



TOWN OF
Kiawah Island

Mayor

John D. Labriola

Council Members

F. Daniel Prickett
Maryanne Connelly
John Moffitt
Scott M. Parker, MD

Town Administrator

Stephanie Monroe Tillerson

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Virtual Meeting via Zoom
September 15, 2021; 2:00 PM

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order:**
- II. **Approval of Minutes:**
 - A. Minutes of the July 2021 Environmental Committee Meeting
- III. **Old Business**
 - A. Kiawah Landscaping Workgroup (Grow Native)
 - B. Shorebird Stewardship Program
 - C. Flood Mitigation and Sea Level Rise
 - D. Grow Native/Parkway Landscaping
 - E. Rodenticides/Wildlife
 - F. Deer Management
 - G. Kiawah Conservancy Projects
 - H. Green Initiative Working Group
- IV. **New Business**
 - A. Plant-based Plastic Straws
 - B. No Wake Zone at Captain Sams Inlet
- V. **Reports:**
 - A. Town of Kiawah Island
 - B. Kiawah Island Community Association Land & Lakes Management
 - C. Kiawah Island Golf Resort
 - D. Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board
 - E. Kiawah Conservancy
 - F. Turtle Patrol
- VI. **Citizen Comments:**
- VII. **Chairman's Comments:**
- VIII. **Committee Member Comments:**
- IX. **Adjournment:**

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

July 14, 2021; 2:00 PM

MINUTES

I. Call to Order: *Mr. Jordan called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.*

Present: Jim Jordan, Chairman
Jim Chitwood
Jim Sullivan
Lynne Sager
David Pumphrey
Pam Wilson
Scott Nelson
John Leffler
Jack Kotz
KINHC: Lee Bundrick
KICA: Lucas Hernandez
KICA: Matt Hill
KIGR: Liz King
TOKI: Aaron Given

Absent: Jane Ellis
ARB: Sara Senst

Also Attending: Dr. Scott Parker, *Council Liaison*

II. Approval of Minutes:

A. Minutes of the May 2021 Environmental Committee Meeting

Mr. Hill made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2021 Environmental Committee meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hernandez and was unanimously approved.

III. Old Business

H. Green Initiative Working Group

Dr. Parker stated the ad-hoc Working Group had its organizational meeting at which the overall strategy and initiatives were discussed. He felt the workgroup was well received by the Resort, Town, and Community Association. He will also meeting with The Club, who is on board with the project. The first working meeting will be next Wednesday in Council Chambers. At that time, the various entities will start working on a charter, timeline, and general initiatives each entity can do to help reduce their carbon footprint in a multi-year project.

A. Kiawah Landscaping Workgroup (Grow Native)

- No Update

B. Shorebird Stewardship Program

- Program Underway

Mr. Given stated that the nesting season had wrapped up at the island's east end with no active

Least Tern nests remaining. He indicated it had been a good season with a lot of nests and chicks along with several Oystercatcher nests and a good number of Wilson's Plover nests. Signage will be left up for the next few weeks in case there are some chicks still hiding.

C. Flood Mitigation and Sea Level Rise

- Adaptive Management Plan Update

Mr. Hernandez reported he would be presenting to the KICA Board reviewing the resilience plan thresholds and initial recommendation for a monitoring program on August 8th. A presentation to the Town will follow.

D. Grow Native/Parkway Landscaping

- Project completed –

Mr. Jordan stated he was pleased with the project overall and noted that all of the perennials are starting to look good and are blooming.

- Guard rail repainted

Mr. Jordan stated that the guard rail was painted before the PGA Tournament with the wrong color, so it is being painted another of the 12 different versions of the Kiawah brown colors.

E. Rodenticides/Wildlife

- Tested five additional animals since the last meeting:
 - Three raccoons – one of the three showed SGA exposure (33%) substantially lower than seen in earlier testing.
 - Two alligators – both showed exposure to brodifacoum (100%)

Mr. Sullivan stated that a neighbor was inquiring with a pest control company about an issue with mice or rats. He was told by the company that rodents were overrunning the island because they could not use second-generation pest control agents, and the older agents don't work. He asked if there was any truth in the comment. Mr. Jordan responded by saying "no" but that he had received a handful of similar calls through the year.

Mr. Sullivan also commented on the frequency armadillos are being seen in the Preserve and asked if he should or should not be doing something. Mr. Jordan stated that armadillos naturally moved to the island three or four years ago and are now a part of the Kiawah ecosystem. Any concerns will be minor, with some being managed, trapped, or damage mitigated on a case-by-case basis. An article on armadillos had been planned for the near future.

- SCDNR sampling – Did not occur
- Clemson Research Project – Funding for at least a minimum proposal has been secured. Graduate student, Meghan Keating, is at Clemson and will visit Kiawah in early August to get familiar with the island and meet with pertinent groups and individuals. There will also be additional conversations with her about more specific details of the research project. The proposal for the project will be a work in progress until later in the fall, with the first fieldwork on the study taking place in January or February of 2022.

F. Deer Management

- No Update

G. Kiawah Conservancy Projects

Mr. Bundrick reported that following the PGA, all of the dataloggers for the groundwater wells were collected. Data was retrieved up to June and will be used to come up with seasonal water tables. He also reported that work on creating maps for the marsh vulnerability project has been going smoothly.

IV. New Business

A. Conservancy Project Funding for FY 21-22 (Integrated Watershed Study)

Mr. Jordan stated discussion of potential Conservancy projects for the upcoming fiscal year have taken place at the last several meetings and noted the Town has a line-item of \$50,000.00 budgeted for that purpose. At the last meeting, five different projects were reviewed, with two selected as having potential. The current proposal removes the ground-based lidar project previously discussed and focuses entirely on an Integrated Watershed Study. Following discussion, if the committee agrees, a formal recommendation will be made to Town Council to approve funding of the project.

Mr. Bundrick stated that Kiawah has focused on the ponds and all the upland areas for the past three or so years. Now many are focused on the estuarine environment and the marshes. This project will try to figure out how water on the island and within the estuarine system affects each other and how the marsh is affected by water quality in general. Some of the focuses are how much water is going in and out, the quality of that water, and studying water inputs onto the island.

Within the study, the island will be split up into different sections based on watersheds. Each section will be studied to create water budgets using tidal gauge information and Weather Station information. Several different weather stations will be established to get a fully comprehensive look at the island in the different regions. Currently, there are two stations; one is at The Timbers on Beachwalker Drive, and the other is at the KICA office and using the same instrumentation. The Conservancy is looking to procure two additional weather stations to put on the other parts of the island to provide island-wide coverage.

KICA consistently measures the water quality within the ponds using different types of measuring equipment. Similar equipment is needed to take measurements within the estuarine environment and the marsh focusing on specific areas near the major marsh outflows at Inlet Cove and Canvasback Pond.

After procuring the equipment, approximately \$14,000 has been reserved, leaving the potential to have a graduate assistant work at the Conservancy to help capture data and analyze it. There's also the potential to use the funds to work with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources through an extended contract with KICA to add additional analyses.

Committee members engaged in an in-depth discussion of the study proposal providing comments and suggestions to be included in the study and points to be made when presenting the proposal.

Mr. Chitwood made a motion to recommend to the Town Council to fund the Conservancy's Integrated Watershed Study Project for FY 21-22. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pumphrey and was unanimously passed.

V. Reports:

A. Town of Kiawah Island

- 2021 Bobcat GPS Study
 - One out of six (17%) bobcats have died
 - Bobcat 200 – January 27th – 2-year-old Male, Willet Island, 19lbs 15oz.
 - Bobcat 250 – January 28th – Juvenile Male, Preserve, 16lbs 8oz. New cat.
 - Bobcat 767 – January 28th – Adult Female, Indigo Park, 13lbs 5oz. New cat. **Hit by car 4/4/21.**
 - Bobcat 300 – January 29th – Adult Female, Flyway Drive, 13lbs 12oz. New cat.
 - Bobcat 450 – October 18, 2020– Adult Female, Captain Sams, 13lbs 3 oz. – 14 years old
 - Bobcat 550 – January 29th – Adult Female, Little Bear Island, 15lbs, 10oz. 2020 recapture.
 - Two dens found
 - Bobcat 550 – 4/12/2021 - Two 8–10-day old male kittens. Den along Ocean Course Drive.
 - Bobcat 300 – 5/11/2021 – Three 4-day old kittens (2 males, one female). Den in secondary dunes along Flyway Drive.
 - Alligator Calls
 - 15 nuisance alligator calls received this year
 - Two nuisance alligators removed to date
 - Painted Bunting Banding
 - Six to eight locations sampled
 - Eight to ten locations remaining, to be completed by August 1st
 - Fall Migration Banding
 - Banding begins August 15th

B. Kiawah Island Community Association Land & Lakes Management

Mr. Hill reported that pond management was in a holding pattern for the summer. The water is getting hot and is monitored on a daily basis for algal and aquatic growth and hopefully prevent any negative outcomes.

Mr. Hill reported on the recent storm. The pond system handled the storm well with no major fish kills as a result of the 3.77 inches of rain being recorded at the maintenance office. Land management had some minor debris to be picked up and one or two trees down.

Mr. Hernandez stated he reviewed the data collected at the weather stations and tide gauges at the Kiawah River bridge and Ocean Park. He noted the monitoring showed there was about a foot and a half of storm surge at the point when the tornado warning was issued with another minor surge about thirty minutes later as another band came through the area. Mr. Jordan stated that the weather station on top of the Timbers showed the highest wind gust of 60 mph at 5 am, wind gusts above 40 mph from about 1 am to 6 am, and highest sustained winds at 37 mph

C. Kiawah Island Golf Resort

Ms. King thanked Mr. Given for his quick response to the loss of an osprey nest during the storm. He quickly created a temporary platform to hold the juvenile.

Ms. King reported that construction had started at Night Heron Park. Fencing can be seen in the back of the pavilion area, but the Nature Center would remain open during the

construction.

D. Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board
None

E. Kiawah Conservancy

Mr. Bundrick provided an update on the Emergency Coastal Resilience Fund federal grant the Conservancy received last year. He stated some of the things being looked into were different types of living shorelines and green infrastructure. There were two webinars, one by Michael Hodges with SCDNR talking about living shorelines and one by Kim Morganella talking about rain gardens. The hour-long webinars were recorded, and the links are available for interested members.

F. Turtle Patrol

Ms. Sager reported 281 nests as of now. The nesting season is still underway and no hatchings have emerged yet. The oldest nest is at 65 days, so it should be hatching soon.

VI. **Citizen Comments:**

None

VII. **Chairman's Comments:**

None

VIII. **Committee Member Comments:**

None

IX. **Adjournment:**

Mr. Hill motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:05 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bundrick and carried unanimously.

Submitted by,

Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,

Jim Jordan, Chairman

Date

To whom it may concern,

Please find this letter in support of the Lowcountry Marine Mammal Network's efforts to make Captain Sam's Inlet a 'No Wake Zone' on the basis of this being a critical feeding habitat for local bottlenose dolphins. "Strand feeding" is a unique hunting behavior in which bottlenose dolphins work together in small groups to herd fish towards the shore. They then use a powerful wave to push the fish onto the shore and then lunge onto the shore to grab the fish. South Carolina and Georgia are the only two locations along the Atlantic coast where this behavior has been documented (Duffy-Echevarria et al. 2008). Captain Sam's Inlet, located between Kiawah and Seabrook Islands in South Carolina, is a main strand feeding location. The dolphins feed here on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis. Disturbance of dolphins while feeding may decrease or stop their normal foraging behavior and cause displacement from preferred habitats (Bejder et al. 2006; Samuels & Bejder 2004).

This behavior is so rare and amazing to witness it attracts at a minimum 10k visitors per year. It has attracted wildlife docuseries to film here such as National Geographic and Netflix. Some dolphins have been monitored in this inlet for 12 hours/day representing a large amount of their daily budget. The dolphins have also been documented to use this inlet to rest, play, mate, socialize, feed, and care for their young. The dolphins are part of the Charleston Estuarine System (CES) stock of dolphins that ranges from Prides Inlet to the north and the North Edisto River to the south (Waring et al. 2015). The population size is currently unknown, though previous estimates from mark-recapture photo-ID studies place it at 289 individuals. Because the stock is small and likely few mortalities and serious injuries would exceed sustainable levels, it is considered to be a strategic stock under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972 (Waring et al. 2015). The CES stock is an estuarine population that is resident to local Charleston waters, where they live year-round.

Dolphins are sensitive to boats, noise, watercraft and tidal changes. When boats use this inlet in excess speed, the dolphins have been documented to stop feeding, leave the area, or dive for long periods of time, directly altering their behavior. According to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, it is illegal to feed or disturb wild dolphins. In 2020, LMMN applied for a No Wake Zone with the SCDNR because of the increasing boat activity moving in excess of idle speed, thus disturbing the dolphins. LMMN was denied the No Wake Zone stating that a No Wake Zone is typically given when boater safety is at risk such as at fuel docks, for swimmers or marinas (Section 50-21-870 (B6)). But, according to **SECTION 50-21-870 (B7)**, a boater should not: *"chase, harass, molest, worry or disturb wildlife with a personal watercraft, specialty procraft, or vessel except while lawfully angling for, hunting, or trapping wildlife"*.

The SCDNR has protected other critical habitats in South Carolina for nesting birds and sea turtles and we would encourage you to protect this area as well. The Town of Kiawah Island supports making Captain Sam's Inlet a No Wake Zone for the conservation and safety of our local dolphins.

Sincerely,

Town Mayor