

Minutes of the June 11, 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 May 14 meeting approved. No edits.

Shorebird Stewardship Program (Memorial Day Weekend)

- 19 volunteers participated, mainly from Johns Island and local residents.
- Coverage on both ends of the island.
- 4 instances of dogs in critical habitat/dunes.
- 2 off-leash dog incidents.
- 2 instances of people disturbing birds in the dunes.
- 175 public interactions (educational or informational).
- Red knots have left; focus is now on nesting birds (Wilson's plovers and American oyster catchers).
- No successful oyster catcher nests this year; some Wilson's plover chicks have hatched.
- Ongoing challenges from tides and storms.

Dog Management and Enforcement Discussion

- Reports of dogs in restricted areas and owners' lack of awareness or disregard for rules.
- Discussion on the value of a dog licensing/registration system to distinguish property owners from visitors.
- Consideration of colored collars, online registration, and QR code signage.
- Emphasis on education and enforcement, including issuing tickets rather than warnings.
- Suggestion to require all dogs on the island to be registered, with proof available on smartphones.
- Consensus to continue exploring these options in a smaller working group.

Resiliency Committee Update

- Restarting the Go Green Initiative.
- Planning a series of educational talks on resiliency, to be held twice a month starting in October.

- Considering integrating these talks into existing committee meetings for efficiency and transparency.
- Developing standards for bulkheads and erosion control devices.
- Emphasis on educational outreach and leveraging existing events (e.g., native plant symposium).

Beach Management Ordinance Update

- Second reading of the ordinance passed; new compromise language adopted.
- Dogs may be unleashed year-round between dawn and dusk in designated areas.
- The mayor can designate suitable nesting habitat areas for restrictions during nesting season (April 1–July 1), based on recommendations from the environmental department.
- Designations must be posted on the town website and are limited in time and area.
- The ordinance aims to balance environmental protection with community needs.

Environmental Monitoring and SGA Exposure Report

- Presentation of new data on SGA (Second-generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides) exposure in wildlife: * 24 raccoons tested, 79% positive for SGA exposure (highest rate recorded). * Opossum exposure rate at 43% (35 animals tested). * Bobcat sample size too small for statistical significance, but high exposure levels noted in past years. * Alligator exposure rates also tracked, with a decline in nuisance alligator removals due to proactive monitoring.
- Discussion of sampling methods (including euthanizing raccoons and opossums for scientific study).
- Concerns raised about the ethics of animal removal for research.
- SGA use is now restricted in South Carolina to licensed applicators, but enforcement and compliance remain challenges.
- Ongoing efforts to encourage voluntary pledges from residents and pest control companies to avoid SGA use.

Conservancy Projects and Other Updates

- Announcement of the “Seed to Shoreline” program: Spartina grass planting at Mingo Point on June 21, seeking volunteers.
- Discussion of efforts to establish a no-wake zone by the bridge for safety, especially for kayakers and paddle boarders.

- Plans to organize a united campaign involving multiple organizations to advocate for the no-wake zone.

Action Items and Next Steps

- Continue developing a dog registration/licensing proposal.
- Expand educational outreach and resiliency programming.
- Maintain and enhance environmental monitoring efforts.
- Pursue further research and advocacy on SGA use and enforcement.
- Continue efforts to establish a no-wake zone and support related safety initiatives.

Adjournment