

SCIENTIFIC LITERACY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Designs and Edits 55 Communications Products to Support Mission

Susan Ferris Hill, Crystal Narayana, and E.V. Bell, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium designed, edited, and facilitated the development of 55 products in support of the agency programs and focus areas. Digital communications and news products as well as flyers, brochures, reports, and guides were produced to support programs and projects conducted by Consortium staff, researchers, and partners.

RELEVANCE: The future of the conservation and management of coastal resources depends on a robust effort to foster stewardship and increase public awareness about the societal value and ecological function of South Carolina's coastal resources. Well-designed, attractive products increase their use in educational settings and promote participating in programs. Branded designs enhance the reach of the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium and promote the brand as a source of science-based information that can be relied on.

RESPONSE: S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's Communications and Education Team assisted with the development of 55 products to support administration, extension, communications, and education programs.

RESULTS: Programs supported include From Seeds to Shoreline, Beach Sweep/River Sweep, the Clean Marina Program, the Blue Carbon Symposium, and the Wetlands of the Upper Estuary Conference, as well as products for programmatic areas including nature-based tourism, sustainable development, water quality, weather and climate vulnerability and resilience, and fisheries and aquaculture.

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Website Continues to Expand in Content and Access

Susan Ferris Hill, Erica Hussey, and Crystal Narayana, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium added 35 news articles and 54 content pages to the website (www.scseagrant.org), a source of science-based information for decision-makers and the public. **RELEVANCE:** Decision-makers and the public should be informed about the coastal and marine environment and related community issues. The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium website continues to be a significant source of this information. The website provides information about Consortium-funded and partnered research, education, and outreach programs.

RESPONSE: The Communications staff maintained the Consortium's website (www.scseagrant.org) and updated the content regularly with input from staff and Consortium member institutions. Additions included news articles, research project updates, and information about extension and education projects. Information about projects was added as they were started with reports, data, and other information added as they were produced. *Coastal Heritage*, an issue-based magazine written in long form, although a print product, was also formatted for online reading.

RESULTS: In FY22-23, the website received 174,026 page views, a 36.9% increase from FY22-23.

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's *CoastalScience@Work* E-newsletter Builds Awareness of Agency's Programmatic Efforts

Susan Ferris Hill, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

RECAP: Eight issues of *CoastalScience@Work* e-newsletters were produced and delivered to an average of 1,087 individual subscribers. The e-newsletters contained program updates for the Consortium's partners and constituents.

RELEVANCE: There is a need to deliver timely, frequent, and effective communications to inform target audiences about the Consortium's science-based products, programs, and staff and institutional changes.

RESPONSE: The Communications and Education Services staff produce and deliver *CoastalScience@Work*, the Consortium's e-newsletter, to an average of 1,087 individual subscribers through the platform Constant Contact. Email lists include the Board of Directors and alternates; Program Advisory Board; Extension and Education advisory committees; research and finance liaisons; National Sea Grant Office; member institution public information officers; S.C. African American Heritage Commission members; S.C. General Assembly members; U.S. Congressional staff; Consortium staff; and the general public.

RESULTS: Eight issues of *CoastalScience@Work* e-newsletters were produced and delivered to an average of 1,087 individual subscribers. The average open rate was 46.1% (a small increase from FY22-23) and the average click-through rate was 3.75%, both of which are higher than the average industry rates for educational content.

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Completes Second Round of Community Engaged Internship Program in South Carolina

Susannah Sheldon, Susan Lovelace, Amanda Guthrie, Brooke Saari, Sarah Pedigo, Jocelyn Juliano, Matt Gorstein, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce

Project Number: M/PM-3

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium completed the second round of the Community Engaged Internship program in South Carolina, hosting three interns in the summer of 2022.

RELEVANCE: There is a need to broaden participation in marine and coastal professions by providing training and mentorship to the next generation of scientists, decision-makers and citizens. Specifically, efforts toward cultivating meaningful and positive (and compensated) internship experiences for students of color and those who come from underserved communities are necessary in this process.

RESPONSE: Following recent implementation by other Sea Grant programs, the Consortium established a Community Engaged Internship Program in South Carolina to provide opportunities for undergraduate students from marginalized and underserved communities to conduct summer community-based projects that focus on environmental and resilience needs as aligned with the Consortium's strategic plan.

RESULTS: Three undergraduate summer interns worked on three projects in 2023. One from the University of South Carolina collected and analyzed urban heat data emanating from different building materials and land cover

types; one from Benedict College identified regional examples of incorporating climate resilience into local laws and ordinances; and one from University of South Carolina developed communications materials for the Trawl to Trash project, including a video tutorial on bag making and a website.

Partners: USC, Benedict College

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium and Partners Kick Off Gullah/Geechee CREATE Project

Matt Gorstein, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium; Queen Quet, Gullah/Geechee Sea Islands Coalition; Marilyn Hemingway, Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce; Zenobia Harper, Gullah Preservation Society

Associated Goals: Improve public understanding about the coastal and marine environment and related community issues

Project Number: R/MD23-2

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium and partners received \$300,000 through the National Sea Grant Office's marine debris community action coalition competition for *Gullah/Geechee CREATE: Coastal Debris Removal Engaging Artists through Environmental Cleanups*, a project focused on collecting and removing marine debris from the coastal environment and upcycling the collected material into artwork.

RELEVANCE: The Gullah/Geechee are a culture and community of descendants of enslaved Africans and indigenous Americans who share common language, foodways, food preparation skills, spiritual connection, art, and music. These communities are deeply embedded in the cultural history of South Carolina, and have a rich history of fishing, harvesting, and preparing marine resources, highlighting a longstanding connection to marine resources, as well as a vulnerability to marine debris in waterways and marine food chains.

RESPONSE: Because the project is led by community-based organizations and engages local artists, the team is building coalitions and partnerships to identify and actively address marine debris prevention and removal at the community level. The team plans to host art and education showcases in 2025 and 2026.

RESULTS: Two clean up events were hosted on St. Helena Island in October of 2023. 43 volunteers removed 64 bags of marine debris from Ball Park Road, and 30 volunteers removed 12 bags of marine debris from the Penn Center property. An interest survey was disseminated to artists – 41 artists filled out the survey, 17 registered for an information session, and 10 attended an information session. 6 artists are currently working on pieces.

PARTNERS: Gullah/Geechee Sea Islands Coalition, Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce, Gullah Preservation Society, James Island Arts and Cultural Center

Grant Awarded to S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Aims to Encourage Youths to be Ambassadors of Community Hurricane Resilience

Susan Lovelace, Amanda Guthrie, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium; Merrie Koester, University of South Carolina Center for Science Education and The Citadel James B. Near Center for Climate Studies; Scott Curtis, The Citadel James B. Near Center for Climate Studies

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings.

Project Number: R/ED-3

RECAP: The Consortium was awarded nearly \$160,000 for a two-year grant through the NOAA National Sea Grant College Program and the NOAA Disaster Preparedness Program to expand and document culturally responsive activities for students to learn about the science behind hurricane formation and steps to be more resilient during a storm.

RELEVANCE: Studies on hazard risk communication reveal that unless messaging is consistent with the beliefs, needs, and goals of a given social group, it is not likely to be acted upon. With few exceptions, minority communities are at greater risk in disaster situations, while community-based organizations that serve and represent these minority communities are not linked well with disaster loss reduction and preparedness efforts.

RESPONSE: A S.C. Sea Grant Consortium researcher is expanding upon the Kids Teaching Flood Resilience program (www.kidsteachingfloodresilience.com) developed in response to a key challenge in the City of Charleston's 2015 Sea Level Rise Strategy Plan. A two-year grant was secured in 2023 to expand and create an educational program for youth educators to teach about hurricanes and improve science literacy and hurricane resilience.

RESULTS: The project team has created resources, such as classroom activities and education videos, for youth educators to use in their programs. A team of teachers has been involved in the testing of the materials and have provided feedback on the implementation and use of the materials.

PARTNERS: University of South Carolina Center for Science Education, The Citadel James B. Near Center for Climate Studies

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's *Coastal Heritage* Wins Notable State Document Award

Susan Ferris Hill, Erica Hussey, and Crystal Narayana, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Improve public understanding about the coastal and marine environment and related community issues.

Project Number: C/IS-1

RECAP: The fall 2023 issue of *Coastal Heritage*, "Where the Wild Places Are: Captivating Carolina Bays," won a 2023 Notable State Document award from the South Carolina State Library.

RELEVANCE: Recognition by librarians and state agency employees of the State of South Carolina is one metric by which success is measured. Acknowledgement that publications are relevant, interesting, well-researched, and provide significant information to the public confirms the Consortium's public service role is successful.

RESPONSE: The Consortium regularly submits publications to various award competitions. The primary contributors to *Coastal Heritage* are staff in the communications, extension, education, and administration departments, as well as university and federal agency partners.

RESULTS: The fall 2023 issue of S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's flagship magazine, *Coastal Heritage*, "Where the Wild Places Are: Captivating Carolina Bays," won a 2023 Notable State Document award from the South Carolina State Library. The magazine was one of 12 publications selected for the award, and judging criteria was based on design, writing style, and breadth of information.

S.C. Sea Grant Co-Edits Special Issue of Oceanography Focused on National Sea Grant Programs

Brita Jessen, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

RECAP: S.C. Sea Grant Consortium co-edited a special feature issue of the journal *Oceanography* that highlights Sea Grant programs and priorities across the nation with a special feature on S.C. Sea Grant staff and an article on the Blue Carbon Law Symposium.

RELEVANCE: Sea Grant programs play a unique role by integrating place-based research, extension, education, and workforce development. The role of local Sea Grant programs has expanded over five decades and not all audiences know of the breadth and scope of impact across stakeholders and the research community. The journal *Oceanography* is freely accessible and well-regarded across academic communities on an international platform and provides an opportunity to highlight Sea Grant to new audiences.

RESPONSE: Consortium staff member Jessen provided a leadership role on the editorial team for the *Oceanography* special issue by convening monthly meetings; hosting informational webinars; recruiting and editing articles for a section of resilience articles; submitting an article on blue carbon; and writing Career Profiles featuring Sea Grant employees.

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Educator Wins 2023 S.C. Environmental Awareness Award

E.V. Bell, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's marine education specialist E.V. Bell wins the 2023 S.C. Environmental Awareness Award.

RELEVANCE: The S.C. Environmental Awareness Award, established by S.C. General Assembly in 1992, recognizes outstanding contributions made toward the protection, conservation, and improvement of the state's natural resources. Nominations are submitted annually by the public and reviewed by members of the awards committee. Members include representatives from the S.C. Forestry Commission, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, and the Consortium.

RESPONSE: After the award's committee receives the nominations, they are independently reviewed and ranked based on several criteria, including excellence in innovation, leadership, and positive impacts on the state's natural environment and/or resources.

RESULTS: The 2023 S.C. Environmental Awareness Award was given to the Consortium's marine education specialist E.V. Bell for her role in the developing and leading marine education programming, specifically the From Seeds to Shoreline® youth salt marsh program and the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification.

Educator Wins STEM Innovation Partnership Award for Participation in S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's Youth Salt Marsh Program

E.V. Bell, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium; Jennifer Brown, S.C. Governor's School for Science and Mathematics

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

Project Number: E/ME-1

RECAP: Dr. Jennifer Brown of the S.C. Governor's School for Science and Mathematics won the National Consortium of Secondary STEM Schools Innovative Partnership Award based on participation in the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's From Seeds to Shoreline (S2S) Program.

RELEVANCE: The From Seeds to Shoreline® program is the state's only youth-focused salt marsh restoration program and is coordinated by the Consortium in partnership with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and Clemson University. Participating students learn about the importance of this ecosystem through cultivating *Spartina alterniflora* at their schools and transplanting young seedlings to areas of degraded or eroded marsh along the coastline.

RESPONSE: The Governor's School for Science and Mathematics (GSSM) is a year-round school that provides high school students with immersive experiences in science and math. GSSM has participated in the S2S program for more than four years and recently was nominated and became a finalist for the National Consortium of Secondary STEM Schools (NCSSS) Innovative Partnership Award based on their involvement in this program.

RESULTS: In 2023, the NCSSS awarded Dr. Jennifer Brown at the GSSM with the Innovative Partnership Award for her leadership and involvement in the Consortium's S2S program.

Partner: S.C. Governor's School for Science and Mathematics

Education Associations Partner to Leverage Capacity and Funding to Provide Outreach Opportunities

E.V. Bell, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

Project Number: E/ME-1

RECAP: The Environmental Education Association of South Carolina and the S.C. Marine Educators Association partner to leverage resources for three outreach programs and opportunities.

RELEVANCE: The Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC) and the S.C. Marine Educators Association (SCMEA) provide educators with resources and opportunities to learn about our natural environment. The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's marine education specialist is a member of SCMEA and serves on the EEASC Board

of Directors. Because SCMEA and EEASC market to the same target audience, participants often must choose between the two based on limited resources, time, and other factors.

RESPONSE: SCMEA and EEASC partnered to jointly host meetups open to members of either organization as well as non-members. Each meetup was jointly funded and co-coordinated by both organizations, and during each event, both organizations highlighted their specific membership benefits and opportunities.

RESULTS: In 2023, three joint EEASC-SCMEA meetups were hosted for approximately 44 attendees: “Seining, Seashells, and Sharks Teeth,” “Shell-abrading the Green Sea Turtle,” and “Marvelous Migrating Monarchs.” The majority of attendees were members of either EEASC or SCMEA and resulted in an increase in membership of both organizations from those non- members attending. Plans are underway to continue the joint meetups in 2024.

PARTNERS: Environmental Education Association of South Carolina, South Carolina Marine Educators Association

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Secures \$20,000 for Ocean Science Career Project

E.V. Bell, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium secured \$20,000 in grant funds from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to develop ocean career outreach and program materials for underserved populations.

RELEVANCE: A 2021 study by the National Sciences Foundation found only 8.8% of graduate students in the ocean sciences identify as part of a racial minority population. Barriers impeding underserved populations to pursue a career in the ocean sciences are complex, but reasons include financial limitations, lack of access to resources related to career opportunities, and a culture of exclusion. Exposing youth to career paths in the ocean sciences can increase diversity within this field.

RESPONSE: The Consortium submitted a proposal to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and NOAA to fund an Ocean Odyssey Coastliner Program to build a network to share about career opportunities, create four toolkits for hands-on learning to explore ocean sciences and careers, and provide teacher support at six Title 1 schools with predominantly minority populations. This proposal was submitted with the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, Horry-Georgetown Technical College, and Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum.

RESULTS: The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and NOAA awarded the Consortium \$20,000 to create the Ocean Odyssey Coastliner program that would foster a network of ocean science professionals and educators, support immersive collaborations with six Title 1 schools with predominantly minority populations, and create educator toolkits that emphasized career paths through hands-on learning.

PARTNERS: S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, Horry-Georgetown Technical College, Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Continues to Organize Diversity Staff Trainings

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium provided three staff trainings on topics related to incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into agency-wide and program-specific projects.

RELEVANCE: Increasing diversity among staff members, stakeholders, and end-users continues to challenge not only the Consortium but geosciences-based organizations across the country. Along with increasing diversity, ensuring that programs, resources, and opportunities are equitable and inclusive adds important layers for consideration and implementation. Diversity statistics continue to be low among career geoscientists, and end-users of scientific information for personal and community decision-making are often not reflective of the larger community.

RESPONSE: In June 2020, the Consortium initiated efforts to create an agency-wide diversity plan based on input from staff. Of interest to staff were diversity training opportunities for personal and professional growth. Using this feedback, four diversity staff trainings were scheduled: February 2023 (International African American Museum), March 2023 (Accessibility and Inclusivity), and December 2023 (Indigenous Peoples – self-guided).

RESULTS: During 2023, three diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings were held for Consortium staff, during which more than 75% of staff attended.

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Continues Salt Marsh Education and Recreational Fishing Program with Local Title 1 School

E.V. Bell and Morgan Treon, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium; Michael Hodges, S.C. Department of Natural Resources

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

Project Number: E/ME-1

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's From Seeds to Shoreline® program serves as a foundational component in a two-year education initiative at Edith L. Frierson Elementary School—a rural, Title 1 school that is located less than one mile from the nearest salt marsh and has a majority historically marginalized student body.

RELEVANCE: Opportunities for schools that are socio-economically disadvantaged (e.g., Title 1 status) and/or host a predominantly historically marginalized population to connect environmental education with recreational fishing are limited across S.C. While there are salt marsh ecosystem-focused environmental education programs as well as recreational fishing businesses, there is little collaboration. Combining environmental education and ethical recreational fishing practices deepens not only youth environmental stewardship, it connects on a cultural level for many S.C. communities.

RESPONSE: The S.C. Department of Natural Resources received \$155,000 in funding from NOAA to support the two-year habitat restoration and recreational fishing education project at Frierson Elementary School on Wadmalaw Island. The project launched in fall of 2022 with partners leading a variety of classroom salt marsh education

activities approximately every other week. Through the From Seeds To Shoreline program, the students planted *Spartina alterniflora* seedlings at a campus-located greenhouse and participated in a restoration day within their community.

RESULTS: Since the launch of the program in fall of 2022, 150 students have participated in salt marsh education and recreational fishing programming, growing *S. alterniflora* on their school grounds, and restoring local salt marsh by planting *S. alterniflora* and placing modified abandoned fishing gear for oyster habitat. Assessment data from 2022-23 program showed an increase in knowledge about the salt marsh, including evidence that students have developed a personal connection to the salt marsh due to this program.

PARTNERS: S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Edith L. Frierson Elementary School, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's *The Lettered Olive* E-newsletter Keeps Educators Informed on Opportunities and Resources

E.V. Bell and Susan Ferris Hill, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

RECAP: Nine issues of the *The Lettered Olive* education e-newsletter were produced and delivered to 1,130 individual stakeholders with an average open rate of 42% and click-through rate of 4.7%.

RELEVANCE: There is a need to deliver timely, frequent, and effective communication to formal and nonformal educators across the state regarding the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium's professional development opportunities, K-12 student resources, and employment opportunities.

RESPONSE: The communications and education services staff continue to produce and deliver *The Lettered Olive* to 1,130 individuals. Each newsletter begins with a short feature about a native plant or animal species found within the coastal plain and follows with information regarding upcoming workshop trainings, educator and student resources, grant and employment opportunities, and other relevant information.

RESULTS: Nine issues of *The Lettered Olive* education e-newsletter were produced and delivered during FY23-24. The average open rate was 42%, an increase from 37% from the previous reporting year. The click rate was 4.7%, which was nearly double the industry average of 2%.

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium Fosters Student Support Through Internships, Fellowships, and Research Opportunities

Susannah Sheldon, Susan Lovelace, Matt Gorstein, and Brita Jessen, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

RECAP: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium continues to substantially contribute to workforce development through

internships, fellowships, and research opportunities.

RELEVANCE: Supporting undergraduate and graduate students and early career professionals in earth and marine sciences leads to an informed, engaged, and well-trained workforce. The Consortium is involved in initiatives that support educational and professional development for these individuals.

RESPONSE: Sixty-four Knauss S.C. fellows have been selected since 1984, and 20 S.C. coastal management fellows have been placed since 1997. The Consortium and S.C. Space Grant Consortium support the Kathryn D. Sullivan Earth and Marine Science Fellowship to increase trained scientists and to enable graduate students to conduct NASA- and NOAA-related research. Additionally, Community Engaged Internships, Margaret A. Davidson Resilience Scholars Program, and the Minorities in Aquaculture Internship Program support undergraduate students.

RESULTS: In 2023, the Consortium supported 32 undergraduates, 18 master's-level students, and 13 Ph.D. students in conjunction with Consortium-funded research, internships, and fellowships. Thirty-six were new to Sea Grant support and 24 received continued support. Three of the graduate students were Consortium interns. Two Sea Grant-nominated students were selected for the Knauss fellowship and another for the Sullivan award. Student support has improved student and early professional ocean and coastal literacy, while helping secure employment.

Partners: Member institutions, MIA, SC Space Grant Consortium, Benedict College

IMPACTS

S.C. Sea Grant-Funded Program Develops New Career Education and Employment Opportunities

Julie Binz, Jessica Kinsella, S.C. Department of Natural Resources/ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings.

Project Number: R/ED-2

RECAP: S.C. Sea Grant Consortium-funded researchers worked to enhance the participation and career opportunities of ACE Basin students in Title I schools through internship opportunities, teacher training sessions, career expos, and student engagement in marine science.

RELEVANCE: This project's primary goal was to facilitate viable conservation-based career paths for underserved students in the ACE Basin region of South Carolina by strengthening the relationship between the ACE Basin Reserve and local Title I schools and providing in-depth long-term engagement in marine science education activities.

RESPONSE: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium funded the following opportunities: estuary education programs for over 800 middle school students; a marine biology career exposition for over 5,000 middle school students; a Career Explorers club for 20 high school students; a Master's research project on personal identity in the context of environmental career choices; and summer internships including workforce training for 10 high school students.

RESULTS: This project created 10 internships with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR); one intern is now fully employed at SCDNR. This project also supported an engagement specialist who is a bilingual educator.

SCDNR expanded its recruitment process as a result of this internship: job postings are now extended when possible, and the job posting link is widely distributed to local colleges and on social media to recruit to a wider, more inclusive audience.

PARTNERS: S.C. Aquarium; Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor; Sea Islands Heritage Academy; S.C. Chamber of Commerce

S.C. Sea Grant Consortium’s Environmental Education Certification Program Endorsed by S.C. State Department of Education

E.V. Bell, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium

Associated Goals: Coastal and ocean K-12 education programs foster scientific literacy, stewardship, and exposure to science-based careers in both formal and informal settings. Also, coastal and ocean education programs foster the development of a diverse scientifically trained workforce.

Project Number: E/ME-1

RECAP: The Palmetto Environmental Education Certification program receives official approval from the S.C. State Department of Education as an endorsed local professional development provider.

RELEVANCE: The S.C. Sea Grant Consortium provided leadership in the development of the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification program (PEEC). Launched in 2018, this two-year program requires attendance at four workshops, completion of eight online modules and 90 hours of electives, and a final project. Both formal and nonformal educators are eligible for the certification and receive training on best practices, materials and resources for their place of employment, and guidance on the creation of a project.

RESPONSE: Formal educators must complete 120 hours of renewal credits through extracurricular professional development every five years to maintain their teaching license. In 2023, the Consortium applied to the S.C. Department of Education for PEEC to become an official “Endorsed Local Provider” for 120 renewal credits.

RESULTS: In 2023, the S.C. State Department of Education approved the PEEC as an “Endorsed Local Provider” for 120 renewal credits – the amount required for a formal educator to receive every five years to maintain licensure. Therefore, completing the PEEC course in two years satisfies one five-year cycle of renewal credit requirements.

PARTNERS: Environmental Education Association of South Carolina, S.C. Department of Education