



## INITIATIVE NEWS

In the first part of this new year, we're focused on following up on the tasks that came out of our SASMI Partnership Council meeting in December, while also gearing up for the next convening of the SPC this spring. We are also preparing for and looking forward to the release of our state roadmaps and SASMI impact report later this year. As you'll see below, many of our partners are also off to a busy start in 2026 with lots of upcoming events!



Trey Cooper, UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant

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## SASMI PARTNERS' GOOD WORK

**Ocean Sediments Key to Survival of Northeastern U.S. Salt Marshes**. A new study led by the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Massachusetts Geological Survey reveals a previously undiscovered source of the sediments that are key to the salt marshes' survival: the ocean. The research, published recently in *Geophysical Research Letters*, relies on an innovative method of working with satellite data to see a process that has been hitherto invisible and

holds immediate implications for coastal management. While this effort doesn't focus on our SASMI states, there may be transferrable lessons learned.

**Conserving Iconic Coastal Habitat In South Carolina's Grand Strand.** The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism used the award to purchase 107 acres of critical coastal habitat located at the confluence of the Little River and Atlantic Ocean—land that will be set aside for permanent conservation and public access to nature in the rapidly developing Grand Strand region. The site, initially conserved by the Open Space Institute and four siblings whose family has owned portions of the land for more than a century, represents iconic local landscapes and cultural importance to the Gullah Geechee and Waccamaw Indian peoples. It includes a portion of Waties Island, one of the last remaining undeveloped barrier islands of its size in the Southeast.

**Interactive Tool Gives Virginia Communities Data on Economic Effects of Marshes and Living Shorelines.** Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) researchers have developed a tool that individual landowners, communities, and resource managers can use to help them make decisions about projects in Virginia's Middle Peninsula. The tool, which is called SHORE-BET, calculates ecosystem and economic benefits for marsh restoration projects. Knowing the benefits that landowners and communities would get from projects can help decision makers prioritize where to allocate funding. In recent months, close to 2,000 visitors have explored the tool. Take a look and consider what utility a tool like this would have for our SASMI geography!

**Editorial: South Carolina needs a plan to save our salt marshes.** "A defining feature of South Carolina's coast is the roughly 350,000 acres of salt marshes that line our rivers and tidal creeks, and no one seems to know for sure how healthy they really are or how best we can help them survive in future years. That must change." Post and Courier highlights a need we know all too well in this opinion piece.

**First Line of Defense: Building resiliency through native plants on Georgia's coast.** The State Botanical Garden of Georgia at the University of Georgia and the Jekyll Island Authority are partnering through the garden's Georgia Native Seed Network to regrow native plants and restore the coast's vital ecosystems. Historically, conservationists lacked the native plant seeds and materials to restore these lands. Now, a grant from the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship

Program has funded the construction of a greenhouse at Jekyll Island State Park to cultivate maritime grasses, including wiregrass, muhly grass, and broom sedges. Shanna Lee, the Georgia Native Seed Network technician stationed on the coast, has grown more than 170,000 plugs of native grasses for restoration projects.

## FUNDING REMINDERS

### [Cornell Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative](#)

This grant opportunity is seeking projects that contribute to bird conservation on private lands through activities such as (but not limited to) strategic planning, outreach, habitat management, stewardship, bird monitoring, eBird use, capacity building, and land or easement prioritization. Specific award categories include Capacity and Partnership Projects (6 grants of \$10,000 each) and Management and Restoration Projects (8 grants of \$25,000 each).

Applications are due on **March 1, 2026**.

### [FY2025 Disaster Supplemental Grant Program](#)

The FY 2025 Disaster Supplemental Notice of Funding Opportunity is not just about rebuilding—it's about transforming local economies after disaster, with an emphasis on improving communities' economic outcomes and resilience to future disasters. This funding opportunity encourages broad based local engagement and places special emphasis on projects that involve private industry in disaster recovery and economic renewal. Readiness and Implementation grant applications will be accepted and reviewed on an ongoing (rolling) basis until funds are exhausted or the Notice of Funding Opportunity is canceled; Industry Transformation grant applications are due on **Tuesday, March 3, 2026**.

### [2026 Climate Smart Communities Initiative](#)

CSCI awards provide funding and technical assistance to advance community-based climate resilience in communities or regions that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Grants typically range from \$60,000 to \$115,000 based on the scope of work proposed in the application. The program prioritizes funding for communities that include historically disinvested populations at increased risk to climate-related impacts. The competition is open to US-based project teams composed of a climate adaptation practitioner and representatives

from a local or regional government entity and a community-based organization. Applications are due by **March 12, 2026**.

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## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

### [Risk Communication Training for the Coastal Inundation Community of Practice | February 11, 2026 | Virtual](#)

Join the Coastal Inundation Community of Practice for a virtual 2-hour Risk Communication training designed to strengthen how we talk about coastal hazards, risk, and preparedness. Effective risk communication is essential for coastal practitioners working on planning, preparedness, and community engagement. This interactive session is based on NOAA's Office for Coastal Management's Seven Best Practices for Risk Communication training and is tailored for community of practice members. (Course registration is currently full, but there is an option to join the waitlist). You can also learn more about the [Coastal Inundation CoP here](#).

### [Count the Carbon in your Wetland: Explore the Pacific Northwest Blue Carbon Calculator | February 17, 2026 | Virtual](#)

Join The Pew Charitable Trusts on February 17 at 11:00 AM PT / 2:00 PM ET for a Wetland Carbon Network webinar introducing this new regional planning tool. Speakers will cover why and how the calculator was developed, demonstrate its use, and share real-world applications. They will also discuss how the tool supports climate-informed planning by helping practitioners compare scenarios, assess restoration benefits, justify investments, and align wetland projects with climate mitigation and resilience goals.

### [Seminar: Accounting for Future Change in Wildlife Action Plans | February 18, 2026 | Virtual or Raleigh, NC](#)

Wildlife action plans must consider how species will be impacted by ongoing and future climate, land use and other global changes if proposed management actions are to deliver sustained benefits for species and ecosystems. We will describe a multi-year effort to support states and other partners in the Southeast as they integrate future change into wildlife action planning.

### [2026 ACE Basin Symposium | February 26, 2026 | Walterboro, SC](#)

The ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve invites you to the 2026 ACE Basin Symposium! This year's theme is Insights from the Estuary. The symposium will focus on recent, ongoing, and potential research in the ACE Basin. Our aim is to deepen our understanding of research in the region, build partnerships among institutions, agencies, and other organizations working in this area, and identify research needs. It will be a place for researchers, students, landowners, and others working in or with an interest in the ACE Basin to learn, share, and collaborate.

**[Coastal Cultures Conference 2026 | March 20-22, 2026 | St. Helena Island, SC](#)**

The 2026 Coastal Cultures Conference will center on historic St. Helena Island, SC and journey to the Port Royal Sound and May River in Beaufort County, SC. This annual conference hosted by the Gullah/Geechee Sustainability Think Tank brings together a wide variety of diverse environmental leaders focused on ensuring not only the sustainability of the coast and our waterways but also the cultural heritage of communities such as that of the Gullah/Geechee Nation. This year, the event will include a coastal adaptation and sustainability tour on the South Carolina coast, the Bluffton Gullah Cultural Heritage Center, Gullah/Geechee Party with a Purpose, Gullah/Geechee Living Marketplace, and the annual Coastal Culture Circle of Engagement.

**[Marsh Madness Salt Marsh Conservation Expo | March 21, 2026 | Okatie, SC](#)**

Join Port Royal Sound Foundation and others to learn about the valuable services our salt marsh provides and the work going into conserving it. Followed by an Oysters, BBQ & Bluegrass social in the evening!

**[Annual Meeting of the National Shellfish Association | March 22-26, 2026 | Portland, OR](#)**

The National Shellfisheries Association is hosting their next Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon in March 2026. There are many topics which may be of interest here, but take special note of the "Shellfish Restoration & Conservation" session moderated by Peter Kingsley-Smith. This segment will feature a diversity of presentations related to research and efforts to restore, enhance or conserve molluscan shellfish species (not just oysters!). Living shorelines, ecosystems services, sustainability, and increased resiliency are all relevant themes for talks submitted to this session.

**MARSH Forward!**

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