



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION
ONE CONSERVATION WAY · BRUNSWICK, GA 31520 · 912-264-7218

WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

DOUG HAYMANS
DIRECTOR

Coastal Advisory Council
January 29, 2026
Location: SSELC
Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions:

The Winter Meeting was called to order by Chairman John Hunter. Mr. Hunter welcomed everyone with a happy new year.

Old Business:

The Fall 2025 meeting summary was provided to all CAC members and there were no additions or changes.

Committee Reports – *Scott Hendricks*

Communications Committee – *Hyde Post*

Mr. Post had nothing further to report but wanted the Committee to be aware that Ms. Stacia Hendricks decided to step down in order to attend to other engagements.

Legislative Committee – *Scott Hendricks*

Mr. Hendricks reported that he spoke with Mr. Shawn Jordan, who will be stepping down from his position as Chair of the Legislative Committee. Vacancies and new opportunities are anticipated. At this time, there is nothing new for the Council to review or discuss. If any new legislation arises or issues arise, they are expected to come forward quickly. Council members were encouraged to reach out if they become aware of any legislation that should be discussed, even if they are not serving on the Legislative Committee.

New Business:

News from the Hill– Jill Andrews

The House and Senate passed two bills that affect the NOAA budget. The NOAA budget which sets the CZM funding is now flat funded. Great news!

The only funding that did get cut was the 5th year of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding. CZM will be creative with the funding that is still available.

Several developments are underway regarding snapper, with efforts focused on increasing access via a request to NOAA for an exempted fishing permit.

The DNR Board meeting will be held on Friday, January 30, 2026, on St. Simons Island. During this meeting, proposed regulatory changes to the Shellfish Program will be discussed. Dominic Guadagnoli (Manager of the Shellfish and Water Quality Program) will present information regarding a potential summer oyster harvest, including proposed timeframes. Sampling conducted by UGA evaluated whether additional harvest windows were feasible. Based on the findings, there is potential to expand harvest hours, with a proposed window of 30 minutes before sunrise to 10:00 a.m., which appears to offer the best balance between access and public safety. This represents a significant development.

Courtney Reich asked for clarification regarding the Bird Island agenda item. Ms. Andrews explained that the item relates to bird nesting habitats, including man-made islands designed to function more naturally. These areas are intended to be protected habitats with no human or dog access. The project involves expanding existing bird islands and creating additional habitat areas. She clarified that this is a Wildlife Resources Division agenda item.

Christi Lambert gave context to the specific areas to be addressed.

CAC Member Vacancies– John Hunter

John Hunter provided an update on member turnover and the application deadline, noting current open vacancies. The application deadline is February 18, 2026. Openings are available on several committees, including the Executive Committee and the Scientific or State/Regional Committees, which typically meet once or twice between CAC meetings to discuss agenda items.

Mr. Hendricks also provided an update from the Communications Committee, noting that a list was sent in January 2025 and again in January 2026. Ms. Mackinnon will resend the list to assess current needs. Amy Spinks offered to join the Communications Committee.

Mr. Hunter noted that he is approaching his two-year term. Mr. Hendricks will be moving into the Chair position after the summer meeting, which will create an opening for the Chair-Elect role. The Officer Nominating Committee will develop a slate of nominees for the next Chair-Elect. Members were encouraged to reach out if they are interested in this opportunity.

Presentations:

Historic Research Vessel Kit Jones – Laurie Poole (*Cycle 27 Coastal Incentive Grant*)

Laurie and Davis Poole presented information and historical background on the historic research vessel *Kit Jones*. The presentation included details on the vessel's lifespan and the funding that made the project possible.

Staff Updates:

NFWF and BRIC Grants – Kelly Hill reported that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant focusing on flood mitigation of the City of Brunswick has been completed. Also, the Building Resilient Infrastructure for Communities grant has concluded. This project included researchers from Polis Center and UW working with Glynn County GIS staff to update the building inventory toolkit to be utilized in Hazus when developing different flood and wind damage and loss scenarios for this area.

GCMP 309- Jan Mackinnon provided an overview of the 309 Coastal Zone Enhancement Program, a 5-year strategic plan beginning in 2026:

Every 5 years, states review programs to identify priority needs and opportunities for improvement. States collaborate with NOAA to develop multi-year improvement strategies focusing on one or more enhancement goals. This enhancement to coastal programs provides match free dollars for priority coastal enhancements in nine areas, including wetlands, coastal hazards, public access, marine debris, cumulative and secondary impacts, special area management plans, ocean and great lakes resources, energy & facility siting and aquaculture.

Georgia's 2026-2030 309 Enhancement Strategy includes the below:

Year 1: Focus on 5 inland counties; future floodplain mapping; host resiliency academy for local government officials.

Year 2: Full 5-county future floodplain GIS products; community meetings and stakeholder engagement.

Year 3: Future condition assessment; gather local knowledge on hydrologic connectivity threats and constricted culverts; create risk assessments for 3 southern inland counties; support land acquisition, living shorelines, flood mitigation, green growth; host resiliency academy.

Year 4: Host 3 Georgia resiliency conferences; risk assessments for 2 northern inland counties; complete freshwater living shoreline guidance document with site suitability criteria and BMPs for Tier-2 communities.

Year 5: Host countywide meetings presenting the original resiliency guide with prioritized risk assessments; present findings at local, state, and national conferences; host resiliency academy for local governments.

The work will begin October 1, 2026.

312 evaluation – Ms. Mackinnon also provided an update on the NOAA 312 Evaluation that was canceled in November due to the government shutdown. The new evaluation dates are March 23-26, 2026. There will be a public meeting that week.

GCMP Program Area/staff changes – Ms. Mackinnon provided an overview of recent staff changes and restructure. The GCMP staff that the CAC primarily interacts with at quarterly meetings are seated in what used to be called the Coastal and Ocean Management Program. Ms. Mackinnon explained that this has been a challenge to identify ourselves due to the name. As the

only non-regulatory group within the GCMP, it was decided that the Coastal Planning Program was more appropriate. Ms. Mackinnon continues to be the Program Manager and Kelly Hill and Jennifer Kline are now supervising staff within the Coastal Planning Program in the Coastal Hazards and Nature-based Solutions team (Jennifer, Meghan and Kate) and the Green Growth and Marsh Health team (Kelly, Lexie, Alana and Campbell).

Coastfest – Ms. Mackinnon announced that Coastfest 2026 will take place on Saturday March 21, 2026 from 10-4 at Mary Ross Park in downtown Brunswick. This is the 29th annual event!

CIG Cycle 29 – *Shy Duncan*

Ms. Duncan provided a Cycle 29 update. A total of 23 pre-applications were submitted in December 2025- 6 from local governments and 17 from research institutions. Staff met on January 8, 2026, and selected 15 projects to move forward including 4 from local governments and 11 from research institutions.

Full Applications are due on the portal February 13, 2026. Cycle 29 will include 7 carry-over projects from cycle 28. The CIG 5 Review meeting for Full application selection will be held on March 19, 2026, at CRD.

Cycle 28 remains delayed due to Environmental Compliance requirements for one project. Unfortunately, at this time there is no timeline for when that funding will be released.

National Wetland Condition Assessment – Meghan Angelina Chrisp announced that GCMP staff will participate in the 2026 National Wetland Condition Assessment funded by the Environmental Protection Agency. This assessment's goal is to provide a report to Congress on the condition of the nation's wetlands. CRD will be working with GA EPD to complete all sites for the state, with CRD focusing on tidal sites. There are 10 sites on the coast where vegetation, soils, water quality and buffer impacts data will be collected. The project will run from May through September.

Member Announcements:

None currently.