

September 20, 2023

Hog Hammock Community
Post Office Box 15
Sapelo Island, Georgia 31305

Dear Residents:

This letter outlines the meeting held on August 24, 2023 in which the Sapelo Island Heritage Authority (SIHA) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) discussed issues and gave updates regarding Sapelo Island. Many topics were discussed during the meeting, and DNR's comments are outlined below.

As I stated at the meeting, DNR's goal is to provide a timely response to the topics discussed, identify those items for DNR to consider and/or address, and identify action items for discussion at the next SIHA meeting.

First, I have discussed the following items with DNR leadership and a current update on planned action is provided below:

1. DNR is pleased to hear of the coordination between the community and the Georgia Forestry Commission to develop a Firewise Plan. DNR agrees that lands under the SIHA need management actions to eliminate concerns related to wildfires. DNR plans to draft a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the SIHA to define these actions, identify funding opportunities to clear understory brush, and create a process to assure these lands are maintained through prescription fire in the future.
2. Although not required by the Coast Guard for ferry operations, DNR agrees with the recommendation to have Automated External Defibrillators (AED) units on the Marsh Landing dock and ferries. This action item has been assigned to the Game Management Section and the AEDs have been ordered.
3. DNR's Engineering and Construction staff are currently overseeing a damage assessment to the boardwalk accessing the beach. We are exploring alternative anchoring and position options of the boardwalk to allow better resistance to high tide and storm events. Once plans are finalized, the repairs to the boardwalk will be made.

4. DNR has been in communication with the county regarding concerns related to ditches not draining properly. The county has submitted a grant application to the US Army Corps of Engineers to design and improve the drainage ditch system. This would include installation of water control structures with gates if needed.
5. DNR is not seeking to take over operations of the community center but will work with the county to provide some on-site support.
6. DNR will explore improvements associated with household trash collection site.
7. DNR has a long-term maintenance upgrade plan for the community water system and will continue to seek funding opportunities for these upgrades.

Second, based on your comments, the items below will be provided to the SIHA to discuss at their next meeting. The date and time of the meeting has not been scheduled yet.

- SIHA Board makeup
- Creation of a Community Advisory Committee
- Use of land owned by SIHA
- Existing land use requests
- Primary point of contact for all SIHA questions
- Website creation and maintenance
- Meeting notices, access, transparency, email/text blasts

I want to personally thank all the residents who attended the meeting. I look forward to working with you in my new position as Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Walter Rabon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Walter" and the last name "Rabon" clearly distinguishable.

Walter Rabon

WR:tw