



Coastal Advisory Council
October 20, 2015 at Midway EMC
Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions:

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul Wolff and the Council went through introductions.

Special Presentations:

Georgia Coastal Research Council Update, Dr. Merryl Alber

Dr. Alber provided an update on the role of the GCRC and their accomplishments over the past year. The GCRC currently is comprised of 159 members representing coastal research and management. One of the highlights is a biannual colloquium bringing researchers and managers together to discuss ongoing research as well as management needs. The Colloquium highlights current research projects as well as identifying gaps in research needed for management decisions. The GCRC also disseminates information through its website (www.gcrc.uga.edu) and a public symposium. The first symposium was held in May of 2015 with current or recently completed project report outs and short introductions for new projects that will be starting. The symposium had 80 attendees representing state and federal agencies, academia, local governments, NGOs, and private citizens.

Another task of the GCRC is to synthesize technical material and pull together literature on specific subjects requested by managers. Two projects were completed this year. The first was on vegetated buffers in salt marsh environments and the second was on disposal of dredge material. The GCRC is also requested to do directed projects which are longer term research projects directed at providing more information concerning a specific management issue. Dr. Alber gave three examples of recent directed projects: a study on the effects of wrack in the marsh, climate signals related to how fisheries might be affected, and a squeezebox model to simulate flow effects on salinity in the rivers and estuaries.

Discussion followed primarily concerning the marsh buffer research that had been done. Other information on buffers had been collected by CRD and a hardcopy is available at CRD. Also, the Chair referenced the Riparian Study for Tybee Island that was completed by the River Basin Center.

Coastal Incentive Grant Ebenezer Greenway Presentation, Brett Bennett, Springfield City Manager

Mr. Bennett gave a presentation on the Ebenezer Greenway. The City has been awarded three Coastal Incentive Grants to help further conservation of and public access to Ebenezer Creek. Ebenezer Creek is a blackwater stream lined with old growth bald cypress and tupelo trees. The City is working to create a master plan and visioning process to conserve the area and promote eco and heritage tourism that will benefit the City. The Coastal Incentive Grants have helped in spurring conservation along the creek and continue to create more access to area citizens. The City just closed out one CIG that outlined planning for an old oxidation pond site that can serve as a public park. The City is also getting ready to kick off a new CIG that will conserve riparian habitat along the creek and provide a kayak launch.

Old Business:

Recommendations for vacant positions

One position was open for Academia. Two nominations for the position were submitted; Katy Smith from the University of Georgia Marine Extension Service and Dr. William Savidge from the University of Georgia Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. Dr. Keferl made a motion for Katy Smith to fill the opening. Dr. Culley seconded the motion. Chairman Wolff called for a vote and the motion passed.

The second opening was for a state agency representative. Two nominations were received for the opening; Ben Carswell representing Jekyll Island Authority and Mark McClellan representing Georgia Forestry. Clay Mobley made a motion for Ben Carswell to fill the vacancy and Stacia Hendrix seconded the motion. Allen Burns made a motion for Mark McClellan to fill the seat and Billy Edwards seconded the motion. Discussion followed the two motions on the floor. Chairman Wolff called for a vote on each nomination. The majority vote was for Mark McClellan.

The third opening was for Citizen at Large seat. Three nominations were received for the seat; Ben Carswell, Larry Miles, and Buddy Sullivan. Billy Edwards made a motion for Larry Miles to fill the seat. Steve Vives seconded the motion. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion and the motion passed.

Status of CAC Comments on EPD marsh buffer rules

Chairman Wolff started the discussion by talking about the letter that had circulated and been approved by the Executive Committee and sent on to CRD. Questions were raised on the process to submit comments through the CRD and the Coastal Management Program. The Chair then asked if it would be valuable to staff for the CAC to make recommendations on existing laws. Director Woodward gave an example of how recommendations for rulemaking and legislative processes work from a Division standpoint, and used his interactions when the original marsh buffer repeal was put into effect as an example.

A recommendation from the floor was made that more discussion and time could be devoted to important issues during the meeting rather than across email and e-votes. The question of e-voting and is the Council allowed to do that was raised by Mr. Burns, citing the fact that certain public boards and bodies would not be allowed to vote electronically. Councils serving in an advisory capacity should be able to e-vote but staff agreed to check into that. Comments were made that a lack of e-vote consensus demonstrated in this case that maybe a formal letter should not have been submitted. It was recommended for the future that rather than a position be taken on an issue, a list of concerns could be submitted instead. The discussion turned to how to handle dissenting opinions and if they should be included in future letters or comments. Concern was expressed on how dissenting opinions would be viewed by the recipient of the letter. Director Woodward agreed that dissents from the same body may be confusing to the recipient. It was suggested that the internal processes be clarified which staff agreed to bring up to the Executive Committee.

The Chair wrapped up the discussion and brought up the possibility that persons could get on the agenda for three minute talks to inform the Council of important issues. Staff stated such talks would fit under new business on the agenda and requested notice two-weeks prior to the meeting to make time on the agenda. Council members discussed how the process would work and if it should go through the Executive Committee. The Chair stated that he would entertain a motion to include the three minute presentations on the agenda. The Council no longer had a quorum so the Chair asked that the process for putting something on the agenda be put on the next meeting's agenda.

Committee Reports

Legislative Committee – no report

Communications Committee – Stacia Hendricks reported they had discussed providing information to stakeholders and board members about the CAC. Director Woodward mentioned that the Board of Natural Resources meets at the coast in January and that the committee could potentially present information. Ms. Hendricks stated they would start working on a briefing for the Board.

Maritime Committee – Charlie Phillips reported that they were working on their mission statement. He also discussed his involvement on an ocean acidification working group and how that information could be relayed to the Council.

New Business:

Coastal Resources Division Funding Overview, Director Spud Woodward

Director Woodward went over the Coastal Resources Division funding streams from state and federal sources. He showed how the operating budget had declined over the past fifteen years. He provided details on what was lost as a consequence of decreased budgets. He discussed how the Division has worked to accommodate the declining budget and the hurdles the Division is facing.

Meeting adjourned.