



Works in Progress

"Conserving Coastal Georgia's Natural Heritage. . . Investing in Our Children's Future"

Winter 2005

Marsh permit issued for major project despite many unanswered questions

On March 4 the Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee unanimously approved a permit for the construction of two marinas and three community docks to be built over publicly-owned marshlands and waterbottoms as part of Cumberland Harbour, a major project located on a peninsula called Point Peter in southern Camden County. This large residential community is one of the region's most environmentally risky projects of its kind ever proposed.

Land Resources of Atlanta is developing a gated waterfront community on 1,014 undeveloped acres, which included about 100 acres of freshwater wetlands that have since been destroyed in preparing the site for this project. Cumberland Harbour is located immediately south of Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in the City of St. Marys, Georgia. Cumberland Island National Seashore, a federally designated wilderness area, is less than two miles away from the project site.

Completion of this project would threaten federally and State-protected marine life and wildlife, while fundamentally altering the character of the area. Land Resources plans to construct two large-scale marinas, three community docks, and more than 90 private docks in the waters surrounding Point Peter that would add more than 800 boats to this area.

The two marinas together would comprise the largest marina facility ever permitted on the Georgia coast, including approximately 17,500 linear feet of docking space for recreational craft – an unprecedented amount that is nearly equivalent to the quantity of publicly-accessible docking space in either Glynn or Chatham Counties, the region's two most urbanized areas. On the upland, the developer plans to build some 1,200 homes and commercial structures.

As part of the negotiations leading up to the project's approval, the applicant, Land Resources, met with DNR staff

and, with the help of the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a consultant hired by Land Resources, conducted a "biological assessment" looking into the project's numerous natural resources at risk. The biological assessment is usually used by federal agencies to evaluate impacts on federally-protected species. In this case it was incorporated by DNR as part of its staff report, and includes as yet vaguely described "conservation measures."

Resources of concern include the Florida manatee, gopher tortoise, piping plover, marine turtles, and so-called "isolated" wetlands that are the habitat for a variety of migratory birds. Cumberland Island National Seashore is likely to be adversely affected by the project as well.

Based on the biological assessment, in their staff report DNR included a general description of various steps for monitoring, evaluating, and controlling the project's environmental impacts, but admitted that details were not yet worked out. Such details will be essential to the effectiveness of efforts meant to examine environmental conditions and take timely action to limit significant adverse impacts identified.

In their testimony at the permit hearing, representatives of several environmental groups were justifiably concerned about the missing details, strongly urging that no permit be issued until the conservation measures and corresponding performance procedures are worked out in detail.

While it is encouraging that the applicant is working with DNR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and others to produce information about the project's environmental impacts, it is decidedly

questionable how such information actually could be used to control or prevent specific adverse outcomes if field sampling reveals problems.

For example, if water monitoring of creeks, rivers, and stormwater pond outfalls indicates contamination (such as nitrogen or phosphorus pollution known as "nutrient loading") or low dissolved oxygen, exactly what will be done about it, and by whom? Similarly, if greatly increased boating in the area causes fatal manatee strikes, what steps will be required of Land Resources to prevent further harm to these marine mammals?

Continued next page ▶

Under these circumstances, it is impossible to confirm, and arguably doubtful, that safeguards will be adopted to ensure effective identification and control of harmful environmental impacts.

▼ **Cumberland Harbour Site (Point Peter)
Pre-development, looking south**



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Information about environmental impacts, important as it is, by itself is not enough to ensure protection of the public interest. Reliable, legally binding means for using such information must also be ensured to correct, minimize, or prevent any environmental damage caused by the project being permitted.

Despite recent legal victories in the Georgia courts by the Center and several collaborating groups, under advice from the office of the Attorney General the Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee persists in ignoring a requirement to evaluate the impact to the marsh system caused by upland portions of projects. Given the Committee's position on this issue, it is highly unlikely that the Committee will take steps to prevent further harm if water quality monitoring shows that polluted runoff from the upland is degrading marsh resources.

Because there were so many unresolved issues about data gathering and related procedures for protecting natural resources at risk, I raised a number of specific questions about performance measures and their enforcement. No satisfactory response to my questions was provided – by the committee, the permit applicant, or DNR staff.

Openly expressing their doubts that these performance measures could be ready for review within the 30-day period allowed for filing a permit appeal, the committee agreed to issue the permit anyway.

Backroom Bargains For Private Gain At Public Expense

Given current efforts to promote fiscal responsibility in government, it is ironic that a flagrantly irresponsible public-private partnership bill (HB218) was being strongly promoted in Georgia's General Assembly. This ill-considered measure would have allowed arrangements made by local governments, state officials, and development authorities with private promoters to be hidden from the public until after sweet-deal contracts are signed.

For many years, government giveaways to corporate players that pit one community against another have been known to be the worst kind of welfare capitalism, hurting the public instead of helping us. Doubly ironic, if not downright two-faced, is that many of the same politicians who condemn public funding for social programs targeting the low income are among the first in line to fork over public resources and tax breaks worth billions to private ventures in the name of economic progress – with no guarantee of results, seldom any accountability, and little on record to bolster confidence.

In the late 1990's *Time Magazine*, hardly a radical left-wing journal, ran a revealing series of articles (*What Corporate Welfare Costs You*) providing overwhelming evidence that lavish government handouts to corporations rarely produce net benefits for the public. Numerous other investigations and studies have found much the same thing – a little searching around on the Web produces rafts of compelling proof.

Making it lawful to keep these negotiations secret until after they become legally binding would rob the public of constitutional control over the use of public resources – monetary and otherwise. Such covert operations sponsored in the name of economic development would be likely to turn Georgia's tax dollars and natural resources into abusive private profits that benefit only a privileged few at the expense of the vast majority.

Corporate welfare and the backroom bargaining that enable it are promoted by those who gain the greatest – namely the most opportunistic segment of the business sector, including many people in high places who own a piece of the action – and well-meaning but easily misled public officials who simply don't understand when they are making a fool's bargain.

Under these circumstances, it is impossible to confirm, and arguably doubtful, that safeguards will be adopted to ensure effective identification and control of harmful environmental impacts.

By issuing this permit prior to establishing the necessary performance standards and enforcement procedures, the committee made sweeping assumptions that the developer will meet these unknown requirements, that monitoring will be complete, and that unclear practices will adequately protect natural resources. Equally critical, the committee has also deprived the public of its right to review and comment on the methods to be used for controlling impacts of the proposed project because these procedures were undecided when the permit was granted.

Without justification, the Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee has left the public with scant assurance that marsh resources will be adequately protected under the law. We are deeply troubled that this major project has been permitted based on blind faith, without sufficient understanding or control of its effects on Georgia's vital natural resources held in the public trust.

David Kyler

Executive Director
Center for a Sustainable Coast

Passing this bill would deny Georgians basic open-government assurances that safeguard the public, encouraging special-interest manipulation and misuse of public funds and other resources.

As many have said, the need to attract new jobs shouldn't trump the public's right to know what is being done with tax money, especially projects that might adversely affect the quality of life and property value of Georgia citizens.

Moreover, I remind our public officials that not all jobs are worth creating, and not all employers will be responsible members of our communities unless they are held publicly accountable. Secret deals made behind closed doors, promoted and legalized by HB218, would work directly against that crucial accountability.

Note

*An earlier version of the above commentary by the Center's executive director was published in **The Savannah Morning News, Connect Savannah, and The Business Report & Journal** during February 2005.*

Due to widely voiced objections to HB218 published throughout the state's newspapers, the bill was tabled in the General Assembly Senate and is not expected to be enacted.

It is encouraging that Georgians value open government because it is essential to the strength of our democratic institutions.

Land Use and Environmental Quality

Although most land in coastal Georgia is not urbanized, areas that are being developed and other areas that are in use (dominated by tree plantations or commercial forest) can have profound effect on environmental quality.

The reasons for such effects include:

- ▶ Non-point source pollution of surrounding waters, including wetlands and fishery habitat
- ▶ Disturbance, degradation, or destruction of native land-based habitat
- ▶ Point-source contamination of land, air, and/or water
- ▶ Concentrated use of resources, such as groundwater, which can cause reduction in resource quality
- ▶ Inappropriate land uses that encroach upon sensitive resources (such as septic tank drainfields near water supply sources and fish habitat)
- ▶ Disruption of natural water flow, retention, and release (most commonly from ditching and filling wetlands)

While it is commonly recognized that limiting the area of impervious surface (pavement, rooftops, etc.) is needed to control non-point source pollution, there are other factors that must be considered as well. Due to wide variation in soil permeability, topography, vegetation, wildlife, and proximity to aquatic and other sensitive ecosystems, analysis of any particular site must be carefully considered in determining its proper use.

General site development standards, as typically set forth in zoning ordinances and other local land use controls, even when rigorously enforced, are often inadequate to ensure environmental protection. Furthermore, local officials typically view protection of environmental quality as the state's responsibility, even though decisions made under state law may not comply with local priorities.

The fragmentation of authority in analyzing and controlling the impacts of land use creates confusion and misalignment among the objectives of both regulatory authorities and those proposing to build projects. Local governments, granted authority in state law to control land use, are typically ill prepared to base land use decisions on environmental factors that are the primary responsibility of state regulatory agencies governing water withdrawal, water use, wastewater discharge, air quality, and waste disposal.

Most land use decisions and the permits needed to support development (both state and local) are made on a case-by-case basis with little if any perspective on the cumulative effects of many such decisions over time. Despite the emphasis on local planning in state law (*Georgia Planning Act, 1989*), comprehensive plans are too seldom used by local planning commissions in making land use decisions, and in any case, there has been virtually no use of planning by state regulatory permitting agencies.

Recommendations

- ▶ Local planning and zoning officials need extensive technical assistance and training to improve their understanding about relationships between land use and natural resources.
- ▶ Local development codes must be upgraded to include requirements for site evaluation and assessment to improve the compatibility between natural resources and project designs.
- ▶ After projects are built there must be sufficient monitoring and assessment to determine their impacts and the effectiveness of steps taken to predict and control such impacts. Ideally, monitoring should be tied to analysis based on the use of "sustainability indicators."
- ▶ A unified approach to permitting, encompassing both state and local arenas of regulation, should be developed to ensure a properly comprehensive and integrated procedure.
- ▶ Public forums and other venues should be used to open a dialogue about public resources and private property rights to advance common understanding needed to achieve effective, balanced solutions for coping with environmental problems caused by land development.
- ▶ Authorities for permitting the use of natural resources (primarily state and federal agencies) need to incorporate longer-term perspectives in the procedures they use to make decisions supporting land use. Issuing environmental permits on a case-by-case basis can never achieve the objectives of true "resource management."
- ▶ Linkages among the use of land, air, and water must be more carefully evaluated in permitting decisions to ensure that interactive, cumulative, and long-term impacts are properly controlled.

☞ Note ☞

This article is from ***The State of Georgia's Coast***, a report by the Center for a Sustainable Coast. The executive summary of this report is available online from the Center's website at:

www.sustainablecoast.org .

Copies of the full 220-page report are now available for a modest fee to cover printing costs. ▶ **See page 6 for contents.** Please call the Center at **912.638.3612** for further information.

Special Note:

Reports of both the Pew Oceans Commission (2003) and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (2004) independently concluded that one of the greatest threats to the nation's marine resources is non-point source pollution from land-based activities.

Thus, land use and land management throughout coastal watersheds are critical to our region's quality of life as well as the health of America's marine environment, upon which we all depend.

Do “marine protected areas” really work?

Reprinted from **Atlantic CoastWatch**, January – February 2005. **Atlantic CoastWatch** is a project of the Sustainable Development Institute. On the Web at www.atlanticcoastwatch.org.

In the January 2005 issue of *Oceanus*, the online magazine of research from the **Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution**, marine scientists **Michael J. Fogarty** and **Steven A. Murawski** address a major question: “Do Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Really Work?” The paper focuses on Georges Bank off the Massachusetts coast, where fishery closures have been in effect since 1994. Excerpts follow.

Closing parts of the ocean to fishing to preserve fish stocks holds great intuitive appeal. Similar resource management tools have been used as far back as the Middle Ages, when European kings and princes controlled access to forests and streams, and the fish and wildlife in them. In Hawaii local chiefs maintained networks of no-fishing “kapu” zones, with violations punishable by death. But the key question remains: Do MPAs really work? Is it the modern incarnation of a longstanding question: How can we best ensure sustainable fisheries?

Today MPAs - areas of the ocean temporarily or permanently closed to harvesting - are being proposed to restrict not only fishing, but also mineral and hydrocarbon extraction, and other activities. Some advocates of MPAs suggest that at least 20% of the coastal and open ocean should be set aside and permanently zoned to protect ecosystems, sustain fish stocks, and reduce conflicts between users of the oceans.

The long history of research on Georges Bank adds a foundation of scientific knowledge that makes the Georges Bank MPA an ideal system to test the effects of year-round fishery closures and adds essential observations to test models.

A few comments about Marine Protected Areas in the South Atlantic & Georgia

- *There is little evidence that protected areas work for all species of concern in the South Atlantic.*
- *In general, species associated with the ocean bottom benefit most from protection, while migratory species may benefit, but to an extent that is lower and less predictable.*
- *However, protected areas are useful for reef habitats and the many species dependent on them.*
- *The mechanisms at work are complex and difficult to understand. Observation and documentation needed to completely justify protected areas are extremely expensive. The deeper the water the more intractable this problem.*
- *Enforcement of MPAs is problematic at best and impossible at worst.*
- *Degree of benefit depends in part on type of fishing gear used prior to adoption of protected areas adopted.*
- *Marine Protected Areas remain very controversial among thousands of Georgians who are active in recreational fishing.*

Special thanks to Gordon Rogers, fisheries biologist and Satilla Riverkeeper®, in preparing these bulleted points.

It is not easy to separate the effects of the closed areas on Georges Bank from other changes, such as fishing-days reductions implemented at the same time.

However, our studies show that the closures have played an important role in the overall increase in abundance of these stocks:

- The biomass (total population weight) of a number of commercially important fish species on Georges Bank has sharply increased, due to both an increase in the average size of individuals and, for some species, an increase in the number of young surviving to harvestable size.
- Some non-commercial species, such as longhorn sculpin, increased in biomass.
- By 2001, haddock populations dramatically rebounded with a fivefold increase.
- Yellowtail flounder populations have increased by more than 800% since the establishment of year-round closures.
- Cod biomass increased by about 50% by 2001.
- Scallop biomass increased 14-fold by 2001, an extra benefit of closed areas primarily intended to protect groundfish.

The large-scale management experiment on Georges Bank indicates that a combination of MPAs and other management measures, such as reduced fishing efforts, can allow some species to recover from overexploitation. And beyond protecting fisheries, MPAs potentially offer other benefits. They can:

- Help preserve marine ecosystems and biodiversity of species not targeted by a fishery but impacted by trawling damage or inadvertent catch
- Promote non-extractive uses of marine areas, like eco-tourism
- Establish undisturbed locations for scientific studies that can further improve resource management and conservation.

To make the best use of MPAs, though, we have to clearly specify our objectives. We then must evaluate the effectiveness and the social and economic benefits of MPAs and compare the utility of MPAs with other possible management tools to see if they are the best option for the situation. The Georges Bank experience has proven very instructive in how to implement and evaluate marine protected areas in temperate seas—and the experiment is still going strong.

Project Description

Southern Natural Gas Company (Southern) proposes to expand its existing interstate natural gas pipeline system from a point near Port Wentworth, Georgia, to a point interconnecting with Florida Gas Transmission's (FGT's) system in Clay County, Florida, near Jacksonville. Gas to be distributed will be shipped as liquefied natural gas (LNG) from foreign supplies by tanker to a reactivated LNG facility at Elba Island in Chatham County.

The project as proposed will be constructed in three phases. Phase I will include the initial pipeline of 165 miles of 24-inch diameter pipe. Assuming a 100-foot wide easement, the total area of the corridor will be some two thousand acres, including many sensitive and valuable coastal wetlands.

The new pipeline will interconnect with four outlets: Atlanta Gas Light in Glynn County, Georgia; Southern's South Georgia facilities in Nassau County, Florida; Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA) in Duval County, Florida; and FGT in Clay County, Florida.

The pipeline is being promoted as a means to help meet the current and future gas requirements of markets in south Georgia and Florida. Promoters say that the Cypress Project will provide more suppliers for gas consumers in these markets and increase gas supply access and reliability. In addition, the pipeline will enable gas suppliers of Southern's LNG facility near Savannah to deliver incremental gas supplies into the Georgia and Florida markets. The Cypress Pipeline will have the ability to flow gas bidirectionally from Florida to points north in Georgia, as well as from the Southern LNG interconnection south.

During the planning stages and route refinement process for the Cypress Pipeline Project, three different types of surveys will be conducted: a preliminary civil survey to locate the

proposed centerline of the right of way; an environmental survey to locate wetlands and other sensitive environmental resources; and an archaeological survey to identify the location of cultural and historic resources. Before a federal permit is issued, an environmental impact statement must be prepared. If approved, the pipeline is expected to be operational within two years.

Preliminary Civil Survey

A survey crew will locate the centerline of the proposed route of the pipeline. This centerline will be used as a guide for all surveys. In some locations it may be necessary to clear and cut brush, limbs and small trees along the centerline of the proposed right of way.

Later another crew will return to record the survey data along the marked line. Other survey crews may follow-up to make adjustments to the centerline as a result of changes to the line at other locations, as well as to avoid sensitive areas identified in earlier surveys.

Environmental Survey

An environmental survey team will conduct a field study in the proposed right-of-way and its adjacent area. The adjacent area to be analyzed will range from 150 to 200 feet on either side of the centerline, depending on the specific location. The purpose of the environmental survey is to determine the size and location of wetlands and streams, and to evaluate the land for potential habitat of endangered plant or animal species.

The environmental survey crew will also locate springs and/or water wells, erosion prone areas, man-made features such as ponds, irrigation systems, drain tiles, or other such alterations. Additional surveys might be required in conjunction with any adjustments made to the centerline of the proposed right-of-way.

Archaeological Survey

A survey crew of about 6 to 9 people will study the proposed right-of-way and adjacent area (extending approximately 150 to 200 feet) on either side of the centerline. The purpose of the archaeological survey is to identify the presence, if any, of cultural or historic resources that need to be protected. The survey will include shovel tests approximately 18 inches deep at intervals of roughly 50 meters. The soil from each shovel test will be sifted through a screen to check for the presence of historical remains, pot shards, arrowheads and any other artifacts with historical significance. Professionals will study any objects found. After the survey process is complete, any materials taken from private property will be returned to the landowner upon request, consistent with state law or other regulations. Additional surveys may be required in conjunction with any adjustments to the centerline.

► **To express concern about this project by mail**

Send an original and 2 copies of your comments to:

Magalie R. Salas, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, N.E., Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426

- Make sure they are received by than **April 7, 2005**
- Reference Docket Number PF05-7-000
- Label one copy: Attention Gas Branch 1, DG2E

► **Your comments may also be filed electronically**

See instructions on FERC's website at <http://www.ferc.gov>. Look for the links to "e-filing" and the "User's Guide."

Some important but unanswered questions about this project

- ✓ What are the risks from terrorism and natural disasters of both the LNG facility and the pipeline?
- ✓ What portion of the total market to be served by this pipeline will be in Florida, not Georgia?
- ✓ If most of the projected market will be in Florida, why isn't the LNG shipped directly to Jacksonville?
- ✓ What liability coverage is available if damage is done?
- ✓ Exactly how much area of wetlands and waterbottoms will be disturbed along the pipeline corridor?
- ✓ What are the initial and cumulative impacts of the project on rivers, wetlands, and other sensitive resources and habitat?
- ✓ If the pipeline is damaged or begins leaking, what are the hazards and who is responsible for damage control?
- ✓ What is the expected lifespan of the pipeline?

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Perdue Orders Expanded Coastal Growth Management Plan

The following press release was issued by Governor Perdue announcing a potentially authoritative coastal Georgia planning initiative. Neighboring states have already taken similar steps for their coastal areas.

While we are encouraged that the governor and his staff are aware that the coast's future depends on environmental stewardship, there is no precedent in Georgia for a state plan that successfully weds economic development with responsible protection of natural resources. Thus, this initiative could signal noteworthy progress in Georgia's political maturity.

Historically, fragmented, myopic thinking used in misguided promotion of economic development – turning a blind eye to long-term implications for natural resources – has caused some of Georgia's greatest environmental threats.

Coastal Georgia's rapid rate of development and environmental vulnerability make growth management vital in our region. But prudent planning statewide is crucial if we are to conserve natural resources throughout our vast coastal watersheds, while making wise choices that guide Georgia's future development.

Effort aimed at gaining wider participation in forming strategies

Perdue's coastal plan must be truly comprehensive and then reliably implemented through both budgeting and permitting decisions for years to come. We must make sure that sound science and accurate environmental analysis are consistently applied in economic development as well as in local regulation of land-use.

There is disturbingly little evidence of that being done in the past, which is a major reason why Governor Perdue's new effort is so significant to the future of our coast.

*(See **Economy, Environment Form a Team**, below.)*

PRESS RELEASE

February 21, 2005

ATLANTA – Gov. Sonny Perdue has issued an executive order directing the implementation of a Comprehensive Master Development Plan for the Coastal Georgia region. The plan will guide the future development of Georgia's coast, while addressing the needs for environmental stewardship and the development of tourism and business assets, the governor says

The Comprehensive Master Development Plan will outline guidelines for sustaining economic development without compromising the quality of life enjoyed by residents and the natural appeal that attracts coastal visitors. It will broaden the scope of the current plan, which was prepared by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and allow expanded input from a variety of stakeholders on issues such as housing, transportation and development that are facing Georgia's coast. The plan will also allow for the integration of existing management plans for coastal-area entities such as Jekyll Island, the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center and other governmental bodies. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is charged with developing the new plan by October 2007."

Our coastal areas are vital to Georgia's future, not only for the economic activity they stimulate, but for the quality of life they offer our citizens and the heritage they hold for visitors and our children," said Perdue. "This plan will identify ways to resolve the often conflicting interests that have a stake in Georgia's coastal resources. This plan will enable stakeholders in Georgia's coast to find ways to complement each other."

By taking away buffers for streams that only flow during rainstorms, the Board of Natural Resources is exposing state waters to still more threats from non-point source pollution, blatantly at odds with Georgia's tourism interests.

No matter how seldom a small stream or ditch may transport water, without natural buffers it is likely to convey contaminants, which can add substantially to the non-point source pollution of state waters – already a well-documented and serious water quality problem throughout Georgia. Exposing hundreds if not thousands of such streams to these risks by adopting the proposed buffer exemption unjustifiably jeopardizes Georgia's water quality and long-term economic interests through further impairment.

This unwise exemption adds more problems to a program already plagued by poor performance. By various estimates, the Environmental Protection Division is underfunded by 60 – 80% of what is needed to properly enforce existing point-source permitting regulations. State erosion and sedimentation regulations are also known for having chronic enforcement deficiencies, due at least in part to major funding and staffing shortages. Local governments share in this default of public water protection responsibilities by often failing to adequately monitor and enforce erosion controls in land use decisions.

Beyond these concerns, but directly related to them, are national problems with marine habitat, as reported in two recent studies by highly reputable groups. Both the Pew Ocean Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy emphasized the critical importance of reducing non-point source pollution of the nation's rivers in order to improve and, if possible, recover degraded habitats and the living marine resources dependent on them. Marine biologists estimate that water quality in coastal estuaries and near-shore waters is essential to the health of 75 to 80 percent of marine life, because of its importance to the food web and various habitat functions during the life-cycle of innumerable species.

Georgia is long overdue for an economic development strategy and budget that are reconciled with the state's environmental laws and limits to achievable sustainable, responsible and consistent public policy. Given the short-term, fragmented thinking that dominates most decisions affecting the condition of Georgia's public trust resources such as air, water, habitat and wildlife, this is a formidable challenge.

We urge Governor Perdue to use his considerable authority to stop Georgia's self-defeating history of robbing Peter to pay Paul by recognizing the vital functions of the natural environment when promoting the state's economic development. This objective should be at the very heart of the Governor's efforts to achieve greater fiscal responsibility, because our natural resources are among Georgia's most valued forms of wealth – and essential to the shared future prosperity of all our citizens.

Economy, Environment Form a Team

Atlanta Journal Constitution

by David Kyler, Center for a Sustainable Coast

GUEST COLUMN

December 20, 2004

Last week, the Governor spoke about the importance of promoting tourism in Georgia, in part to compensate for the state's continued lackluster economic performance, now projected through 2005. Yet recent actions of Georgia officials are a direct threat to tourism as a strong and growing economic force.

By our reckoning, at least \$15 billion of the state's annual tourism activity is directly attributable to healthy natural resources – especially water quality and fisheries, which here on the coast are known to contribute some \$1 billion in tourism and outdoor recreation business revenues every year. This means some 40,000 coastal jobs and as many as 600,000 jobs in Georgia that depend directly on a well protected environment. Even minor harm to natural resources could cause millions of lost annual revenues in nature-based business, severely curtailing Georgia's potential for further tourism diversification.

In light of the Governor's public commitment to boosting Georgia's tourism efforts and overwhelming evidence of that sector's growth potential, it is especially ironic that, by an 11 to 5 vote, the state's Natural Resources Board adopted an exemption abolishing important water quality safeguards.

Why Support Our Work?

- ✓ Coastal Georgia is rapidly developing, with serious risks to our environment and quality of life, yet public agencies such as DNR and EPA are often unable to adequately address such issues.
- ✓ The Center is playing an active and vital role as both advocate and analyst for coastal Georgia – a challenging and demanding combination of data gathering, growth assessment, policy and position formulation, education, and, when needed, legal action.
- ✓ We recently produced a *State of the Coast Report* for Georgia, the first comprehensive analysis of coastal growth and environmental conditions, which is being used to prepare decision-makers and the public for many tough decisions ahead.
- ✓ Center staff is playing a key role in formalizing and upgrading DNR's Coastal Advisory Council, creating opportunities for substantially improving Georgia's federally funded Coastal Management Program.
- ✓ The Center is working with the Georgia Water Coalition to strengthen the state's water resource policies. Thanks largely to the Coalition's efforts, Georgians can look forward to better water planning and conservation, key to the coast's future – including nature-based businesses supporting thousands of coastal families.
- ✓ We helped launch two riverkeeper groups in the region. Because our estuaries, wildlife, and fisheries are dependent on water quality and flow in coastal rivers, Center staff spent hundreds of hours organizing and securing funds for Altamaha Riverkeeper (1998-99) and Satilla Riverkeeper (2003 – 2004).
- ✓ The Center has won important legal victories in Georgia's courts that will strengthen the State's interpretation and enforcement of environmental regulations protecting coastal resources through the Marshlands Protection Act.

How You Can Help . . .

Why not join hundreds of concerned Georgians who have supported the Center for a Sustainable Coast by making a **tax-deductible** contribution? It's a sound investment in our coast.

Your generous donation will help the Center –

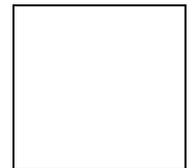
- ▶ Keep our office doors open, covering the costs of rent, utilities, computer operations, email, fax and telephone communications, and the Center's website.
- ▶ Pay for staff time needed to prepare newsletters, analysis, presentations, and formal comments on environmental permit applications, regulations, project proposals, and regional issues.
- ▶ Convince foundations that ample local support for the organization's work justifies their grants to the Center.
- ▶ Gather, analyze, and report data about regional conditions and trends, strengthening our ability to educate public officials and citizens about growth issues, policy needs, and wise planning.

Giving Options – All Tax Deductible

We will accommodate your preferences by making arrangements that best suit your budget and schedule. You or your business can send a check once a year, quarterly, or choose a monthly amount that can be deducted automatically from your bank account.

Any contribution can be designated to be used for a specific issue, project, or endowment, or in the memory of a loved one. We'll gladly honor any request to recognize a donation in our newsletter.

For your convenience, a return envelope that includes a membership form is enclosed in this newsletter. Whether or not you choose to become a Center member, by making a contribution you will be among good company – thoughtful Georgians who want to conserve our valuable resources and protect our cherished quality of life for this and future generations. Won't you please take a moment and lend us your valued support?



Works in Progress

Winter 2005 Issue

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

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED