

MARINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Friday, April 28th, 2023
Virtual Meeting Via GoToMeeting

MAC Members Present: D. Swygert, P. Keener, M.P. Adams, C. Woods (virtual), J.R. McCroskey

MAC Members Absent: J. Massey, J. Cribb

DNR Staff Present: B. Keppler, T. Snoots, J. Binz, R. Milan, D. Sanger, M. Hodges, A. Locatis Prochaska, T. Darden, P. Kingsley Smith, B. Dyar, J. Kinsella (virtual), A. Tweel (virtual), J. Ballenger (virtual), J. Yost (virtual), C. Busch (virtual), K. Luciano (virtual)

Guests: Chaplain Jeff Shealy, Scott Whittaker, CCA

1. Call Meeting to Order – Chairman Swygert:

Chairman Swygert called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

2. Housekeeping – J. Binz:

Julie reviewed the processes in place for the Virtual Meeting.

3. Invocation – Pastor Jeff Shealy:

Pastor Shealy led the Invocation for the meeting.

4. Pledge of Allegiance:

J.R. McCroskey led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Public Comment – Chairman Swygert:

There were no public comments for this meeting. C. Woods thanked everyone for their participation in the Marine Resources Center Open House event.

6. Approval of Minutes: Chairman Swygert:

Chairman Swygert asked for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes (January 2023). P. Keener made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. M.P. Adams 2nd. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Deputy Director Comments – B. Keppler:

Deputy Director Keppler's comments included the following points:

- Thanked the committee and SCDNR staff for their participation in the Open House event. Total attendance for the event was 1,897.
- Recognized the 2022 Marine Resources Division Employee of the Year nominees and winner.
- Provisional areas for shrimp opened April 27th.
- The Blue Crab Report has been presented to the Senate Fish, Game and Forestry committee. Another presentation will be made to the House Natural Resources Committee in the future.
- Updated FY24 budget requests:

- Request for appropriated funds to replace federal funds that had come to the end of their life for the Fishery Statistics program has been fully funded by both the House and the Senate.
- Funding requests for employee recruitment and retention efforts and a new Crustacean manager were fully funded.
- A small amount of funding may be received for the 1.5 million request to replace funding that has been lost over the years.
- Request for 18 million in non-recurring funds was made for infrastructure updates to the Fort Johnson campus, and about 10 million may be funded.
- Deputy Director Keppler offered an introduction to the topic of the report presentation.

8. **Report:**

A. **The Marine Resources Division: a leader in protecting and studying our salt marsh habitats in South Carolina**

Dr. Denise Sanger discussed why salt marshes are considered critical habitats and provided an overview of the Marine Resources Division's efforts to study these ecosystems. These efforts include research on finfish, blue crabs, marsh dieback, marsh health, and living shorelines.

Michael Hodges stepped in to discuss living shorelines and community-based restoration efforts. He highlighted the work of the South Carolina Oyster Recycling and Enhancement (SCORE) and From Seeds to Shorelines Programs, as well as the successful expansion of restoration efforts through collaborative projects.

Abi Locatis Prochaska reviewed SCDNR's outreach efforts to educate the community, outside agencies, and collaborative partners on living shorelines and regulations. These efforts include creating a guidance document on living shorelines research, developing a living shorelines website for landowners, and organizing training courses for the community and decision makers.

Denise concluded the presentation by highlighting the ways in which the Marine Resources Division will continue to support salt marshes. These efforts include seeking new funding opportunities, conducting new projects, continuing existing research and restoration, exploring new avenues to expand our knowledge base, and continuing to engage the public.

Chairman Swygert asked about the most prevalent reason for losing salt marsh habitat. Dr. Sanger advised that it is difficult to pinpoint and likely a combination of factors; some including

erosion of the marsh edge from boat wake and storm surge, drought conditions, tidal frame elevation, and sediment supply.

Chairman Swygert also asked if increased coastal development was causing harm to the salt marshes and, if so, if the Committee should pursue more direct enforcement against development. Dr. Sanger advised that there is a correlation between the amount of impervious cover and the environmental quality of marshes. There have been efforts to limit impervious cover but, beyond outreach, it falls upon the planners and municipal governments to manage the amount of impervious cover and development.

C. Woods commented that the Committee and Division need to take an offensive stance toward economic development, as this causes the biggest impact to the ecosystem.

P. Keener encouraged use of the Wild Activity Marsh Metaphors activity to engage stakeholders of any age. She also thanked SCDNR staff for their work on the Open House event and Deputy Director Keppler for her updates on funding and legislation.

M.P. Adams commended the Seeds to Shorelines project and thanked staff for their efforts to educate younger generations to understand the importance of marsh preservation.

Chairman Swygert asked about projects outside of the coastal region. Michael Hodges confirmed that the SCORE program has expanded their oyster shell recycling and educational efforts across the state.

9. Date, Place & Time of Next Meeting – Chairman Swygert:

The next scheduled meeting of the Marine Advisory Committee is Friday July 21st @ 10:00 am.

10. Adjourn – Chairman Swygert:

Chairman Swygert adjourned the meeting at 11:07 am.