



CONSERVATION PLAN DEBUT

It's an exciting time for the Initiative as we look forward to the debut of the finished Conservation Plan later this month, celebrate the submission of two funding proposals, and prepare to take the next steps toward Plan implementation. As previously discussed at Coffee with SASMI over the past several months, SASMI's framework is being restructured to better support on-the-ground conservation. We look forward to keeping the coalition updated as that continues to take shape. The coalition remains incredibly valuable to SASMI and will be a part of that restructuring. Thank you for your work and dedication in helping us reach these important milestones, and for your support as we continue to "marsh forward!"



CONNECT WITH THE COORDINATOR

Hello all – it’s my pleasure to connect with you here in my first SASMI newsletter. My name is Amanda Gobeli, and I’m a Project Coordinator with a background in environmental science, natural resource conservation, and project management. I am also a self-proclaimed “bird nerd” and am thrilled to be part of SASMI! If you have questions or simply want to visit without setting up a formal meeting, feel free to call during “**office hours!**” I have set aside a couple of hours on Fridays, from 2-4 PM ET, without other appointments. You can reach me at (720) 333-6224.



SASMI PARTNERS’ GOOD WORK

Efforts to secure Initiative funding are underway! Thanks to support from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the SASMI Steering Committee, The Conservation Fund, on behalf of the SASMI Coalition, has recently applied for two grants to support the implementation of the forthcoming SASMI regional conservation plan. The Conservation Fund and the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition have applied for an EPA Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving grant to support salt marsh enhancement and other green infrastructure investments in St Helena Island and other Gullah/Geechee communities across the SASMI region. Numerous groups across four states, with The Conservation Fund serving as a regional coordinator, also submitted a pre-proposal to the NFWF National Coastal Resilience Fund for community planning and capacity building for future nature-based solutions that support the SASMI regional plan. If successful, these projects will start in 4Q 2023.

[On U.S. Barrier Islands, African-Rooted Traditions Protect against a Relentlessly Rising Ocean.](#)

An estimated one million Gullah Geechee people live on the coastal areas between Jacksonville, Fla., and Jacksonville, N.C., with a rich cultural heritage of West African traditions adapted to fit life on the barrier islands where they lived, largely isolated from the rest of the American colonies before the American Revolution. Salt marsh plays an important role in sustaining the livelihood and culture of the Gullah/Geechee Nation, who have been valued SASMI partners aligned with our goal to conserve approximately one million acres of salt marsh. This article

provides insight to how the Gullah Geechee have worked to preserve their heritage, maintain ownership of their lands, and steward the vital yet delicate coastal ecosystem.

[After decades, project to fix a Georgia salt marsh shows early results.](#) On the southern end of the Georgia coast, old scars left in the marshes by the logging industry are starting to heal, thanks to new federal funds. Officials announced the completion of the first stage of the project Friday, in which the Army Corps of Engineers spent \$3.1 million to close two logging cuts through tidal salt marshes so the water can flow naturally. The Corps will monitor the results. If it's deemed a success – and the necessary funding is available – there are plans for a second phase, which would close another large cut in the marsh.

[Interior and Defense Departments Launch Readiness and Recreation Initiative to Preserve Green Spaces, Enhance Recreation Opportunities Around Military Installations.](#) The Departments of the Interior and Defense announced a new partnership and \$80 million in investments to preserve land around military installations and improve access to outdoor recreation for millions of Americans. Through the new Readiness and Recreation Initiative, the Interior Department's National Park Service will provide approximately \$40 million in funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LCWF) and matching \$40 million funds from the Defense Department's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI). Learn more in the Funding Reminders section below.

[A Dialogue on Sustaining Coastal Wetlands.](#) More severe storms and rising sea levels resulting from a changing climate pose a threat to ecosystems along the U.S. coast. These include beaches, dunes, wetlands, and marshes, which provide significant environmental, recreational, and economic benefits. Practices to sustain these ecosystems are available, but are not well understood, face legal and financial obstacles, and have not been widely implemented. On January 19, 2023, the Environmental Law Institute hosted a panel of experts who explored measures and practices for sustaining coastal wetlands in the face of a changing climate. This is a transcript of that discussion which has been edited for style, clarity, and space considerations.

[Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Projects Recommended for Funding.](#) NOAA is recommending more than \$265 million in funding for 38 projects through the Biden-Harris Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law with funding leveraged from the

Inflation Reduction Act. These projects span a broad range of habitats and restoration techniques. They will reconnect rivers to their historic floodplains, outplant corals to rebuild reefs, build living shorelines that will protect coasts from erosion and sea level rise, and more.

[Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Underserved Communities](#)

[Recommended for Funding](#). NOAA is recommending nearly \$25 million in funding for 35 new projects that will advance the coastal habitat restoration priorities of underserved communities. The investment is provided through the Biden-Harris Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law with funding leveraged from the Inflation Reduction Act. These projects will support community-driven habitat restoration and help build the capacity of underserved communities to participate in restoration activities.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

[Coastal Watersheds Grant](#)

The request for proposals for the 2023 NEP National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant Coastal Watersheds Grant is now available. RAE will select grantees through a two-step process: 1) letters of intent (LOI); and 2) full proposals by invitation only. Both steps are competitive and a request for full proposal does not guarantee funding. **LOIs are due on Friday, May 5, 2023** and must be submitted online via the submittal portal. Projects must occur in their entirety within the geographic areas shown on [this interactive map](#).

[LWCF State Assistance + REPI Partnership Challenge Program](#)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1964 to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard our natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. Using zero taxpayer dollars, the LWCF invests earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to help strengthen communities, preserve our history and protect our national endowment of lands and waters. Applicant eligibility is limited to a the lead agency designated by the Governor or by state legislation for the purposes of implementing LWCF in that state. Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM, ET on **August 21, 2023**.

COFFEE WITH SASMI



Our April Coffee with SASMI occurred on Friday the 28th. The meeting recording is available [here](#) and the meeting agenda and chat can be found [here](#). *Please note that Amanda sent out a new recurring invitation following that meeting; if you did not receive it, please reach out!* We hope you'll join us at the next Coffee with SASMI Friday, May 26th 10:00-11:00 am EST via Microsoft Teams.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

[Georgia Climate Conference | May 15-17 | Athens, GA](#)

The 2023 Georgia Climate Conference aims to support and accelerate Georgia's efforts to take practical steps to minimize the risks and maximize the opportunities associated with a changing climate. The event will bring together hundreds of attendees representing multiple sectors and areas of expertise to collaborate, raise awareness of work across the state, highlight progress, and identify opportunities to do more. [Registration is now open.](#)

[Blue Carbon Law Symposium | May 17-18 | Athens, GA](#)

The first Blue Carbon Law Symposium, hosted by University of Georgia in partnership with Georgia Sea Grant and S.C. Sea Grant, is fast approaching. Coastal decision-makers are one of the target audiences for this event, which will include presentations on developing blue carbon projects in state waters, federal perspectives, community impacts and engagement, and other topics. While this event coincides with the Georgia Climate Conference, dual registration is not required if you only want to attend the Blue Carbon Law Symposium. [Registration is now open.](#)

[Workshops to Review the Southeast Conservation Blueprint | May 18, 24, or 25 | Virtual](#)

The Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) is a regional conservation initiative that spans the Southeastern United States and Caribbean. The primary product of SECAS is the Southeast Conservation Blueprint, a living, spatial plan that identifies priority areas for a connected network of lands and waters across the region. We need your feedback on the draft

Blueprint! Your input helps to ensure the Blueprint represents on-the-ground conditions and captures your conservation priorities. Workshops focus on different regions. [Register here](#).

[DoD Climate Resilience Workshop | July 10-13 | St. Louis, MO](#)

This Workshop will provide a forum for DOD stakeholders and partners to explore the many facets of climate change, a national security threat that has tangible impacts to military readiness. Installations, environmental organizations, and climate change professionals will all be broadly represented to help inform the Military Departments on data, tools, and resources for addressing and combatting climate change threats. [Registration is free](#).

CONNECTING THE COALITION

SASMI Coalition Contact List: this is the updated list of coalition members. We hope this helps connect you all and facilitate collaborations to further your good work. Please do not share this outside of the coalition. An updated coalition contact list will be made available each month in the SASMI newsletter. Please email amanda.gobeli@ag.tamu.edu if you have any updates to contact information.

MARSH Forward!

This newsletter is distributed by the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative Please share salt marsh related news, learning opportunities, publications, and management tools by emailing amanda.gobeli@ag.tamu.edu | [Unsubscribe](#) from this list.