



SC Beach Preservation Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting Summary June 17, 2022

OVERVIEW

The SC Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) convened the initial meeting of the SC Beach Preservation Stakeholder Workgroup on Friday, June 17th at James Island Town Hall in Charleston, SC to discuss and guide potential recommendations as our state moves from a policy of retreat to a policy of beach preservation.

This workgroup brings together representatives of diverse stakeholder groups including residents of coastal communities, state and federal government agency representatives, academic professionals, conservation organizations, consulting engineers and policy experts with a commitment to actively participating in this process. Meetings scheduled in the coming months will present resources and information to promote further dialogue and solution-based discussions. The group was encouraged to maintain the perspective of the full SC coastline and to strive for consensus. DHEC OCRM staff will value all perspectives and take all discussions consideration in determining the agency's recommendations which will be outlined in a final report as the stakeholder process concludes.

There will be opportunities for broader stakeholder and members of the public to provide comment throughout the process and a webpage will be established to provide updates and seek additional feedback. The public participation process and opportunities to comment would extend into any subsequent process of drafting regulations related to the issues discussed by the workgroup.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

At 9:30 a.m., S.C. DHEC OCRM Chief Elizabeth von Kolnitz welcomed the Workgroup members and noted the importance of this process and the perspectives they bring.

Adam Bode, Coastal Planner for DHEC's OCRM and Kristy Ellenberg, Director of Collaborative Partnerships & Strategic Initiatives in DHEC's Office of Environmental Affairs introduced themselves and noted they would be serving as co-facilitators throughout the process.

The following Stakeholder Workgroup members were in attendance:

Jenny Brennan, Southern Environmental Law Center

Blanche Brown, DeBordieu Colony Community Association, Inc.

Alex Butler, SC Office of Resilience

Emily Cedzo, Coastal Conservation League

Melissa Chaplin, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Nicole Elko, SC Beach Advocates

Paul Gayes, Coastal Carolina University

Justin Hancock, South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

Jack Smith, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP—Attorneys and Counselors at Law

Steven Traynum, Coastal Science & Engineering

Rob Young, Western Carolina University

A full list of stakeholder workgroup members is included as an appendix to this meeting summary. DHEC facilitators and staff will follow-up with those unable to attend to gather perspectives to be shared with the group.

Also in attendance were members of the DHEC's OCRM staff Jessica Boynton, Coastal Services Section Manager; Matt Slagel, Beachfront Permitting Project Manager; and Tara Maddock, Program Coordinator. India Mackinson attended as an observer.

During introductions, workgroup members were asked to share goals they hope to accomplish as part of this workgroup. Those are summarized below:

Group Goals of this Process

Discussions reflected in policies and regulations	Have the outcomes of these meetings and discussions reflected in updated policies or regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure state flexibility in processes and enforceability• Policy recommendations and changes as straight forward as possible• Help DHEC OCRM do their jobs in a more effective way to help better define and place boundaries on the existing regulations
Balancing needs	Balance the needs of the beachfront communities, economic benefit from tourism, value of beachfront infrastructure and the natural systems. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure not only threatened and endangered species but also the beach dependent shorebird and species are represented.• Public trust resources• Look at how beach preservation differs locally

Proactive planning and management	Thinking proactively about short- and long-term threats and impacts to the SC Coast. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather than planning and managing on the emergency scale and timeframe, begin long-term planning in an orderly matter.
Learning and sharing information	Provide clarity on specific beach preservation topics and issues so that everybody is operating from a clear set of standards for permitting and planning.
Tools for beach preservation	Increase the number of tools in the toolbox for beach preservation for the state and all involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify management tools for both short- and long-term needs
Funding and implementation	Discuss how these policy changes may impact the assistance provided to the state. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider funding for any potential changes

INFORMATIVE SESSION

A presentation entitled *South Carolina Beach Policy History and Background* was given by Elizabeth von Kolnitz, which provided an overview of OCRM's programmatic and regulatory goals and approaches as well as a background of South Carolina Beachfront Management Policies. The presentation concluded with a brief history of beachfront management, including the transition from a policy of retreat to a policy of beach preservation.

Following the presentation, participants shared their thoughts on current stressors and pressures on the SC coast. These included:

- High value of at-risk real estate
- Sea level rise and long-term erosion
- Stronger storms creating more acute erosion events
- The cutoff of sediment flows in the watershed
- Increased impervious surfaces increasing runoff and higher volumes of water coming downstream
- Jurisdictional lines not being accurate for all beaches
- Property lines and property rights
- Current setbacks are backward looking
- Tensions from people wanting to protect their investments
- Using a static line in a dynamic system
- Widespread poor understanding of economic dynamics, especially long term
- Equity in adaptation versus buyout funding, which typically go to wealthy beachfront communities and underrepresented communities, respectively
- Lack of education on flood risk for real estate buyers with current vague disclosure language

- Tension between public trust access and oceanfront property owners' expectation that their values will remain high
- Protecting habitat versus critical infrastructure
- Limited tools for giving the environment a voice
- Deciding how we want to preserve habitat (do we want to engineer habitat?)

WHAT IS BEACH PRESERVATION?

To work toward a common, foundational understanding of what “beach preservation” is as it relates to the topics to be discussed by the stakeholder workgroup, the Facilitators highlighted the following statements, which were selected from input provided by the former Technical Advisory Team (TAC):

- Maintaining the status quo
- Preserving natural functions
- Pro-actively maintaining the functionality of the beach/dune system
- Protecting and enhancing natural beach processes
- Balancing habitat and environmental concerns with current development
- Protecting the highly dynamic ecological process and functions that shape, form and maintain the beach, dunes and nearshore habitat.

Utilizing an interest-based stakeholder analysis worksheet, workgroup members were asked to identify stakeholders, interests, and considerations as it relates to the following statements:

- What is beach preservation?
- What is being preserved?
- Who is involved and affected?

The Facilitators led a group discussion to identify commonalities across stakeholders and interests. The following is a high-level summary of those items:

Stakeholders

Conservationists & Natural Resources (habitat, species)	Property Owners (oceanfront, non-oceanfront)	Regulatory & Resource Agencies (State & Federal)
Business Owners / Commercial	Industry / Coastal Engineering	Future Generations
Academics	Tourists	Realtors
Developers	Local Governments	Public Beach User
Elected Officials	General Public	

Interests and Considerations

- Connection to place and quality/way of life
- Public beach access
- Resilience and stability of the resource
- Looking for efficient use of funds; concern surrounding investments in bad, short-term solutions
- Experiencing the intrinsic, natural aspects and value of the natural resources
- Feasibility of long-term planning; difficult to balance short- and long-term management of policies and processes
- Habitat protection and ecosystem management/preservation

FACILITATED GROUP DISCUSSION: BEACH PRESERVATION STAKEHOLDER WORKGROUP TOPICS AND THEMES

To confirm and identify the themes and topics that the Workgroup will discuss over the next several meetings, the Facilitators led members through a series of rotating discussions around the topics of beach nourishment, land management, and an open topic to be defined by the Workgroup. The following provides a summary of input gathered during these discussions:

Beach Nourishment

- When done well, it's a good short-term solution for beach preservation but it also gives everyone a false sense of security. Not a viable long-term solution
- Considerations include source and borrow area(s) as well as quality
- Window and timing of nourishment is important to consider
- Consider requiring a bond for downdrift impacts
- Project criteria need to be analyzed to identify gaps and updated.
- Costs, dedicated funding, and funding responsibilities (local vs state) need to be discussed
- Operational (ie, annual) approach to nourishment
 - Discuss the pros/cons of larger versus smaller, more frequent projects
 - Permit (similar to USACE general permit)
 - Impacts (persistent/cumulative vs one-time)
 - Nearshore placement for beneficial use
- Should groins be required with all projects?
- Could tie nourishment funds to resilience planning requirements for local governments
- What does beach stewardship look like at the local level?
 - Tie funding to long-range plans (condition of grant)
- Beach Resiliency Plans and "grants" that take into account disaster and recovery planning as well as resilience analysis

Land Management

- Land management is another word for managed retreat
- Spatial and temporal planning
- Future-oriented
- Scale and location
 - Landscape/state coastline (proactive, long-term)
 - Parcel/property (reactive, short-term)
- How do we define a planning area? Estuarine and oceanfront?
- Beach resilience plans
- Structure groundwater management regulations with flexibility for a dynamic system
- Local plans are vague – how do we make plans that take location uniqueness into account and have projects identified for when funding opportunities arise?
- What is the best data to use for planning?
- How do we get communities to think proactively?
- How do other plans, such as inlet management plans, marsh management plans, groundwater plans, and SLR plans connect to local comprehensive beach management plans (LCBMPs)?
- How do we help local plans be more comprehensive and encompass whole systems and encourage future planning?
 - Suggestion – Evaluate and add requirements beyond minimum elements
- Beach Resilience Plans
 - Identifying potential remedies for beach migration, erosion, ecosystem/habitat changes
- Identify how to have more complete local beach management plan tools and capacity building

Other

- How comprehensive should plans be? Do they need to take into account habitat management (birds, turtles, etc) and ecosystem functions (natural vs recreational)?
- Identify outstanding data needs (groundwater, monitoring, nature-based solutions, new and innovative technologies and practices)
 - Explore grants for local and state data collection
- Estuarine shoreline management
- Creating accurate, shared terminology
- Disaster planning and vulnerability analysis
- Funding prioritization (planning v. implementation)
- Advisory panel
- Public notices
- Coordinating and improving emergency orders across state and federal agencies
- Vulnerability assessments and case studies that acknowledge various scenarios

Appendix A

SC Beach Preservation Stakeholder Workgroup

Ross Appel
Attorney & Charleston City Council Member

Amy Armstrong
South Carolina Environmental Law Project

Keith Bowers
Biohabitats, Inc.

Jenny Brennan
Southern Environmental Law Center

Blanche Brown
DeBordieu Colony Community Association, Inc.

Alex Butler
SC Office of Resilience

Emily Cedzo
Coastal Conservation League

Melissa Chaplin
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Nicole Elko
SC Beach Advocates

Paul Gayes
Coastal Carolina University

Justin Hancock
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

Iris Hill
Town of Edisto Beach

Lindsey Jackson
SC Realtor's Association

Michelle Pate
SC Department of Natural Resources

Aaron Pope
City of Folly Beach

Queen Quet (or designee)
Gullah/Geechee Nation

Jack Smith
Attorney

Don Thomas
Peace Sotheby's International Realty

Steven Traynum
Coastal Science & Engineering

Rod Tyler
Industry - New technology/Living shoreline products/Property Owner on Marsh in Murrels Inlet

Robert Young
Western Carolina University