

Minutes of the August 13, 2025 Town of Kiawah Island Environmental Committee Meeting

Attendees: Madeleine Kaye, Jim Jordan, Aaron Given, Matt Hill, Lynne Sager, Liz King, Lynda Leffler, Jennifer Hayes, Cindy Perry, Pam Wilson.

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes from June 11 meeting approved. No edits.

Program Updates

- Shorebird Stewards: No significant updates; the season concluded with a dinner event attended by over 30 people.
- Conservancy Projects: Updates included ongoing work at the Betsy Kerrison property, such as wildflower planting, irrigation, and demolition of old structures.
- Living Shoreline Project: Liz provided an update on recent activities at Mingo Point, including the construction of 40 manufactured wire reefs (MWRs) with plans to deploy 50. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is assisting with boats and logistics. The deployment is scheduled for next Monday, with media coverage and photography coordinated.
- Discussion about whether KICA or the town contributed funds to the Betsy Kerrison project. Linda will follow up for more information. The property is generally accessible for walking, but attendees were warned about yellow jackets after a recent incident.

SGA Rodenticide Issue & Wildlife Impact

- Jim and Madeline reported on a juvenile bobcat's death, which had high SGA levels, indicating ongoing use of these rodenticides despite previous awareness efforts. Data was presented showing exposure rates and levels in raccoons, opossums, and alligators, with a concerning upward trend since 2023. Discussion covered the sources of SGAs, regulatory changes (now restricted to licensed professionals in South Carolina), and the role of both pest control companies and homeowners in SGA use. The group discussed the need for renewed education, possible incentives for using safer alternatives (bromethalin and cholecalciferol), and the importance of rat-proofing homes.
- Legislative & Regulatory Strategies – 2 options discussed
 - a) Lobbying the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) for a temporary or permanent ban on SGAs in the area, supported by a sustained letter-writing campaign and media outreach.
 - b) Encouraging the community association (KICA) and individual homeowners' associations to ban SGAs, which is legally permissible. The importance of a carefully planned advocacy campaign was emphasized, with a core group (including Jim, the

mayor, and others) tasked with meeting KICA leadership and developing a communication/action plan.

- **Action Planning & Next Steps**

The committee identified three key audiences: homeowners, pest control companies, and legislators/regulators. Plans include using data in advocacy letters, providing letter templates for a sustained campaign, and possibly surveying homeowners and pest control companies to better understand their practices and motivations. Volunteers (Pam, Linda, Cindy, Jim, and Madeline) will work on drafting the action and communication plan, prioritizing audiences, messages, and outreach mechanisms.

- **Additional Suggestions**

Direct outreach to pest control companies to understand their continued use of SGAs. Consideration of labeling or warning requirements for rodenticides. Monitoring EPA regulatory developments, which may further restrict SGA use nationwide

Noise Control Initiatives

- The committee also addressed noise control ordinances, particularly regarding two-cycle engines and gas-powered leaf blowers, based on a request from Mayor Belt. Madeleine proposed forming a subcommittee to review and revise the existing noise ordinance, collecting issues raised at the council meeting and examining gas blower regulations in other municipalities.
- The group discussed the feasibility of transitioning to electric leaf blowers and lawn equipment, with Jim sharing positive experiences from their all-electric landscape contractor. Madeleine suggested benchmarking against Washington DC's approach, while Jennifer raised practical concerns about battery life and maintenance capabilities. The discussion revealed that while electric equipment has improved significantly, cost and practicality remain important considerations, with some companies like The Greenery showing that all-electric operations can be both viable and competitive.
- The group discussed the environmental impact of 2-cycle gas-powered leaf blowers, with Jim noting that 2-cycle engines are the least efficient, most polluting, and noisiest options compared to 4-cycle engines and electric alternatives. Matt shared that while KICA previously studied transitioning to electric equipment, there was resistance due to costs, but technology has since progressed. Liz explained that the Resort currently uses a combination of gas and electric blowers for pool decks, favoring gas for efficiency and electric for noise reduction when people are present. Madeleine tasked Jennifer with conducting benchmarking research on other communities' practices, while planning to follow up separately with Jim regarding their specific assignment.

Adjournment