

# Enhanced Protection for Beachfront and Critically Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Planning Commission Meeting  
March 5, 2025



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## Objective / Purpose

Establish a primary (\*and secondary) preservation zone/buffer along Kiawah's beachfront and critical environmentally sensitive areas as marsh where certain or all types of development are prohibited or significantly restricted to preserve biodiversity, provide protection of development from coastal flooding and erosion and maintain consistent sight lines for preserving the natural character of Kiawah Island.

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## South Carolina Dynamic Beach System

As a dynamic beachfront for the state of South Carolina, due to erosion and accretion rates, significant storms and wave action, and other factors, the jurisdictional lines for the state, move. This is a state administered process. South Carolina law requires SCDES BCM to establish and review the position of the [beachfront jurisdictional lines](#) every seven (7) to ten (10) years. The average annual erosion rate for all oceanfront land that is developed or potentially could be developed is also reviewed during this time frame. This review was last completed in 2018. The state is currently under that [cycle of review](#). Kiawah's time frame for review is in Spring / Summer 2026.

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## Kiawah Island's Marsh

Kiawah's marsh front is primarily located to the north, and far east and west ends of Kiawah. The 2023 Comprehensive Marsh Management Plan

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## Kiawah Island Development Patterns

Unlike many coastal communities, because of forward-thinking during master planning of Kiawah's early development stages and the platting process, the vast majority of Kiawah's beachfront will not be developed. The beachfront areas conveyed to the Kiawah Island Community Association provide approximately on average 100' 150' of natural protection from future development for most of Kiawah's beachfront. Concentrated areas of higher density, principally in three areas of beachfront based on land use patterns and resort activity differ in development pattern. These are properties boundaries along Kiawah's beachfront which extend to the Mean High Water.

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## Property Setbacks

Kiawah rear setbacks vary on properties along the beachfront. They range from 20' to 120' depending on location and zoning district. Majority of rear setbacks are 25', 30', 50', or 120' measured from the rear property line. Property rear setbacks also factor in height of structures as the Oceanfront setbacks for RST-2 Resort Zoning District.

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## Existing Structures & Undeveloped Properties

- According to the [2020 Beach Management Plan](#), an inventory of all structures along the beachfront has been conducted. Excluding beach walkovers, there is only 1 structure located seaward of the OCRM Setback Line on Kiawah Island. This structure is a covered deck attached to a boardwalk. The 5-year review of the Town's Beach Management Plan is scheduled to occur this year (2025).
- Remaining large tracts of undeveloped parcels which may impact Kiawah's beachfront profile are owned by the Kiawah Island Golf Resort.

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## Timeline & Next Steps

- A small Planning Commission workgroup has been established to begin refining objectives, establish preliminary recommendations for the full Planning Commission to consider.
- Phasing of this initiative has been discussed with the workgroup with a focus on the beachfront for Phase I.
- The workgroup will work with staff to study and identify best tools and strategies to address cone objectives.
- No date identified at this time for formal recommendation.

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