words, if all hidden costs were included in the price of fuel, many uses of petroleum would already be obsolete because the market would support alternatives such as electric cars recharged from renewable power sources. It is only because these costs are concealed that oil appears to be so cheap and the use of it continues to be so deceptively defended.

Comparable hidden costs in the form of tax subsidies and other public bailouts are tied to every single dominant form of energy – including coal and, above all, nuclear power. In a truly free market, all major energy sources would be significantly higher in price than they now are, while renewables would be comparatively cheaper.

Consequently, it is completely misleading to compare lavishly subsidized oil, coal, gas, and nuclear power with modestly supported capital investments in wind, solar, and other clean energy sources. Moreover, once clean energy infrastructure is built, fuel is literally free. Considering the true costs, defenders of free markets cannot honestly justify continuing dependence on conventional forms of energy.

One last inconvenient fact: when corporate spokesmen testified in the recent Congressional hearings on the BP oil spill – including reps of BP and Halliburton – each of them said that another disaster like the current one could not be prevented from reoccurring. Thus, there simply is no fail-safe way of saving 3 cents a gallon with more drilling, and it is unlikely there ever will be.

Responsible energy policy relies on the public being aware of the real costs and consequences of our choices.

David Kyler, Executive Director  
June 2010

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## ***Coastal stormwater management – reducing a major source of water pollution***

### **Coastal Georgia's water quality is under assault from continuing development.**

Clearing and building on coastal land can cause serious erosion, as vegetation is removed and heavy equipment carves up the landscape. When it rains, loosened soil is carried off into creeks and rivers where it degrades water quality and fish habitat. Georgia's Soil Erosion & Sedimentation Control Act was adopted over thirty years ago to get control over these problems – with varying degrees of success.

But what about stormwater pollution that continues after development? There is ample evidence that Georgia's water quality suffers from contamination that's carried by stormwater runoff from both urban and rural activities. In developed areas, roads, driveways, parking lots, and rooftops shed rainwater that carries large volumes of pollutants into our rivers and creeks. This "non-point" source pollution is nationally recognized as a significant problem to both drinking water and recreational use of our waterways.

In recognition of this problem, eight years ago stormwater management guidelines were adopted in the Atlanta metro area. These measures included methods for gathering, storing, and slowly releasing stormwater to filter out pollutants before runoff is returned to state waterways. The guidance is enforced by local permitting officials when they inspect development. Retention ponds, drainage features, and other stormwater control devices must be properly maintained to achieve their intended benefits.

### **Coastal stormwater management guidelines are being adopted.**

Building on the success of the guidelines adopted in metro Atlanta, a "coastal supplement" has been developed by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). The coastal version is meant to adjust requirements to be more effective in this region's landscape – which is much flatter and with sandier soils than the rolling hills of the Piedmont zone.

Several coastal communities have adopted the new guidelines and are putting them into use. In Chatham County, the coast's most intensely urbanized area, Port Wentworth and Garden City are implementing local stormwater management programs.

Midcoast, McIntosh County is currently reviewing a draft ordinance applying stormwater controls, which is expected to be adopted later this year. At the south end of the region, Camden County has adopted and is now using the Coastal Stormwater Supplement. [Contact Cole Conn, Camden County staff.]

A Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) has been set up to provide training to local governments in the use of stormwater controls. Alice Vick is the agency EPD representative [Alice can be reached by phone at 912-554-3493 and email at [Alice.Vick@dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:Alice.Vick@dnr.state.ga.us).] This training is also intended to link stormwater controls to the recently adopted coastal regional plan, under the aegis of the Coastal Regional Commission, formerly the Coastal RDC.

### **Costs**

Some local officials are concerned about the costs of enforcing stormwater controls. Evaluating projects for compliance with these new standards adds to the responsibilities of local building inspection departments. Options for training local officials and for funding of enforcement functions are being actively explored.

Once inspectors are trained, the added enforcement tasks are relatively modest according to some advisors.

### **Monitoring**

To ensure that stormwater controls are working properly, in addition to inspections, field studies are needed to verify that water quality is being improved and/or protected. These studies are important, but the costs often make them the first thing to be cut from budgets. It is hoped that foundation funding can be secured to assist in these assessments across the coastal region.

# Tribute to Dr. Jim Henry, our departed friend and colleague

David Kyler, Executive Director

On May 12, the Center's board member, colleague, and dear friend, Dr. Vernon J. [Jim] Henry died at his home in Savannah.

Dr. Henry played a vital role in the formation, identity, and reputation of the Center for a Sustainable Coast and in the lives of those who are affiliated with the organization. Everyone who had the privilege of knowing Jim can attest to his uncommon combination of intelligence, compassion, wisdom, and wit. The loss of his professional insights, congenial guidance, and friendship are felt deeply throughout coastal Georgia and beyond.

I met Jim soon after moving to Saint Simons Island in 1977 to begin working as a regional planner for the Coastal Area Planning and Development Commission, later known as the Coastal Regional Development Center and now the Coastal Regional Commission. As a research coastal geologist with a comprehensive understanding of the region's issues, Dr. Henry was a superb mentor on a range of environmental topics. Equally important to his role as advisor was Jim's generous nature, which provided anyone in his circle with a chance to learn more about coastal issues and, motivated by his example, to use knowledge to improve conservation of the region's environment.

By the time the Center was launched in June 1997, Jim and I had been trusted colleagues for 20 years, so his interest in, and value to, such an enterprise was obvious. Dr. Henry and a few other colleagues met with me to discuss the mission and purpose of the new non-profit environmental advocacy organization we were planning. Guided by their perspectives on issues and trends, I wrote a proposal describing why such an organization was needed and how the region's most urgent problems must be approached to be resolved effectively. With a greatly valued start-up grant from The Sapelo Foundation, the Center was off and running.

As president of the Center's founding board, Jim Henry's reputation undoubtedly helped win credibility for the organization. Immediately, the Center was immersed in controversial issues related to a proposal for privatizing water supplies – which would have compromised coastal rivers and aquifers and placed control of coastal development in the hands of speculators. After that issue was put to rest, Jim led the board through a series of issues that tested the Center's resolve, including dock permits, harbor deepening, mercury pollution, stormwater contamination, groundwater assessment, and animal feeding operations – all within the first five years of operation. Most of these issues still remain problematic, but the Center has established a voice for the public interest that continues to strengthen responsible viewpoints.

In keeping with Dr. Henry's well-considered positions, the Center has emphasized the need for policy advancement based on comprehensive, integrated methods for guiding development and regulation to help reduce harm to coastal ecosystems. To this day, the Center is unique for its systemic analysis as the basis for forming positions on public policies – at all levels – as they affect coastal Georgia's vulnerable environment. We owe this well-reasoned policy perspective primarily to Dr. Henry.



Jim Henry was a pioneer in the use of side-scan sonar technology to study the submarine morphology of Georgia's estuaries and continental shelf. He was a recognized authority on the coastal and barrier island geology of Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. His expertise was sought not only in these states but also globally.

Many of Dr. Henry's research studies and those of his students are still definitive today. Dr. Henry was one of the most respected geologists in Georgia and he was frequently called upon to shape the state's environmental policy.

Jim's leadership on the Coastal Management Advisory Council was critical to the 1996 formation of Georgia's Coastal Management Program. In 1996, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recognized Dr. Henry as an "Environmental Hero" for his work on Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. After retiring from the University System of Georgia in 2003, Jim kept his office at the Applied Coastal Research Laboratory (which he founded) and stayed active in barrier island research and the environmental community.

The focus of Dr. Henry's last efforts was the Cumberland Island Wilderness, covering some 80% of that National Seashore. He hoped to reverse the negative impacts of commercial operations on land removed legislatively from federal protection in 2004 and to reinstate the original Wilderness boundaries. The Center is still working on this issue, and will strive to be even more diligent in Jim's memory.

## The Jim Henry Barrier Island Fund

In recognition of their father's deep dedication to conserving Georgia's coastal resources, Jim's children – Carolyn, Jeff, and Leslie – recently announced that they are establishing the *Jim Henry Barrier Island Fund*. This special fund, to be administered by the Center, will help cover the costs of staffing and support for Center activities that address problems threatening any or all of Georgia's barrier islands.

Issues conflicting with responsible conservation of Georgia barrier island are numerous and persistent:

- Disruption of land having important environmental functions and wildlife habitat value.
- Violation of adopted controls over locations designated for research and conservation.
- Wilderness areas that are threatened by disruptive, illegal, and unacceptable activities.
- Docks and oceanfront development that jeopardize tidal marshes, dunes, and public safety.
- Offshore activities such as oil exploration and development that impose unjustified risks.

The Henry children have asked other family members, friends, and colleagues to consider donating to the new fund in their father's memory. Contributions to the Jim Henry Barrier Island Fund, like all Center donations, are fully tax deductible.

Contributions may be mailed to –

Jim Henry Barrier Island Fund  
Center for a Sustainable Coast  
221 Mallory Street, Suite B  
Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

For more information, please call the Center at 912-638-3612.

## Coastal Forum – *Earth, Fire, Air, Water: Vital Elements of Comprehensive Water Policy*

April 10, 2010

John W. Stevens Wetlands Education Center, Richmond Hill Georgia

By Steve Willis, President of the Board, Center for a Sustainable Coast

Sustainability is a holistic concept. The BP oil disaster in the Gulf demonstrates the risk of:

- government agencies staffed with ex-employees of the very corporations they are tasked with regulating,
- State governors and representatives energetically advocating the jobs and income that under-regulated corporate enterprises promise to create, and
- corporate finger-pointing at lawyers, scientists, regulators and media pundits to avoid accepting responsibility.

Who's responsible? BP? Haliburton? Transocean (owner of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig)? Sierra Club? Nonsense.

Fragmented, disconnected thinking, planning, regulation and misdirection produce a sense of futility and disempowerment. When the crucial role of government is compromised and in disarray, the chips fall where they may – and the chips are most likely to fall into the pockets of the most ruthless and irresponsible.

When that happens, what are we to do? Look for someone to blame? In a democracy, the blame can never really fall on the desk of the president, or BP, or MMS. It is the citizenry who is always left holding the bag, and who must always, ultimately, pay the price.

**“Thinking globally while acting locally is no longer just a good idea – it has become imperative if we are to succeed as a state and nation.”**

As voters and tax payers, American citizens are the people who must always be responsible for what goes right, and what goes wrong. There has been an awful lot going wrong lately, and it is time for Americans to stop pointing their fingers and begin looking in the mirror.

On April 10, 2010 The Center for a Sustainable Coast teamed up with Clean Coast and the Georgia Sierra Coastal Group to present a forum at the John W. Stevens Wetlands Education Center in

Richmond Hill. The event intended to explore interconnections between key factors influencing and threatening our environment within the Savannah River Basin and along Georgia's Coast.

The forum title, *Earth, Fire, Air, Water*, expresses the unbreakable connection between the land, technology and energy, and air and water. Change one, change the others. Destroy one or use it recklessly, and ultimately harm the rest.

The real world and the challenges critical to shaping a healthy future are not simple right/wrong, good/bad, black/white, or right v. left matters, but, rather, complex and highly interactive, often in ways that are not obvious.

Until we Americans look beyond artificial, sound-bite simplicity and slogans, we are doomed to continue suffering a series of one disaster or tragically lost opportunity after another. The Richmond Hill forum provided insights empowering participants to see our regional environment from a fresh and revealingly relevant viewpoint.



The forum began with a morning birding walk in the freshwater wetlands of the Ogeechee River led by Ornithologist, Steve Wagner. After a continental breakfast, the 40 attendees considered a presentation “Connecting green infrastructure with stormwater management” presented by Keren Giovengo, Program Manager, Coastal Sustainable Communities Program, UGA Marine Extension & attorney Phil Fortune.

Ronald Carroll, Professor, UGA Odum School of Ecology, followed the stormwater management presentation with a lecture on sea-level rise and impacts of global warming. Management of water resources in the Savannah River basin from the South Carolina point of view was then presented by Dean Moss, Director, Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority.

After lunch, Robert Tudor, Deputy Executive Director, Delaware River Basin Commission, discussed multi-state river basin management. Finally, a closing presentation, titled Understanding the Options for a Sustainable Energy Future, was given by the author of this column, Steve Willis, affiliated with both the Sierra Club & Center for a Sustainable Coast.

The program highlighted many of the environmental interconnections which are frequently ignored or misunderstood – by both the public and governmental officials. The stormwater management presentation stressed the crucial interdependence between the careful planning of human communities, and the quality and health of the natural environment, most notably water.

Also highlighted was the importance of adopting and following improved guidelines, such as the new coastal stormwater management regulations. To be truly effective these must be supported with education, enforcement by local governments, acceptance by voters, and willingness to pay for essential planning, implementation, and infrastructure.

Ron Carroll’s eye-opening lecture explained the probable effects of rapidly changing climate on sea level and temperature, dependable water sources, and ominous infectious diseases.

It was clear that the relationships between climate change and stormwater management make it imperative that Georgians become far more forward-thinking in our stewardship of this region. In this critical period of rapid change, reactionary defense of the *status quo*, aggravated by dogmatic, uninformed views, causes highly disruptive confusion and conflict that delays needed progress.

The presentations by Dean Moss and Robert Tudor’s stressed the folly of attempting to artificially divide planning, policy and management within a single river basin. Currently, responsibility for management of the Savannah River Basin is not only divided between dozens of state and local governments, agencies, and councils, but also among numerous Federal agencies. Worse, three states manage sectors of the basin with little cooperation or consultation. Everyone’s responsibility is no one’s responsibility, as the seemingly irreversible decline in the quality and quantity of the Savannah seems to testify.

The closing presentation by Steve Willis aimed to demonstrate the relationship of the water and land use issues already discussed with the impact of power production in Georgia and the Southeast.

When the households of the Atlanta metropolitan area use more than three times as much water to supply electricity as

to meet their direct household needs, while using more water to supply the food they eat than for other domestic purposes, it becomes clear that water problems cannot be solved with a narrow approach.

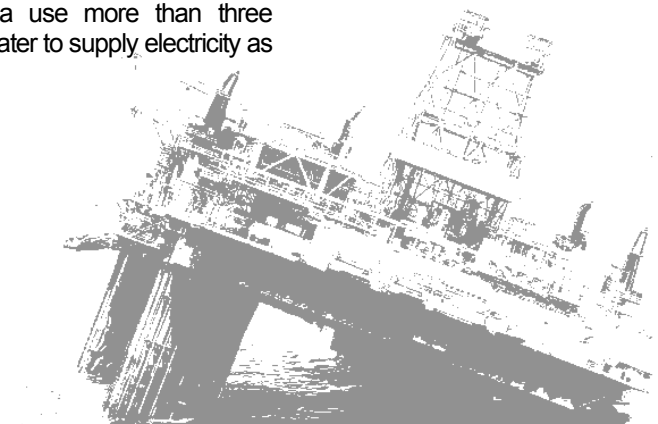
Willis also explained the financial web between Georgia Power’s huge investment in coal and nuclear generated power, their political lobbying, financial contributions and monopoly privileges, the misdirection of public funds to environmentally counterproductive biomass and biofuels programs, and the drastic underfunding of truly effective, proven clean renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

Although environmental advocacy groups always wish they had more public participation, the forty or so attendees generously praised what they felt to be an unusually informative and interesting forum. Despite the timeliness of the water policy issues discussed, especially river management issues addressed by Tudor and Moss, there were few government or political officials in attendance.

Attendees lingered to discuss the ideas presented in the forum for almost an hour after the last presentation. There is clearly a growing interest in the many environmental issues facing us today. Actually, hasn’t “environmental issues” become shorthand for the major quandaries confronting the future of our planet?

The hard-won lessons taught by BP, the financial melt-down, and rising sea level – to name only a few of many profoundly vexing, human-created problems – are all text-book studies from the same course on the interconnectedness of all things.

Thinking globally while acting locally is no longer just a good idea – it has become imperative if we are to succeed as a state and nation.



## Mindy Egan joins Center board

Jekyll Island resident Mindy Egan was elected to the Center board and participated in its meeting on June 4 in Savannah.

In commenting on her new role, Center board president, Steve Willis, said, "Mindy's energy and enthusiasm will be a valuable asset in our continuing efforts to address the profound challenges being faced by coastal Georgia."

In 1997, Mindy left a 27 year career as a school psychologist on Long Island to retire with her husband, David to beautiful Jekyll Island. Her career was highlighted by being instrumental in developing an elementary counseling program and Parent Center in her school district.

In 2006, Mindy and her husband David founded the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island State Park (IPJI). IPJI is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization committed to preserving Jekyll's traditional character, historical/cultural heritage, and natural assets.

IPJI\* was created as a result of frustration with the Jekyll Island Authority's failure to provide adequate opportunities for the public, Jekyll's customers and visitors, to participate in planning for Jekyll's future.

**\*The web address for IPJI is [www.savejekyllisland.org](http://www.savejekyllisland.org)**

It was during that time that the Egans were introduced to the Center for a Sustainable Coast. Encouraged by the Center's positions that were aligned with IPJI's mission, a productive relationship was formed with Center executive director, David Kyler. Since then, the Center has become a key partner with IPJI, and Kyler has written several influential Op-ed pieces about Jekyll issues that have been extremely helpful to the missions of both organizations.

Some issues of concern on Jekyll are examples of broader problems throughout the coastal Georgia region. These include questions surrounding the judicious use of state authority to regulate public resources and to properly interpret state policies related to environmental protection, public access, and recreation.

In December 2008, David and Mindy Egan were honored with the Center's first annual *Nick Williams Coastal Sustainability Award* in recognition for their work associated with IPJI. Inscribed on the certificate of award was the following statement:

***"The board and staff of the Center for a Sustainable Coast are proud to present the first annual Nick Williams Coastal Sustainability Award to David & Mindy Egan for their insightful commitment to protecting and promoting the public interest in stewardship of natural resources, preserving public access, and ensuring responsible use of Jekyll Island State Park."***

Mindy has always been interested in environmental issues and her work with Jekyll Island has inspired her to become more



Mindy Egan

According to Mindy, "Coastal Georgia is a uniquely beautiful region that deserves being safeguarded with disciplined adherence to existing laws intended to protect natural resources. At the same time, we need to carefully promote new policies that address a wide range of unprecedented development pressures. The Center's mission and track record make it well suited to serve these objectives. I'm looking forward to contributing however I can as a board member."

After working with thousands of Georgians from around the state, in addition to being honored by the Center, the Egans have been recognized by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and Common Cause of Georgia for their efforts on Jekyll Island's behalf.

When time allows, Mindy enjoys swimming, gardening, seining for shrimp, and golfing.

## Anti-socialism forces, unite!

*Letter-to-editor published in The Savannah Morning News, July 12, 2010.*

My compliments to the *Savannah Morning News* for providing readers with information about our present and projected monthly electricity costs.

According to the numbers published in the July 6 editorial, Georgia Power is guaranteed an 11.25 percent return on the dollar value of the physical plant and equipment it owns. And, it's allowed by the Georgia Public Service Commission to charge customers for past costs it incurred in building power lines, generating capacity, etc. Georgia Power is now asking that anticipated equipment costs also be charged to rate payers, in addition to their monthly payment for electricity.

What a deal.

No longer do Georgia Power investors have to put up their own money to build new generating and distribution facilities. Our own public servants on our own PSC have ruled and are being asked to rule again that our money, instead of investor money, be used to build new power company facilities. Then, the increased total value of Georgia Power-owned facilities will be the basis for computing their guaranteed profit of 11.25 percent.

Capitalism is all about rewarding capital investment, but this is astounding.

In the first place, when profit is guaranteed, a return of 11.25 percent on investment is about twice as much as would be reasonable. Secondly, calculating private profit on the value of facilities built with our rate payer funds is unconscionable.

Socializing the profit of a private business, which is what this is, cannot be justified under any concept of economics. Yet, that's what our PSC has done and is being asked to do again.

For those who hate socialism, it is time to speak out and loudly.

David Nagle  
Savannah

## Georgia earns bad press

Written by Center President, Steve Willis  
Edited by David Kyler, Executive Director

For the past thirty years Georgia has adopted the Reagan philosophy that government is not the solution, but the problem. Low expectations for government have become self-fulfilling prophecies, needed reforms are ridiculed, while incompetence and malfeasance are accepted as the norm.

Since government in Georgia has lost the confidence of the people, control of the public sector has almost entirely fallen into the hands of the corporate elite, who, despite their contempt for government, are all too ready to put serious money into contributions and lobbying in hopes of being well rewarded for their political investment.

This philosophy that "financial incentives" for business are the final answer for almost any question of public policy has led to a fire-sale mentality among Georgia's leaders.

Business must be "lured" to Georgia, and into rural Georgia from Atlanta, and the "lure" almost inevitably comes out of the hide of the average Georgian: direct incentives to business using tax-payer's cash, tax-breaks (which mean businesses are not required to contribute fairly to their society, but pass that burden on to the average citizen), or more subtle incentives, such as forcing residential customers to pay for natural gas or electricity at much higher rates than businesses, or simply turning a blind eye to environmentally destructive and hazardous activities conducted by some businesses.

All this is done at the expense of investments which would form the basis for genuine long-term progress: care for infrastructure, education, and the environment, with serious efforts to clean up Georgia's government so legitimate prospective business ventures can look forward to competent and fair treatment.

Despite hundreds of millions of state dollars being spent to lure business to Georgia, our state recently has been the object of terrible business publicity, which leaders would have been wise to avoid by long ago correcting the problems identified.

*Continued on next page...*

### **Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) issues "Request for Information" (RFI) on Master Plan revisions.**

**The JIA has issued a notice requesting information, ideas, and opinions from all individuals and organizations having interest in the future of Jekyll Island State Park. The current Master Plan for the park was adopted in 1996 and updated in 2004.**

**The Center and others have been concerned that a conservation analysis was not included in the original master plan (MP) and an attempt to amend it with a "conservation plan" has been unreasonably delayed for several years. In the meantime, island redevelopment efforts have moved forward without any official conservation guidance.**

**There are several other issues of urgent concern, including:**

- **affordability of facilities being developed for public use under JIA's decisions**
- **lack of open planning that has resulted in repeated disputes over redevelopment issues**
- **questionable advice provided by unqualified consultants**
- **no evaluation of the impacts of redevelopment on the visitor experience.**

**We urge you to submit comments to help correct past deficiencies in public involvement.**

*Comments regarding to the*



## **Bad Press, continued**

In the past year, *The Economist*, probably the most respected international business magazine, has featured two scathing articles about the State of Georgia.

One article, "Sweaty Days; Georgia's troubled banks," August 29, 2009, fingered Georgia as the leader in American bank failures, with over a fifth of all US failures (a number which has grown considerably since then). The article accounts this super-high rate of failure to too many poorly regulated banks, and a practice of luring out of state money into Georgia to back rampant development speculation with unsustainably high yield certificates ("hot money").\*

The second article, "Divide to conquer; A new transport bill for a gridlocked state", June 19, 2010, pointed out that residents of metro Atlanta spend more than 135 million hours sitting in traffic delays each year, while burning off 96 million gallons of fuel in the process – five times as much as 20 years earlier, more than twice the previous per-capita rate. Georgia ranks 49<sup>th</sup> among the states in infrastructure expenditure per capita, and has the second lowest petrol tax in the country.

Continuing investment in the upkeep and timely replacement of bridges, roads, water and sewer systems and other public infrastructure is essential to economic competitiveness as well as quality of life and environmental health. Evidently, Georgia leaders prefer "investing" in tax cuts for corporations while neglecting infrastructure and reliable environmental regulation.

To make matters worse, *The Economist* article explains, the Governor's 12-Region transportation bill ensures that areas outside Atlanta will not be taxed to support Atlanta transportation. Instead, transportation revenues will be obtained through highly regressive sales taxes.

Moreover, the regional approach constitutes a serious impediment to state-wide projects, which would link cities such as Atlanta and Savannah, but would have to garner the cooperation of regions in between having little interest in either Atlanta or Savannah.

If you were a global corporation CEO, would you think favorably about Georgia after reading these articles? Would you be eager to move your headquarters here? Build a plant? Do business at all?

It is time for Georgians to reverse the dismissive trend in state government. No one wants big, inefficient government bureaucracy, but only scoundrels want negligent government that leans too hard on the middle class, while cynically subsidizing abusive business practices.

Georgians need good government that is responsible, accountable, and even-handed. Until we get it, Georgia will continue suffering lost opportunities and a diminished quality of life.

No amount of PR gloss can cover the realities of Georgia's declining reputation among legitimate business decision-makers. Such opinions will be key factors in deciding where the best jobs in the nation will be created. That does not bode well for Georgia.

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*\*Note: For several years leading up to the ongoing national economic dilemma, the Center publicly voiced concern about environmental havoc being caused by reckless development speculation in coastal Georgia. Little did we know at the time how widespread and financially ruinous this speculation would prove to be, or that many Georgia banking institutions were among the worst offenders in the nation.*

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## **'Conserving Coastal Georgia's Natural Heritage...**

### **Investing in Our Children's Future"**

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