

4/25/03

AREA PLAN REVISION COASTAL GEORGIA RC&D COUNCIL

I. MISSION: To plan, identify funding sources, and implement community development and conservation projects throughout 10 Coastal Georgia counties.

II. VISION: Strong communities that manage their natural resources wisely while preserving and enhancing the unique environment and culture of Coastal Georgia.

III. NEEDS, OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES

A. LAND CONSERVATION

1. Erosion and Sediment Control

A September, 2001 State Auditor Report criticized the enforcement of the state's erosion and sediment control laws as fragmented and ineffectual. Coastal Georgia RC&D Council received approval of a \$121,000 Coastal Incentive Grant (CIG) to fund a 3-year pilot program to improve this enforcement in the coastal region. It funds an Erosion and Sediment Control Inspector position for the Coastal Soil and Water Conservation District to serve Bryan, Chatham, Liberty, Long, and McIntosh.

The planned activities of the inspector include:

- Checking construction sites to see that conservation practices are installed according to the approved erosion and sediment control plan.
- Responding to citizen complaints of violations.
- Training contractors, builders, and engineers to improve their construction site BMP skills and knowledge of erosion control requirements.
- Training issuing authority staff to improve their ability to provide effective oversight.
- Dissemination of existing Soil and Water Commission publications to the construction community and local government staff.

The Council will work with the District to manage this program. Coastal Georgia RC&D Council will provide office space and equipment for this employee. The Council will receive rent from the CIG grant for this space. The Council and District will seek project expansion to provide additional staff and cover additional counties to improve local E&S enforcement efforts.

Recently local developers have also come under the jurisdiction of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). It requires them to develop stormwater management plans and to monitor runoff from new subdivisions. In North Georgia, Soil and Water Conservation Districts are providing training to builders and engineers to help them comply with these new regulations. The workshops they put on not only provide this needed training but have brought the Districts considerable revenue. The Districts

charge \$100+ registration fees to attend these workshops. The Coastal District would like to take advantage of this opportunity locally, perhaps using the new E&S Inspector they are hiring. The Council will assist them in these efforts.

Goals and Objectives

1. Assist the Coastal District in managing and training the new E&S Inspector, and administering the CIG grant supporting the position.
2. Seek opportunities to fund additional E&S Inspector positions.
3. Assist the Coastal District in setting up and managing NPDES Workshops.

B. WATER MANAGEMENT

1. Water Conservation

The major conservation and development issue in the Coastal Georgia region is the availability of water. A 5-year long drought has continued into 2002. Southeast Georgia and parts of South Carolina and Florida depend on the Floridan Aquifer for their drinking water. Excessive pumping has created cones of depression in the aquifer in the Savannah and Brunswick areas. Naturally flowing artesian wells fed by the aquifer were a common sight in the region as recently as the 1920s, but have now disappeared in most areas. Hilton Head, South Carolina has already experienced salt water intrusion from the ocean in its wells as the aquifer has been depleted. The states which share the aquifer may end up in federal court if they cannot work together to properly manage it.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division, which regulates groundwater permits, has instituted a cap on new drilling in a 24 county area of Southeast Georgia. This is considered a temporary measure while it studies the sustainable yield of the aquifer. One of the biggest issues facing the Georgia Legislature in its upcoming 2003 session is water policy. A Policy Committee studying the issue to make recommendations to the Legislature is already badly split on basic principles. Does the state's water belong to the public as a whole, to those owning adjacent or overlying property, or to those who established the earliest claim to its use?

While there is considerable controversy over much of the state water debate, all parties agree that increasing voluntary water conservation would be a positive step. The Coastal Georgia RC&D Council assisted with a mobile irrigation lab project to help farmers improve their irrigation efficiency. That project has since been handed off to the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission which has managed it effectively and is expanding it to new agricultural areas. They are also seeking a new state program to cost-share irrigation system improvements suggested by the mobile lab's results. The Council continues to support the Commission's mobile irrigation lab efforts and their proposed cost-share program.

The Council also supports efforts to measure agricultural water use which is currently unmeasured. As a result agriculture cannot disprove accusations by some of excessive use.

Farmers also cannot establish past use records and possible damages should they lose future water rights in competition with cities.

The Council supports all voluntary water conservation measures for all water users in the region. The Council will offer assistance to any local group with a sound approach to voluntary water conservation. Data is currently being gathered on a potential Council project to conserve aquifer water by voluntary capping remaining artesian wells in Camden and Glynn Counties in the southern part of our service area.

Goals and Objectives

1. Determine feasibility of artesian well capping project in Camden and Glynn Counties.
2. Offer assistance to local groups with a sound approach to voluntary water conservation.
3. Seek opportunities to fund agricultural water metering pilot projects.

2. Water Quality

Coastal Georgia RC&D already has ongoing 319 Clean Water Projects on the Altamaha River and Ebenezer Creek to address nonpoint source pollution from agricultural activities in those watersheds. Under Federal Court orders, Total Maximum Daily Load levels are being developed for additional streams in the region. For example, stakeholder meetings are currently being organized for Doctor Creek in Long County. The most common impairments to streams in the region for recreational use are low dissolved oxygen (dO) and /or fecal coliform. Agricultural nutrients can contribute to low dO, while animal waste is a prime contributor to high fecal coliform counts. The major solutions to reducing negative agricultural impacts on water quality in the region are:

- Reducing erosion and sedimentation from farm fields.
- Fencing cattle out of streams and developing alternate water sources.
- Storing chicken litter out of the elements and applying it to farm fields according to a nutrient management plan.

The Council will complete its Ebenezer Creek and Altamaha River 319 projects in 2003 and 2004 respectively. It will consider additional 319 projects as Georgia Environmental Protection Division priorities are announced each year. Demonstration projects such as those planned for the Council's current projects were less favored in the last funding cycle than TMDL Implementation or Watershed Restoration Action Strategies. Council staff will consult with cooperating Soil and Water Conservation Districts to determine if EPD's priorities mesh with the Districts'. If they do, additional 319 projects will be brought to the Council for possible incorporation into future Annual Plans of Work. The Council will also continue to make conservation tillage equipment available to farmers on a rental basis as long as their interest continues; use has fallen in recent years largely because of the ongoing drought.

Goals and Objectives

1. Complete Ebenezer Creek and Altamaha 319 Projects
2. Continue conservation tillage equipment rental program.

3. Consult with Districts on possible additional 319 projects.

3. Nutrient Management

Because of low prices and small scale, the regional hog industry has virtually disappeared. Local cattle operations are relatively small and static in size. Cattle are generally widely dispersed in pastures, so their waste is not concentrated as it would be in a feedlot or dairy. So the major cattle-related water quality issue is simply keeping them out of streams. Poultry is the one livestock industry in the coastal region which is expanding. More farmers are looking to make their revenue stream more regular and reliable by diversifying their operations to include poultry. At the same time, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division has been prompted by the major environmental problems with hog waste in other states to tighten the regulation of poultry waste to minimize its impacts on water quality.

The Council is just beginning a project to improve poultry waste storage and utilization and nutrient management. A group of local farmers is building a regional stackhouse with \$200,000 in NRCS Environmental Quality Improvement Program funds. A front end loader to move and load manure was purchased with a \$40,000 Georgia Environmental Facilities grant and \$10,000 from the Council's no-till fund. The Georgia Coastal Management Program supplied \$9300 for a litter spreader to apply the manure to farm fields. The equipment was purchased in October, 2002. The Stackhouse construction should be complete in January, 2003.

The Georgia Coastal Management Program (GCMP) is responsible for preparing and implementing a Nonpoint Source Plan for the coast to maintain its current funding levels from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Both the Council and Cooperating Districts have greatly benefited from GCMP funding and Council staff has been assisting with this plan's development. One of NOAA's requirements is to develop a program (it can be voluntary) to promote Best Management Practices to animal operations which are below current regulatory thresholds. The 2003 round of Coastal Incentive Grants will offer funds to parties willing to carry out such a program and the Council and Districts are being encouraged to apply.

Goals and Objectives

1. Complete Stackhouse Project
2. Initiate nutrient management program. Promote rental of litter spreader and use of manure from Regional Stackhouse.
3. Apply for Nutrient Management Specialist funding through Coastal Incentive Grant.
4. Train and supervise the new Nutrient Management Specialist if the position is funded.

C. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Assistance to Communities with Limited Resources

For the last 6 years, the Council has been providing grant writing and grant administration assistance to communities which lack the staff resources to successfully carry out such tasks. Recently, a number of local communities have hired their own staff at least in part to help them seek and administer grant funds for their projects. Examples include Steve Scholar in Richmond Hill, Dick Newbern in Glynn County, Dave Rutledge and Denise Grabowski in Effingham County, Richard Douglas in Long County, Carmella Moore in Liberty County, and John Butler in Pembroke. The Council encourages such efforts which free up Council resources for larger scale and more regional projects. The Council will generally not provide grantwriting services for nonprofit organizations and local governments which have their own full time paid staff with grant writing capabilities. The Council will, however, notify such staff of grant opportunities they may not be aware of. The Council will also review and comment on proposals written by new staff as requested to help train them.

The Council will continue to support projects for the poorer counties in the coastal region. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs has designated Tier 1 & 2 Counties as those in the state most in need of economic development. Liberty, Long, and McIntosh Counties are each Tier 1. All 3 rank in the bottom 10 of Georgia's 159 counties in per capita income. Evans and Tattnall Counties are currently ranked as Tier 2.

The 2001-2002 economic downturn has placed additional pressure on welfare recipients who are trying to move into the work force. The lifetime clock on many welfare recipients has run out. Transportation continues to be a major obstacle to their attempts to get and keep a job. The Council's Wheels to Work program continues to be one of the few Welfare to Work programs that works and is cost effective. Since the original \$674,000 DHR grant to the Council expired in August, 2001, the Council has managed the program and placed additional cars on the road using the proceeds of clients' vehicle payments. The Council will continue to seek additional funding for this program to add new clients and vehicles. The Council will also continue to manage the program for its remaining 95 clients. Most of the Council's existing client loans continue to 2005. The Council will husband its resources to continue the program to this date even without additional outside funding. New cars will be purchased as funds allow.

Goals and Objectives

1. Continue providing assistance, mainly grant writing and grant administration, for local projects to communities with limited resources.
2. Continue seeking new funding for Wheels to Work Program.
3. Continue managing Wheels to Work Program through the 2005 completion of most current client contracts.

2. Assistance to Help Ensure Proper Planning

The Council will give priority to local projects included in county comprehensive plans and other planning documents, such as Greenspace Plans. Both the Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs and Coastal Management Program give higher priority in their grant programs to projects included in these plans, and the Council should reinforce their insistence on proper planning. The Council will encourage the use of professional design

assistance to communities and help cities and counties locate and find funding for such assistance. The Council can supply free landscape architect services to one local project each year and has received grant funding for such services on a project specific basis for additional projects.

The Council will also encourage local communities to take advantage of professional planning resources available for no or minimal cost from colleges such as Georgia Southern, Georgia Tech, Southeast Georgia College, University of Georgia and Savannah College of Art and Design. Each has provided professional guidance to help local citizens develop more effective projects. Past examples which were crucial to the development of RC&D projects included the UGA Cobbtown Downtown Revitalization Plan and Georgia Tech studies of assets and needs along the Wiregrass Trail and the Altamaha River.

The Council will also support projects which focus on growth issues in still counties with rapid population growth. According to the 2001 edition of The Georgia County Guide, Bryan County's population grew 52% between 1990 and 2000, including an explosive 132% increase in Richmond Hill, its fastest growing municipality. Effingham County's population grew 46% during this period. Camden County grew 45%, including a 67% increase in both Kingsland and St. Mary's. In spite of this rapid growth these counties are still structured as if they were still sleepy rural counties with minimal planning and few staff people. The Council has been providing professional arborist services to such communities for the last 3 years to help them retain and manage as much native tree canopy as possible. The Council will continue this service as long as funds are available for it and communities want it. The Council will consider additional growth-related projects in these rapidly growing counties as they emerge. Potential projects include water supply, solid waste disposal, unpaved road development and maintenance, recreation, and wetland preservation.

The Georgia Coastal Management Program (GCMP) is encouraging the Council and District to develop a "Green Subdivision Program" to encourage environmentally sensitive development practices. GCMP would fund the program with a Coastal Incentive Grant. This program could expand the Council's Tree Friendly Developer Program which encourages retention of native trees on building sites. The Request for Proposals is not yet available but this could be an additional program to help fast growing counties in the coastal region channel growth in a positive direction.

Goals and Objectives

1. Continue providing assistance to help ensure proper planning.
 - a. Continue arborist program as long as Georgia Forestry Commission continues funding and communities wish to use services.
 - b. Continue landscape architect program using NRCS cost-share for one project per year. Seek additional funding from Georgia Forestry Commission or Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs or interns from colleges for additional projects needing Landscape Architect assistance.
 - c. Utilize professional planning assistance available from colleges to improve regional tourism projects.

2. Support additional projects to solve growth-related problems in rapidly growing counties as opportunities arise.
3. Review RFP for Green Subdivision Program and consider working with GCMP to implement it in local communities.

3. Hazard Mitigation Projects

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 there has been widespread recognition of the potential devastating impacts such attacks can have on our communities. In addition, the coastal region continues to be vulnerable to potentially disastrous hurricane wind and storm surge damage such as that suffered in recent years from Hurricane Andrew in South Florida and Hugo in South Carolina. But most County Emergency Management Agencies have very small staffs and many lack basic equipment and facilities. For example, McIntosh County does not have a 911 system. Many first responders (police, sheriff, fire, emergency medical technicians) lack the safety equipment they need to protect themselves as they respond to emergencies. Liberty and McIntosh County lack wildland fire protective gear for some of their firefighters. Tattnall County does not have a self-contained breathing apparatus for all of its firefighters.

Because of September 11, the federal government has committed large increases in FEMA funding to state and local hazard preparedness efforts. In addition, they are requiring counties to prepare local Hazard Mitigation Plans to maintain eligibility for future federal disaster assistance. Future Hazard Mitigation funds will not be available for projects not identified in the local plan. The Council has written 4 planning grants (3 approved) and has assembled a team to prepare Hazard Mitigation Plans in 4 counties. FEMA and GEMA are actively encouraging such regional teams to help them deliver FEMA assistance to local communities. Past regional efforts have generally gotten poor reviews from local emergency agency staff who are also seeking new regional partnerships to help them address local needs. There is an opportunity for the Council to work with local EMA offices and staff and help them use federal funds effectively to solve local problems. Once all the County Hazard Mitigation Plans are written there will be additional FEMA funds available to help counties implement their plans. Most EMA offices have limited grant writing capability and would welcome Council assistance. This is an opportunity for the Council to help local EMA offices vastly improve their local emergency management services while the Council expands its staff, develops new capabilities and earns operating funds.

Goals and Objectives

1. Complete Hazard Mitigation Plans for Counties with current contracts.
2. Assist RC&D Counties without Hazard Mitigation Planning grants with grant applications.
3. Assist counties with grant writing to help implement their Hazard Mitigation Plans.

4. ISO Reduction Projects

Because of the Council's past work with the Dry Hydrant Program, we have good working relations with local fire department staff. Recently we have teamed with ISOChanger (formerly the Training Center) to help fire departments improve their

capabilities and lower homeowner insurance rates. We currently have ISO reduction projects under way in 4 counties. We are uniquely positioned to expand this locally successful program with ISOChanger to the national level to both bring benefits to other Councils in the nation and raise operating funds for our Council.

Goals and Objectives

1. Complete ISO Reduction Projects for counties with current contracts.
2. Assist Coastal Georgia RC&D Counties without ISO Reduction grants with Georgia Forestry Commission grant applications.
3. Assist Coastal Georgia RC&D counties with grant writing to help purchase equipment to help them achieve ISO reductions.
4. Launch and manage nationwide marketing effort to bring ISO Reduction Program to other 370 RC&Ds in U.S.
5. Assist Councils nationwide with funding sources (predominantly U.S. Forest Service and FEMA) and sample grant applications to fund their participation in ISO Reduction Program.

5. Regional Projects

The Council prefers regional projects to those serving only one community. There are numerous opportunities for regional projects involving multiple cities &/or counties, especially in areas such as tourism, recycling and animal control. The Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center provides regional planning assistance and several programs for the elderly. But no other entity such as a regional authority exists to deliver services on a regional basis. Most local governments focus on their own assets and needs and do not coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions. Cooperative efforts are limited to city-county partnerships and in some counties even those are rare. Past “regional” efforts have often been locally perceived as failures because the largest county involved staffed and managed the project and smaller counties felt their wishes were ignored. The Council has recently become heavily involved in regional emergency planning efforts as outlined in 3 above. It has also supported a number of regional tourism projects, including:

- The Wiregrass Trail
- Coastal Georgia Greenway
- Altamaha River Partnership
- Woodpecker Trail

The Council will continue to support these and other regional projects as resources allow.

The Council has adopted but not yet begun efforts on a regional project to support, expand, and market local agricultural and seafood events in the coastal counties. The Council will initiate this project and support local agritourism efforts such as Farm Fresh Tattall and encourage their expansion to the regional level.

The Council is reluctant to participate in projects with many partners and resources; it prefers to focus on sound projects which would be unlikely to succeed without Council assistance. The Council can provide a variety of services to help complete projects. Depending on the partners working on the project, the Council can provide funding searches, grant writing, grant administration, nonprofit organization and management

help, planning and project design, professional design assistance, infrastructure, financial recordkeeping, a regional perspective, leadership, organization, or whatever else is keeping the project from being completed. The Council is most effective when it provides the missing piece that none of the other project partners can.

Goals and Objectives

1. Encourage regional solutions to local problems. Act as leader and facilitator to make regional projects happen. Seek out opportunities for local counties and municipalities to act regionally.
2. Continue existing regional tourism projects: The Wiregrass Trail, Coastal Georgia Greenway, Altamaha River Partnership, Woodpecker Trail.
3. Initiate a regional project to support, expand, and market local agricultural and seafood events in the coastal counties.
4. Support local agritourism projects and encourage their expansion to the regional level.

6. Exporting Successful Local Project Models to Additional Counties

The Council has successfully worked at the local level to install community improvements. We have had particular success with such local projects in Tattnall County, where we helped plan, wrote grant applications and assisted with grant administration on projects such as Cobbtown Downtown Revitalization, Collins Gym Reroofing, construction of Olie Parker Park, and emergency replacement of the pump for the Manassas City Water System. There is an opportunity to replicate these and other local successes in other communities in the region. For the most part local residents and newspapers focus on developments within their own county. There is little knowledge of projects in other counties, even adjacent counties. The RC&D Council is uniquely positioned to export these successful project models to the other counties in the region. The Council will seek opportunities to do so, particularly in conjunction with assisting Limited Resource Communities as outlined in 1 above.

Goals and Objectives

1. Initiate outreach program to introduce communities who have not participated to the RC&D Program. Staff will meet and offer assistance to elected officials and staff particularly in Evans, Camden, and Glynn Counties and in small municipalities with limited staffs throughout the region. Examples include Guyton, Claxton, Woodbine, Riceboro, and Pembroke.
2. Share successful projects in other localities with local decision makers and seek comparable opportunities in new communities.

D. INCREASING COUNCIL'S ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES

1. Council Office Building

The top priority of the Council is to finance and construct its office building and lease its space fully. As of this date, space is being provided to the Georgia Coastal Management Program (4 staff members), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for RC&D

Office (4 staff) and Field Office (3 staff) and Coastal SWCD (1 E&S Specialist). About half the building is now full. Plans have been approved and the architect is now preparing detailed construction drawings to go to bid about 11/15/02. Construction could commence about 1/15/03 and be complete around 8/15/03.

Goals and Objectives

1. Complete RC&D Building construction.
2. Plan and conduct ground breaking/ ribbon cutting ceremonies.
2. Lease and manage space in RC&D Building.

2. Increasing Council Capabilities

The Council gives high priority to projects which add to Council and partner Soil and Water Conservation District capabilities to do more by bringing in new discretionary funds, staff, funds for contractors, and/or equipment. Current projects which help the Council expand its capabilities and program include: Hazard Mitigation Program, ISO Reduction Program, Coastal Georgia Greenway, Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist, Community Forestry Program, and continued direct contracting with Georgia Coastal Management Program (as was done for the recently completed Marina Hurricane Manual and Video). Each of these projects not only achieve worthy community development and conservation goals in the region but provide the Council and District additional resources. Many also open the door to additional funding opportunities. The recent conversion of the Full-time NRCS Administrative Assistant to Part-time and conversion of remaining support funds to an NRCS administrative support grant also gives the Council additional flexibility.

There is an opportunity to build on existing efforts by NRCS to provide design and contracting assistance for natural resource projects on military facilities in the region. NRCS is prohibited by federal law from receiving any funds except reimbursement for its expenses. RC&D Councils in Maryland and Florida used Councils and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to deliver these same services and charged 10-15% of the total project cost to contract this work locally. The bases benefit because local contracting is quicker and more economical than the cumbersome federal contracting procedures the military and NRCS are required to use. NRCS is amenable to this change and would be willing to continue providing design and inspection staff on a reimbursable basis. There are a number of facilities in the region which could participate in such a program:

- Fort Stewart Army Base (Bryan and Liberty Counties)
- Hunter Army Air Field (Chatham County)
- Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base (Camden County)
- Townsend Bombing Range (Long and McIntosh County)

Goals and Objectives

1. Continue existing projects which add to Council capabilities as long as funding is available for them.
2. Work with NRCS and military to initiate program for RC&D to contract natural resource projects on military bases

IV. TIME FRAMES

The needs and opportunities identified above have emerged as the Council has delivered services to local communities over the last 6 years. Projects are already underway to address most of them. Action Items to initiate remaining projects not yet begun are included in the Council's 2003 Plan of Work to be reviewed at the October 23, 2002 Council Meeting. Additional projects which emerge under the priority headings above will be added to future Council Annual Plans of Work over the next 5 years.

V. RESOURCE DATA USED IN AREA PLAN

Resource data from a variety of recently published sources have been used to help develop this Area Plan, including:

- The Georgia County Guide, 2001 edition
- Georgia Agricultural Facts, 2002 edition
- Georgia Coastal Management Program's (GCMP) Program Document
- Georgia Environmental Protection Division's Water Quality in Georgia, 1999-2000
- One Georgia Assessment
- The Comprehensive Plans developed in accordance with state law for each of the Area's 10 counties (required 5 year revisions were completed in 2000).
- Georgia Environmental Protection Division's Interim Strategy for Managing Salt Water Intrusion in the Upper Floridan Aquifer of Southeast Georgia
- U.S. Geological Survey's Sound Science Initiative: Evaluation of Groundwater Flow, Saltwater Contamination, and Alternative Water Sources for Coastal Georgia
- Gently Down the Stream: The Potential for Nature-Based Tourism on the Altamaha River System, a 2000 study by the Georgia Institute of Technology's Economic Development Research Program
- Wiregrass Trail Studies by University of Georgia and Georgia Tech
- Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, Performance Audit – Erosion and Sediment Control Program, September, 2001
- Georgia Soil and Water Commission's Field Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia
- Water Conservation, a Guide for Georgia
- Georgia's Best Management Practices for Forestry
- Agricultural Best Management Practices for Protecting Water Quality in Georgia
- How to Protect Natural Resources on Construction Sites – The Builder's Guide
- Georgia Forestry Commission's Georgia's Urban and Community Forest, An Assessment and Five Year Strategic Plan, 2000-2004
- Georgia Forestry Commission's Georgia Model Urban Forest Book
- The Longleaf Alliance's Stewardship of Longleaf Pine Forests – A Guide for landowners
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Community Surveys
- Poultry Water Quality Handbook
- Cooperative Extension Service's Georgia's Endangered Animals and Plants

- County Greenspace Plans in Effingham, Bryan, Chatham, Liberty, Long, and Camden Counties.
- McIntosh SEED's Strategic Plan

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public input was obtained at the following public meetings over the last 3 years:

- Coastal Resources Advisory Committee Meetings in Tybee Island, Savannah, Brunswick, and Meridian.
- Animal Waste Workshop in Midway.
- Water Supply Planning Conference in Savannah.
- Erosion and Sediment Control Workshops in Richmond Hill.
- Longleaf Pine Workshops in Statesboro and Midway.
- The Nature Conservancy's Sustainable Development on the Coast Workshop in Eulonia.
- Use of Floridan Aquifer Public Meeting in Richmond Hill.
- Fire Chiefs / Fire Authority Meetings in Hinesville and Reidsville.
- Community Forestry workshops in Kingsland, Brunswick, and Richmond Hill.
- Monthly meetings of the Coastal, Ogeechee River, and Satilla River Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Hazard Mitigation Kickoff meetings in Hinesville, Darien, Richmond Hill, and Jesup.
- Unpaved Roads Best Management Practices Workshop in Midway.
- Coastal Greenway Public Meetings in Chatham, Liberty, McIntosh and Bryan Counties.
- Cooperative Extension Services' Forestry Workshop in Guyton.
- The Nature Conservancy's Landowner Workshop in Ludowici.

Direct input was also obtained from a number of city and county administrators, planning directors, emergency management directors, and elected officials in informal interviews. 277 elected officials in the region also received a personal letter from the Council soliciting their input for this area plan revision. Newspaper articles from 9 local newspapers were also regularly reviewed. Articles about recent City Council and County Commission meetings and descriptions of new or planned local projects were particularly helpful in setting Council priorities.

Copies of the draft Area Plan will be submitted to all County Commissioners and all municipal elected officials in the Area's 10 counties for their review. Department heads in Public Works, Planning, Recreation and Emergency Management Offices in each city and county will also receive review copies. Copies of the draft Plan will be made available for review by the general public in all county library branches and notices of its availability will be sent to all area newspapers. The draft plan will also be available for review and comment on the Council's website. After a 60-day comment period, all comments will be considered by the Area Plan Committee of the Council for inclusion into the final plan which will be considered for adoption at the Council's July, 2003 meeting.

The Coastal Georgia RC&D Council agrees that the RC&D Program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes: namely, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A and B) that provide that no person in the United States shall on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial or technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.

The Coastal Georgia RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with Federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for nonprocurement, suspension, and debarment, and State review.

The Coastal Georgia RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to use effectively the assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Coastal Georgia RC&D Council

By: _____
President

Date: _____

Attest: _____
Council Secretary

This action authorized at an official meeting of the Coastal Georgia RC&D Council on October 18, 2002

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

The State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Area Plan Coastal Georgia RC&D Council as meeting the requirements under Public Law 97-98 to receive assistance from USDA.

Acknowledged by: _____
State Conservationist

Date: _____