Our Changing Waterfronts
Our Changing Waterfronts
An unprecedented demand for new homes along estuaries and tidal creeks is diminishing water access for commercial fishermen and recreational boaters alike.

Traditional Maritime Jobs Disappearing
Jobs are in swift decline in shipbuilding, ship repair, commercial fishing, and seafood processing.

Localities Offering More Public Access to Waterfronts
Charleston, Mt. Pleasant, and North Charleston are taking action to provide more waterfront access.

Survival of the Savviest
In the future, more of South Carolina’s commercial fishermen could become part-timers, using smaller boats.

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Commercial, recreational, and real estate interests compete for scarce space along lowcountry waterfronts like Shem Creek in Mt. Pleasant.

Photo/Wade Spees

Coastal Heritage is a quarterly publication of the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium, a university-based network supporting research, education, and outreach to conserve coastal resources and enhance economic opportunity for the people of South Carolina. Comments regarding this or future issues of Coastal Heritage are welcomed at John.Tibbetts@scseagrant.org. Subscriptions are free upon request by contacting:

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Year after year, Rutledge Leland has seen the number of commercial boats dwindle at his seafood dock. Since the mid-1980s, huge volumes of imported shrimp, mostly from Asian farms, have flooded the U.S. market, driving prices to rock-bottom levels.

“Shrimp imports are so dominant,” says Leland, who has owned and operated Carolina Seafood on Jeremy Creek in McClellanville since 1971. He’s also mayor of McClellanville. “They’re produced more cheaply than we can catch wild domestic shrimp.”

Yet local fishermen’s costs keep rising. “It goes higher every year,” says Leland. “Fuel, chains, nets, shrimp-trawl doors, paint—everything to do with a shrimp boat has gone way up. But, unfortunately, neither the local supply nor the price of shrimp has gone up.”

In 2005, lowcountry shrimpers brought in $5.6 million in landed value. That’s way down from $21.6 million in 1995. Leland, however, says he charges the same rates for handling shrimp as he did 10 to 15 years ago. “The boats can’t afford to pay more. It’s tough, tough, tough for them to make a profit.”

Leland once co-owned another 700-foot fishing dock and adjacent property on Jeremy Creek in McClellanville. In the late 1990s, he and a partner sold that property to a developer who built high-end homes there. In November 2007, one of the homes was for sale, priced at $2.5 million.

It’s striking that the asking price of a single marshfront home is close to half that of the entire South Carolina shrimp catch.

Although a number of fishermen are still able to make a living, they’re threatened with losing places to tie up. Some seafood packers are reaching retirement age or growing weary of the business—and a sensible financial option for them is to sell their waterfronts to the highest bidder. Around the country, upscale condominiums, million-dollar homes, and expensive restaurants are replacing the weather-beaten waterfronts where fishermen would buy fuel and ice, receive dealer credit, and sell their catches—key ingredients of the seafood industry’s infrastructure.
Eventually, somebody is going to wave so much money that dock owners will sell.”

“In a marina, a private company owns it and rents out a slip to anyone who follows the rules,” says Kirby Cay Scheimann, managing director of Marinas International, a trade group based in St. Petersburg, Florida. Coastal planners consider a marina as a public-access point, because boat slips are leased by the year or season. “But, in the case of a dockominium, a boat slip is bought and held exclusively, often with no subleases. The entire waterfront property can become exclusive, like a country club, and sealed off from the public, with an entry membership fee of $50,000 to $200,000, which doesn’t include the price of the slip. Every slip in the country is going to end up that way unless there’s some effort to help John Q. Public get access.”

Planners worry that dockominiums are part of a growing trend toward residential privatization of the waterfront. In Maryland and Virginia, waterfront land is privately owned along most of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and dockominiums have contributed to a decline in water access. Waterfront access has recently become a topic of intense public debate in North Carolina, especially regarding rapid residential growth along the state’s coastal sounds. These conflicts have moved into South Carolina as well.

“As property values go up and up and up, a developer can go in and buy out the existing water-dependent businesses and turn them into residential use,” says Shawn Kiernan, a senior coastal planner with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control–Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (SCDHEC–OCRMA). They’re given an offer they can’t refuse. “Somebody comes in and says, ‘Here’s $15 million. Please sell me your property.’”

Demographic changes, meanwhile, are causing more crowding on public boat landings. The population of Beaufort County, to give one example, has grown by 50 percent since 1980. New coastal residents tend to be wealthier and older than in the past, with more time and money to spend on recreation.

“People retire and move to the coast,” says Amber Von Harten, a fisheries specialist with the S.C. Sea Grant Extension Program. “And often the first thing they do is buy a boat.”

According to a National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 95 million Americans visit the water on a boat every year, and 80 million go fishing for pleasure.

But many communities aren’t maintaining existing public landings or building new ones, according to the April 2007 study. Maintenance gets deferred, and it’s difficult for a community to purchase a waterfront parcel that can cost $1 million per quarter-acre—a price that seems to go up almost every year.

By all accounts, South Carolina coastal counties have done a good job of maintaining and creating public landings. But population pressures will make it harder for local governments to keep up.
“When the coast gets developed with more dockominiums and privately owned waterfronts, there will be fewer and fewer chances for communities to create public-access points for commercial or recreational uses,” says Von Harten.

Florida alone has one million registered recreational boats, plus another 300,000 visiting boats annually. On warm weekends, when a flood of boaters rushes to the coast, tempers sometimes get hot. “You can wait for hours at Florida public landings,” says Katherine Andrews, executive director of the Coastal States Organization, based in Washington, D.C.

Floridians have coined a phrase—“ramp rage”—for explosions of violence at public landings. “People take picnics down to boat ramps to see if a fight will break out,” Thomas T. Ankerson jokes, “the way that some go to NASCAR races to see a wreck.”

DEVELOPMENT VALUES CONTINUE RISING

Since 1948, Charles Gay’s family has owned a stretch of St. Helena Island waterfront in rural Beaufort County, where he operates Gay Fish Company, a seafood-packing business. The company wharf overlooks a scenic creek and a vast stretch of salt marsh. Now, two generations of the Gay family, plus Charles Gay’s ex-wife, are pooling their land holdings and hope to sell 14 acres for the best price they can get—up to a million dollars an acre.

“The commercial shrimping has gone,” says Gay. “Where we used to pack 150 to 200 boxes a night, we might be packing 10. My profit margin is way down, and sometimes I won’t make a nickel a pound. I’m in my sixties and I’m tired. I’ve been doing this all my life so far. None of my kids want anything to do with it. None of my sister’s kids want anything to do with it. You never get any time off.”

In an ideal world, the Gay family would prefer to sell their land to someone who would continue using it for seafood packing. Charles Gay says he knows of buyers who would pay $2 million and keep the waterfront in the packing business. But the waterfront, he says, would fetch a far higher price if sold to a developer.

The Trust for Public Land, a national nonprofit organization, is EARLY RISERS. On warm weekends, boat ramps in coastal communities are increasingly jammed with recreational craft, but most localities aren’t building new landings. PHOTO/WADE SPEES
Coastal Heritage helping Beaufort County identify and negotiate purchases of land parcels throughout the county. In April 2007, the land trust, at the behest of the county, offered a deal to purchase development rights on the Gay family land. When a property owner sells such rights, he promises not to subdivide or develop it. But the landowner usually retains other rights of ownership such as using the property for conservation or historic purposes, including in this case seafood packing and commercial fishing.

Beaufort County has preserved more than 10,000 acres since 1997 and has used nearly all of the $40 million approved by voters in 2000 for the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program, which acquires property for conservation, parks, scenic vistas, and for preservation of valuable economic and natural resources—including commercial fishing and seafood docks.

“The county wants to work a deal with us because they don’t want us to go away,” says Gay. “They want to save the little bit of shrimping that’s left in Beaufort County.”

The land trust’s offer, however, did not meet the Gay family’s financial goals. The family has heard a rumor that a sewer line could be built along the highway next to the Gay Fish Company within the next five years. A sewer line would give a real-estate investor a chance to develop the property intensively, perhaps including a dockominium project and a restaurant. Under that kind of scenario, the Gay family could command the price they’ve hoped for.

A thousand miles away in Maine, a local land trust has conserved a commercial-fishing business and working waterfront through a special easement. In York Harbor, Maine, the York Land Trust collaborated with local lobstermen to purchase a traditional fishing dock and adjacent land.

The Sewall’s Bridge waterfront plot in York Harbor is small—one-sixth of an acre—but it listed on the market for $800,000. The York Land Trust negotiated the price down to $710,000 and then put up $410,000 for a conservation easement on the property, which would allow commercial fishing to continue there but would prevent homes from being built. Two lobstermen, Jeff Donnel and Mark Sewall, paid the remaining $300,000 for the property and the adjacent fishing dock with a loan from Coastal Enterprises, Inc., a Maine nonprofit organization.

The lobstermen now own the small waterfront and fishing dock and

PHOTO/WADE SPEES

RETIREMENT PLANNING.
Charles Gay, long-time owner of Gay Fish Company on St. Helena Island, and his family hope to command a premium price from a developer for their waterfront property. PHOTO/WADE SPEES
continue fishing. This was the first easement in the nation ever placed on a working waterfront, according to Joseph Donnelly, vice chairman of the York Harbor Board.

To the Gay family, however, their land could be so valuable that putting a conservation easement on the property isn’t a tempting prospect. An easement would greatly reduce the property’s potential value because it couldn’t be developed intensively, says Charles Gay. “And then who would want to buy it?”

In any case, the local seafood industry continues to fade away. Charles Gay recalls several other packers in the immediate area who have gone out of business and sold their waterfronts.

“I hate to see it go,” he says. “But I’m tired of fighting it. My son lives in Maryland and he’s been there 10 years and I’ve been to see him twice. His kids are growing up. He visits down here and says, ‘Daddy, when are you coming to see us?’ And I say, ‘I don’t know. I’m broke right now.’ ”

**WATER ACCESS, CHANGING REALITIES**

Shem Creek in Mt. Pleasant was once a thriving maritime center where dozens of long-line fishing and shrimp boats docked and offloaded at several seafood-packing houses.

About 80 shrimp boats worked out of Shem Creek in the early 1980s, says Wayne Magwood, owner of Magwood Junior and Sons Seafood, one of the last two seafood packers there.

About 20 shrimp boats dock in Shem Creek today, but most are part-time, running only on weekends during the shrimping season. The Magwood family owned seven shrimp boats in the early 1980s; today they have one.

Located in the midst of Mt. Pleasant’s trendy suburban bustle, just across the harbor from historic Charleston, Shem Creek waterfront properties are now worth millions of dollars.

Developers have purchased waterfront parcels and proposed building multi-unit dockominiums or hotel projects along Shem Creek, infuriating some local business owners like Magwood who want to sustain local maritime traditions. Magwood wouldn’t consider selling, and he worries about being pushed out.

When a waterfront turns into a place where more people live rather than work, traditional businesses often get squeezed out. The new residents start complaining about smells and noise. Says Kiernan with SCDHEC-OCR, “When residences are built right next to anything like a shipyard or dry-dock facility, it’s eventually going to affect the water-dependent businesses’ ability to operate.”

Recently, though, town officials and Shem Creek business owners have been talking. Magwood says his anger has faded because “town council is starting to listen to us.”

One major proposal for Shem Creek has received the town’s final approval. The Trawler, a restaurant on the southeast side of the creek, will be torn down. It will be replaced by The Landing, a 160-room, $50 million condominium hotel, developed by Richard Coen.

In July 2007, the town’s planning commission gave approval to a proposed project that would include dockominiums with private boat slips and two 1,200-foot public boardwalks along the water. This project, which still must receive approval from town council, would transform the character of the creek. Even so, Eric DeMoura, the deputy town administrator, says, “We expect that no matter what happens in the future there will always be a place on Shem Creek for commercial fishing vessels.”

Wayne Magwood says he’s realistic about the waterway’s economic future. He is building a dry-stack marina with storage area for 80 recreational boats. The new facility, to be completed by the end of 2007, would use some space once devoted to his commercial seafood business.

Magwood has already signed up 60 recreational boats for his new venture. “People don’t want to fight the traffic at the boat landings,” he

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**Traditional maritime jobs disappearing**

South Carolina’s coastal economy will likely continue to lose many of its traditional blue-collar, maritime jobs. The recent decline of the lowcountry’s commercial fishing industry has already hurt some traditional marine trades.

In the Carolinas and Georgia, smaller shipyards have gone out of business in recent years, and the larger shipyards don’t want to service commercial fishing boats because it’s not profitable.

“There is still a scattering of places that are trying to handle what’s left of the fleet,” says Rutledge Leland, owner of Carolina Seafood in McClellanville. “Unfortunately, shrimp boats have almost become outcasts.”

Traditional marine-related jobs in South Carolina such as shipbuilding, ship repair, commercial fishing, and seafood processing have declined since the 1980s. Other job sectors, however, have been on a tear: tourism, real estate, insurance, finance, and health care.

In many coastal communities with high living costs, water-dependent businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to find qualified workers. Marina operators in the Florida Keys, for instance, are losing workers because local housing is so expensive. “In Maine, the people who take care of the coast can’t afford to live there,” says Paul Anderson, director of Maine Sea Grant.

Someday, the nation’s estuaries could be filled with boats but with few capable workers to service them.
Coastal Heritage says. “They can call us up, and 45 minutes later they can be in the water and go. We can sell you bait to go fishing with, and if you don’t catch any fish, we can sell you shrimp to eat at home.”

Local governments often don’t know where to begin to save a working waterfront. That’s why a handful of states have stepped up with planning advice and funding for conservation.

Florida is a national leader in this arena. The state’s Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program provides technical assistance, training, and limited grant funds to localities that aim to protect waterfronts. The Florida program is loosely modeled after the Main Street Program, which helps local residents establish a community “visioning” process. Also, in 2005, the Florida legislature passed a law requiring coastal localities to consider how to protect public access and working waterfronts as part of the comprehensive planning process.

The state of Maine, like Florida, has stepped into a leadership role. In 2005, Maine voters passed a state referendum to allocate $2 million in bond funds to help localities and local nonprofit organizations purchase development rights on working waterfronts. The idea behind Maine’s Working Waterfront Land Bond is to provide incentives for the kind of partnerships that conserved the York Harbor waterfront parcel and fishing dock. In a new pilot program, communities can compete for matching funds to help secure coastal
Localities offering more public access to waterfronts

Some South Carolina localities have jumped at chances to acquire waterfront property for the public and thereby improve their economic prospects.

The Charleston Waterfront Park, completed in 1990, has been an enormously influential project. Charleston leaders and residents proved that creating a waterfront park from an abandoned industrial site could revitalize nearby neighborhoods, raise local property values, and reconnect a community with the water. Developers have built several high-value condominium projects on the park’s landward edge, allowing the public to have full access along that section of the waterfront.

In May 2007, this 13-acre park along the Cooper River won a Landmark Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The judges noted the park’s reputation, inspiring other towns and cities to recapture their own waterfronts for public use.

“Charleston Waterfront Park,” the judges said, “has tremendous impact . . . influencing and shaping the civic realm of American cities.”

Across the Cooper River, the town of Mt. Pleasant has approved the master plan for a 25-acre Memorial Waterfront Park at the foot of the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. The park, slated to open November 2008, will have a 1,250-foot recreational fishing pier, one of the longest in the Southeast. On each side of the pier, there will be kayak launching docks and a floating dock for sailboats, where the town’s recreation department will offer sailing lessons. The town received land for the park in a mitigation swap from the S.C. Department of Transportation when construction of the Ravenel Bridge required filling wetlands.

Five miles up the Cooper River in North Charleston, the recently completed Riverfront Park is giving city residents significant access to the waterway for the first time in a century.

After the Charleston Naval Base closed and the State Ports Authority (SPA) needed expansion space on the river, the state legislature transferred ownership of the southern portion of the waterfront to the SPA and the northern portion to the city of North Charleston. The city contracted with the Noisette Company to build a three-quarter-mile-long riverfront park. Once a 9-hole golf course for the Navy, the park now has public walkways and fishing piers.

A master plan created by Noisette and the city calls for restoration of a tidal creek and marshes bordering the riverfront park—part of a rehabilitation effort across North Charleston’s oldest neighborhoods. The new riverfront park is a central part of the area’s redevelopment.

“There had always been a desire for public access to the river in North Charleston,” says Kurt Taylor, a city councilman. “But there just hadn’t been a place for it.”
This stretch of Jeremy Creek in McClellanville was once a commercial fishing dock. Now, million-dollar homes look out over the creek and salt marsh. Under intense development pressures, prices of waterfront parcels have skyrocketed, encouraging commercial-dock owners to sell. PHOTO/WADE SPEES
provide federal funds to locally sponsored efforts that protect waterfront lands in communities nationwide. The important language here is “locally sponsored.”

The idea is to encourage decision-making at the local level, says Rick Lydecker, assistant vice-president for government affairs for the Boat Owners Association of the United States. “Like politics,” says Lydecker, “all water access is local.”

For years, commercial and recreational fishermen have fought bitterly over a number of issues. But in some communities they are finding common cause over the loss of waterfront access. Many of the people using the water for work or play are starting to collaborate, says Brett S. Dungan, president of Master Marine, Inc., a shipyard in Bayou La Batre, Alabama, and committee chairman of Eat Wild Alabama Shrimp, an advocacy group. “We are putting some of the old conflicts to rest.”

Solving this problem is a community-wide process. “Community members have to come together and decide whether a historic use of a working waterfront is what they want there in the future,” says Kiernan. “They have to ask, ‘Do we want these water-dependent uses to continue?’ If the community says yes, then you can figure out the options.”

What about the financial interests of waterfront business owners? Maybe they want to retire. Or maybe they prefer selling the waterfront to the highest bidder. Should a community try to prevent them? “No,” says Kiernan. “That won’t work. The landowner has to be part of the solution.”

So what are the practical options for, say, Rutledge Leland and his seafood dock in McClellanville? He’s looking at a number of options to keep the dock going. The shrinking commercial fleet now needs only half of his waterfront, so he’s thinking of leasing dock space to recreational boaters. He plans on offering more prepared seafood and perhaps a small, informal “restaurant where people could buy shrimp and fries and sit in a place under the oak tree and look at the boats. People love to mix in with the commercial boats and actually see the seafood coming in.”

**Reading and Web sites**


**Henry, Mark S. and David L. Barkley. The Contribution of the Coast to the South Carolina Economy.** Regional Economic Development Research Laboratory, Clemson University, September 30, 2002. cherokee.agecon.clemson.edu/redrl.htm

**Maine’s Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program.** www.wwapp.org/index.cfm


**Southern Shrimp Alliance.** http://www.shrimpalliance.com


**Wild American Shrimp, Inc.** www.wildamericanshrimp.com
Fred Dockery, a James Island commercial fisherman, could be a new model for the South Carolina shrimping industry. He doesn’t use a commercial dock. Instead, he puts in his 24-foot fiberglass boat at public ramps when he goes out to catch shrimp. (By contrast, a typical shrimp boat in the U.S. Southeast is reportedly much larger, about 65-feet long.) When crabbing, gigging for flounder, harvesting oysters, or farming clams, Dockery uses an even smaller boat, which he also puts in at public ramps. And he sells his catches directly to retailers and other customers at premium prices instead of to wholesalers.

Around the country, commercial fishing docks are being replaced by high-gloss residential development along estuaries and tidal creeks. As a result, fishermen are losing the places where they have to tie up their vessels, buy fuel and ice, and get credit. Commercial docks are essential for shrimp trawlers and finfish boats, such as snapper/grouper and longline vessels, which are far too big to be put in at public ramps.

Jerry Gault of Beaufort County, who fishes for blue crab, octopus, stone crab, and occasionally shrimp, also trailers his 26-foot boat instead of docking at a commercial dock.

“It’s going to get even more difficult for trawlers,” says Gault. “But I worry that we’re dinosaurs. People want to buy everything—including seafood—as cheaply as they can.”

Steve Kerchner, a shrimper who owns a 65-foot trawler, ties up at a tiny commercial dock at Fripp Point Seafood on St. Helena Island. He’s one of three shrimpers working from there; at one time, 15 boats operated out of the dock.

Kerchner acknowledges that the shrimping industry has changed dramatically in recent years. The costs of fuel, labor, and ice have gone up. Wholesale shrimp prices meanwhile have collapsed. Lowcountry fishermen have historically relied almost entirely on the wholesale market. All of these trends threaten the survival of the traditional shrimp trawler—but not necessarily that of fishermen like Dockery who use smaller boats.

On a good day, a lowcountry shrimper with a 65-foot trawler can catch 3,000 to 4,000 pounds of shrimp.
That’s too much to keep on hand and sell locally. So Kerchner sells it to wholesalers, whose prices are determined in the global marketplace. Ninety percent of the shrimp Americans consume come from overseas. About 50 nations, mostly in Asia and Latin America, export shrimp to the United States, and this flood of foreign product suppresses prices of locally caught shrimp. The leading exporter to the United States in 2006 was Thailand with about 194,000 metric tons, followed by China with about 68,000 metric tons.

One thing has improved, though. The retail market for locally caught shrimp in Beaufort County is far stronger than a few years ago, says Kerchner, making it possible for some shrimpers to stay in business when catches are small.

“I firmly believe there is an increased local demand for fresh product,” says Kerchner. He credits this in part to Charleston-based Wild American Shrimp, Inc., a two-year-old branding and quality-certification organization that promotes domestic shrimp as tasting better and being healthier for consumers.

There are times of the year when Kerchner usually catches only 300 to 400 pounds a day, but they are of large roe shrimp that fetch a premium price. He stores the shrimp in a 40-foot-long commercial freezer at Fripp Point Seafood, owned by Lonnie Golden, president of the S.C. Shrimpers Association, who sells it to local restaurants and walk-in customers.

Fred Dockery uses a similar method to make a living with his small boat. His biggest advantage, he says, is how few shrimp he catches—300 to 400 pounds on a good day.

“No way could I find enough people to buy my shrimp at a decent price for 3,000 pounds. There just aren’t that many people who are willing to pay a little bit of a premium to buy fresh local shrimp. Whoever will take the volume of 3,000 pounds is not going to pay a premium price.”

Dockery spends a lot of time on the phone. He’s a salesman as well as a fisherman.

“What I do is fairly hard. People will call me and say, ‘Next time you go, I’m going to want some shrimp.’ When I get back in, I have this list and I’ll call them up. ‘This is what I caught, this is what they look like, this is the price. Do you want some?’ I have some people who want a little bit of a price break, but they want 100 pounds. I shuffle all that around, and that’s as much a part of the job as catching the shrimp.”

Still, some lowcountry shrimpers with large boats are doing all right, perhaps because so many of their competitors have left the business, says Larry DeLancey, crustacean-monitoring supervisor at the S.C. Department of Natural Resources. “The guys who have been able to hang in there are catching more shrimp.”

DeLancey, however, adds, “I can foresee it maybe becoming more of an artisanal fishery here in the future—just small boats, part-time, fishing in the (nearshore areas). In Georgetown and McClellanville, there are guys with small boats, launched at the landings. They don’t need a dock. Some have retail licenses, and that’s how they can get by. About half of the commercial shrimping licenses are for small boats. That will continue.”

Kerchner argues that shrimp volumes in the nearshore areas aren’t large enough to make a living. “You can’t make money consistently that way.” Nevertheless, he also acknowledges that he’s “lucky” to collaborate with a seafood packer who operates a commercial freezer and can sell some of his catch at premium prices, which holds him over during lean times.

Commercial shrimping with trawlers won’t disappear anytime soon in South Carolina. But if recent economic trends continue, many commercial-fishing waterfronts could be lost over the next decade or two. It seems evident the local fishing industry can’t forever depend on vessels that must be tied up to docks built on waterfronts that developers are eager to buy for many millions of dollars.

Assessing lowcountry waterfront areas in South Carolina

The S.C. Sea Grant Extension Program, collaborating with College of Charleston, is conducting a study investigating water-access challenges and opportunities for water-dependent, marine-fishing stakeholders, both commercial and recreational.

The study will identify and characterize factors that are contributing to the decline of South Carolina community waterfronts and access points for commercial and recreational fishermen and related water-dependent businesses. The study will also explore possible options available in South Carolina or used or proposed in other coastal states.

A series of interviews with stakeholders and businesses is underway. The study will be completed by the end of 2007, when the results will be available. To learn more about this study and waterfront access in South Carolina, contact:

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Nominations sought for 2007 South Carolina Environmental Awareness Award

Nominations will be accepted through December 15, 2007 for an award to recognize South Carolinians who are doing extraordinary work for the natural environment. Guidelines and nomination forms for the S.C. Environmental Awareness Award are available at www.scdhec.net/environment/ocrm, or contact Braxton Davis at (843) 953-0246 or davisbc@dhec.sc.gov.

The S.C. General Assembly established the S.C. Environmental Awareness Award, now in its 16th year, during the 1992 legislative session to recognize outstanding contributions made toward the protection, conservation, and improvement of South Carolina’s natural resources.

Each year the public is invited to submit nominations that are then reviewed by an awards committee, which includes representatives from the state’s environmental and natural resource agencies. In judging nominees, the committee considers excellence in innovation, leadership, and accomplishments that influence positive changes affecting the natural environment.

Members of the awards committee represent the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, S.C. Forestry Commission, and S.C. Sea Grant Consortium.

Rick Huffman, founder of the South Carolina Native Plant Society, won the 2006 S.C. Environmental Awareness Award. Mr. Huffman has devoted considerable time and energy to preserving and restoring native plant communities, and educating the public on the character and importance of native plants in South Carolina.

Previous award winners are:
2004 – John L. Knott, Jr., president, Noisette Company, North Charleston
2003 – Burris Family, owners, Cypress Bay Plantation Tree Farm, Beaufort
2002 – Dr. Jack Turner, director, Watershed Ecology Center, University of South Carolina
2001 – James D. Elliott, Jr., founder, South Carolina Center for Birds of Prey
2000 – Dr. Dave Hargett, conservationist, Greenville
1999 – Kenneth Strickland, environmentalist, Florence
1998 – Yancey A. McLeod, Jr., environmental educator, Eastover
1997 – Brad Wyche, president, Friends of the Reedy River, Greenville
1996 – Beaufort County Clean Water Task Force
1995 – Dr. Whitfield Gibbons, senior research ecologist, Savannah River Ecology Laboratory
1994 – Marion Burnside, chairman, S.C. Department of Natural Resources
1993 – Dana Beach, executive director, S.C. Coastal Conservation League

2007 Beach Sweep/River Sweep a success

The 19th annual Beach Sweep/River Sweep was held September 15, 2007. Preliminary estimates indicate 8,600 volunteers statewide participated in the cleanup, which is organized by S.C. Sea Grant Consortium and S.C. Department of Natural Resources. BP Cooper River Plant employees, friends, and SCDNR staff removed debris from the Capers Island Heritage Preserve, an undeveloped barrier island north of Charleston. PHOTO/BRANDY GRAHAM, SCDNR
Two new employees at Sea Grant

Gregory A. Zielinski, Ph.D., has been selected as a regional climate specialist with Sea Grant Extension programs. Based at the Burroughs and Chapin Center for Marine and Wetland Studies at Coastal Carolina University, Greg will develop, interpret, evaluate, and distribute information related to past, present, and future climate and weather events of South Carolina and North Carolina.

His work will address the impact of climatic changes on the public, on stakeholders dependent on the resources of the region, and on the coastal environment as a whole.

Greg will also develop and participate in research applicable to the climate and weather of the coastal Carolinas, and organize and participate in workshops that address any issue related to climatic conditions in the region.

Prior to joining Sea Grant, he was a research professor, most recently at the University of Maine, and the Maine state climatologist. He has published over 60 professional articles on various aspects of climate and meteorology and he has written a book on New England weather and climate.

Greg has led and served on several international commissions addressing a wide-range of issues related to past, present, and future climatic conditions. He can be contacted at gzielins@coastal.edu.

Samuel Walker, Ph.D., has joined the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA) Ocean Data Partnership as an information management coordinator. A S.C. Sea Grant Consortium employee, he is affiliated with the University of South Carolina (USC) School of the Environment. He received his doctorate in environmental health sciences from USC in 2007.

Based in Columbia, S.C., Sam will engage with regional and extra-regional partners that can contribute data, information, expertise, and other forms of assistance to serve the Ocean Data Partnership’s mission. Some of his tasks include making recommendations on hardware acquisitions, application development, and metadata creation, and inviting potential partners to join the Ocean Data Partnership.

SECOORA’s scope is the coastal and ocean environment from North Carolina through Florida. It is one of 11 regional associations spanning the country established to organize regional efforts in support of the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS).

Through a network of observations, IOOS systematically acquires and disseminates data and information on the past, present, and future status of the oceans and U.S. coastal waters. More information can be found at www.secoora.org and www.ocean.us. Contact Sam at Samuel.Walker@scseagrant.org.

Marine debris poster available

A great educational tool illustrating how long it takes for some common objects to decompose in the environment. To order your free poster(s), call Carolyn Robinson at (843) 953-2078 or visit our Web site at www.scseagrant.org/Products.
8th National Conference on Science, Policy, and the Environment
Washington, D.C.
January 16-18, 2008

You’re invited to participate in this conference to develop and advance science-based solutions to climate change. Join the dialogue with leading scientists, policymakers, industry leaders, educators, and other solutions-oriented innovators to develop comprehensive strategies for protecting people and the planet against the threat of climate change. For more information, visit ncesonline.org/2008conference.

7th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth
Washington, D.C.
February 7-9, 2008

Drawing a multidisciplinary audience, this conference will include a dynamic mix of plenaries, interactive breakouts, implementation workshops, specialized trainings, new partners, and optional tours of local model projects in the D.C. area. Most importantly, this event offers you the opportunity to network with practitioners from many different disciplines with the same goal—building safe, healthy, and livable communities. For more information, visit www.newpartners.org/index.html.

Solutions to Coastal Disasters 2008
Oahu, Hawaii
April 13-16, 2008

This is a must-attend conference for coastal planners, managers, social scientists, engineers, geologists, economists, property owners, elected officials, and others interested in the coast. Solutions to Coastal Disasters 2008 will encourage greater examination of the ecosystem dynamics, vulnerabilities, and ways to incorporate social and ecological solutions into the discussion of coastal disasters. For more information, visit content.asce.org/conferences/cd2008/index.html.

Subscriptions are free upon request by contacting: Annette.Dunmeyer@scseagrant.org

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