

INITIAL MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

One of the goals from the 2009 Conservation Strategy relates to recreation on the Island with the mission of providing a high quality, nature-based recreational experience and environmental education for the general public. Objective B of the Strategy included the following:

Objective B: Develop educational programming and materials to promote stewardship of priority communities

This objective emphasized the importance of environmental education on the Island, and opportunities for coordinating and expanding environmental education were discussed at Conservation Committee and public meetings. Through these discussions, it became apparent that coordination of educational programs on the Island needed special focus. Dr. Terry Norton agreed to engage with environmental educators on the Island and in the region and form a Jekyll Island Education Subcommittee. Initially, the subcommittee's objectives were to:

- 1) Identify the facilities, programs, and services already in place
- 2) Define each group's objectives, audiences, schedules
- 3) Determine the gaps and redundancies in programs and people touched by the education coalition on Jekyll, and
- 4) Create a vision for environmental education on Jekyll Island.

The subcommittee held its initial meeting on December 21, 2010, and compiled the following information:

Jekyll Island Education subcommittee members include:

- Terry Norton, DVM, Dipl ACZM, Chair of the Jekyll Island Conservation Planning Committee and Education Subcommittee; Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC) Director and Veterinarian
- Captain Phillip Kempton, Jekyll Eco/Dolphin Tours
- Alicia Marin, GSTC Education Coordinator
- Alice Smith, Retired Educator, currently works at Wild Birds Unlimited
- Donna Stewart, Center Director, Jekyll 4H
- Lydia Thompson, Artist, writer, bird tour leader/educator, and researcher
- Dawn Zenkert, Coordinator, Tidelands
- Gloria Zocchi, Retired teacher, volunteer at GSTC

Existing Facilities, Programs, and Services

Below is a summary of the existing educational facilities and the audiences that they address. Together these groups will generate ideas for improving and expanding on existing efforts and inspire new and effective educational programs. Audiences targeted by these programs include children, adults, school groups, scout groups, home schoolers, veterinarian students, graduate

students, researchers, land planners and other professionals, tourists, teachers/teacher workshops, special events, artists, photographers, off-island outreach, seasonal, and conference groups/field trip for participants.

Jekyll Island 4-H Center

- Part of the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension.
- Located on the south beachside of island.
- One of five centers in the state that offers the largest environmental education program in the country.
- Since 1983, the environmental education program has served over 225,500 participants.
- Serves public, private, and home schools, church groups, 4-H and scout groups.
- Residential and day programs available.
- Offers quality programs based on the Georgia Performance Standards.
- First 4-H Camping programs in 1983 and Environmental Education in 1987.
- Offers classes in beach, maritime forest, marsh, invertebrates, birds, herpetology, orienteering, freshwater studies, and many other aspects of coastal ecology.
- Coordinates Dolphin and Eco tours with Captain Phillip, the Jekyll Historic District, GSTC, Putt-Putt and Scott's Bikes on the island.
- Available for rent (football, soccer, church camp, etc.) as space allows.
- Employs 12 full time staff and 13 seasonal staff during the school year and 9 during the summer.
- Provides internship opportunities
- Please visit www.jekyll4h.org for further information.

4-H Tidelands Nature Center

- Part of the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension.
- Facility located on salt pond on marsh side of the island (a DNR public fishing enhancement area with large dock and dockside teaching area).
- Opened in summer of 2000 to extend environmental education outreach beyond existing residential programs provided by our Jekyll 4-H Center facility.
- Extends our outreach programs to the general public for additional day use including island visitors, elder-hostel groups, motor coach groups, convention groups, as well as college groups, local school groups, church groups, scout groups.
- Overall, the goals of exhibits are to facilitate greater access to research and conservation. Exhibit area (main and annex building) features live coastal species in both interactive and static displays to enhance visitor's knowledge and awareness of Jekyll ecosystems. Live exhibits include several large and small salt water aquaria and touch tanks with a variety of native fish and invertebrates (e.g., crabs, seastars, whelks), sea turtles, fresh water turtles, diamondback terrapins, snakes, box turtles, and gopher tortoises. Displays focus on coastal ecosystems and species, -including threatened/endangered species: marsh, dock ecology (oysters, barnacles, etc), beach, manatees, right whales, and sea turtles, . Exhibits also provide information on shrimp fisheries and turtle excluder devices (TED), predator-prey

interactions (e.g., fish-sharks), and birding. Lastly, several computer kiosks are available to provide interaction with exhibits' focus (shrimp/TED, fish, and birding). -

- Feature year-round guided kayak tours in the salt marsh. Boat ramp access is available on the far side of adjacent salt pond. These excursions immerse participants in the salt marsh ecosystem; topics include marsh vegetation and structure (e.g., spartina and zones of saltwater tolerance), adaptations of marsh plants and animals, and the importance of oysters and oyster shell restoration. This opportunity uses outdoor observation and experience to communicate research and conservation efforts related to the marsh and live wildlife species, including dolphins, manatees, birds, sharks, fish, and invertebrates.
- Offers quality programs based on the Georgia Performance Standards.
- School and group program offerings include modules on coastal habitats (e.g., beach, marsh) and scientific fields and techniques (e.g., seining, dock study, herpetology).
- Full range of coastal ecology class available just as at the Jekyll 4-H Center.
- Public Nature Walks provided at various locations around the island, including Clam Creek, St. Andrew's, South Dunes Picnic area. Walks focus on barrier island ecology (predominantly beach, forest, and marsh). Depending on location, guides can include island residents.
- Conducts Coastal Explorer program in summers, which explores weekly themes, such as marine mammals, marsh systems, crabs, sharks, sea turtles, astronomy programs, and seining.
- Available for program use by Jekyll 4-H Summer campers as well as environmental education groups.
- Recreational as well as educational opportunities available in adjacent salt pond (e.g., canoeing, fishing, marsh and dock ecology).
- Previously included guest lecture series, featuring marine research and teacher workshops.
- Annual Art Inspired by Nature Sale
- Potential for Citizen Science programs on adjacent salt pond- such as water quality monitoring and fish surveys.
- Provides internship opportunities.
- Please visit www.tidelands4h.org for further information.

Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC)

- Department of the Jekyll Island Authority.
- Facility located in the historic district.
- Approximately 100,000 - 120,000 visitors have visited the Georgia Sea Turtle Center each year since its opening in June 2007.
- Primary mission is sea turtle and diamondback terrapin rehabilitation, research and education. Rehabilitates all native turtle species.
- Serves public, private, and home schools, church groups, college groups, 4-H and scout groups, elder-hostel groups, motor coach groups, convention groups, among others.
- Offers quality programs based on the Georgia Performance Standards.
- Provides outreach to local community, schools, church groups, colleges, and veterinary schools.

- Exhibit Gallery features interactive and static displays on live coastal species, including sea turtles and epibiota, fresh water turtles, diamondback terrapins, box turtles, and gopher tortoises. Most of these turtles are undergoing rehabilitation for a variety of reasons.
- Develops and conducts school and group programs in sea turtle biology, threats and conservation.
- Public programs and opportunities include Turtle Walks, Nest Walks, daily programs in the Exhibit Gallery and Rehabilitation Pavilion, and a lecture series.
- Special events include birthday parties, Teacher Appreciation Nights (2), Sea Turtle Camps (eight 5-day sessions), and annual events (Turtleween, Shell-e-brate Earth Day, Turtles for Tomorrow, Santa and the Sea Turtles, Nest Fest, and Scout Month)
- Diamondback terrapin Education and awareness
- Eight terrapin crossing signs are placed along the causeway during the terrapin nesting season from late April to late July.
- A diamondback terrapin bumper sticker was made and distributed thousands of people
- Mobile diamondback terrapin conservation exhibit.
- Educational display of adult terrapin and hatchlings in the GSTC Rehabilitation Pavilion with an interpretive component delivered during daily educational tours.
- During 2009, the Jekyll Island Authority and GSTC worked with the Department of Transportation to minimize mowing on the causeway during the terrapin nesting and hatching season in order to prevent mortality to eggs and hatchling and adult terrapins during this critical time.
- Coordinates Dolphin and Eco-tours with Captain Phillip, the Jekyll Historic District, the Jekyll Island 4 H Center, and the Tidelands Nature Center.
- Employs 14 full time staff, 20 seasonal staff (AmeriCorps Members), and 3 part time staff. Education Staff consists of 3 full-time and 4 seasonal staff (Americorps Members).
- Provides internship and externship opportunities and professional training for educators and researchers, teacher workshops, veterinary students, and graduate students from the US and around the world.
- Presentations and publications to a variety of scientific organizations.
- Please visit www.georgiaseaturtlecenter.org for further information.

Eco-Educational and Dolphin Boat Tours from the Historic Jekyll Wharf Marina

- Provides on-the-water educational and recreational boat tours to the public and private groups.
- Tour boats are US Coast Guard Certified to carry 40 passengers each; they are also sun-covered with an onboard bathroom.
- Guests will experience dolphins, birds and other marine creatures in their natural habitat. Tours also provide extensive information on the coastal and estuarine environment.
- ECO Educational Tours provide environmental education of the estuary system and its inhabitants combined with a fun experience. Shrimp nets are pulled through the water to gather a bounty of marine species for examination before returning the catch to the water.
- ECO Tours are based on Georgia Performance Standards for science studies.

- Please visit www.captainphillip.com for further information.

Birding and Nature Tours with Lydia Thompson

- Offers Bird Rambles (birding tour) on the beach.
- Offer Golf Cart Nature Tours from April to September.
- Maintain weekly lists of birds seen on Jekyll Island and surrounding marshes.
- Maintains a bird column for Jekyll Islander.
- Please visit <http://www.coastalgeorgiabirding-lydia.blogspot.com> for further information.

Segway Tours

- Guided eco-friendly Tours
- Programs focus on maritime forest, plants, and wildlife.
- Please visit http://jekyllisland.com/Explore/ThingsToDo/Nature_EcoExcursions.aspx for further information.

Gaps in Jekyll Island Education Programs

1) Guidelines/criteria for eco-based tourism:

Jekyll Island offers a great variety of natural resources for recreation and education. The goal is that all groups utilizing these assets will offer quality programming that adheres to all current regulations and policies. If there are new organizations or individuals that would like to develop nature based education programs on Jekyll Island, it is recommended that the Conservation Plan Education subcommittee is presented with a detailed plan for the program for review and approval. Additionally, the Education subcommittee will develop a required nature-based education orientation program. The committee will create a list of guidelines/criteria that all groups must adhere to when conducting educational programs on Jekyll Island. Topics will include but are not limited to how to cohabitate with wildlife and safe distances for viewing, and training on flora/fauna. The subject area/cirriculum of new Jekyll Island education programs will be reviewed by the committee to make sure it is correct, appropriate credentials for the educators doing the teaching, and guidelines on proper procedures and environmental etiquette. This information will be developed and available on a Jekyll Island Authority website focusing on nature-based education programs.

2) Marketing/Communication:

As the draw to Jekyll Island includes the natural beauty of our coastal environment, marketing efforts should continue to showcase and highlight the natural Jekyll Island experience for visitors. As we move forward with re-vitalization and the Conservation Plan, marketing efforts should continue to enhance the visibility of individual organizations as well as collaborative efforts in providing coastal environmental learning opportunities for visitors. With that said, the following suggestions are noted with the idea that collaboration among organizations providing environmental learning opportunities will enhance our efforts to provide visitors with a memorable nature-based experience on Jekyll Island and perhaps one that inspires continued efforts toward conservation of Jekyll Island and its natural resources.

- Design, develop and distribute joint marketing media showcasing Jekyll Island's environmental activities such as rack cards, billboards, video segments, press releases in events magazines and local newspapers, on websites and in power point presentations. Media will be directed to local hotels, island amenities, schools, visitor centers, Chamber of Commerce, hotel guides, phone books, Events Magazine, Jekyll Golden Islander, Georgia Edition-Jacksonville Times Union, Faulkenberry Certain Publications, radio stations, and newspaper columns.
- Identify target markets to advertise and distribute information on Jekyll attractions and programs. Collaborate with area businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Colonial Coast Tourism. Develop surveys to assist in future marketing strategies.
- Utilize innovative technology and marketing strategies (interactive websites, mobile marketing, audio-visual displays, etc).
- Display nature based exhibits/kiosks at key locations (hotels, welcome center, town center) to educate people about wildlife and proper etiquette while in nature. Information about all the nature-based educational and recreational opportunities will be included in these exhibits.
- Utilize key marketing distribution locations (Convention Center groups, area businesses and hotels, civic groups, schools, chamber of commerce, island amenities, newspapers, welcome centers, state visitor's centers, area attractions and Beachscape).
- Contact local businesses and area attractions to provide text information and links to the individual and joint opportunities to engage in the coastal environmental experience on Jekyll.
- Provide information on JI's nature-based education programs to area travel groups, elderhostel-groups, motor coach tours for Brunswick Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Coastal Tours Motor Coach Company. Encourage the Visitor Center general manager to submit a request for Georgia State Welcome Centers (95- Kingsland and North of Brunswick) and other all state visitors centers to showcase all environmental education and ecotourism opportunities on Jekyll.
- Conduct collaborative special events and outreach programs to schools, YMCA, boy and girl scouts, area youth organizations, and participate in area celebrations and exhibit booth set up.
- Link with Georgia youth travel web site.
- Highlight and promote all Jekyll EE organizations at the GSTC, Tidelands, and 4H and others.

Promote joint eco-tour packages for visitors.

3) Increase passive conservation products (signage, ebird lists, brochures, guides):

Existing Passive Marketing items:

- Signs for Wildlife Watching Area in place in 2004
- Signs for island natural habitats in place in 2009
- Seasonal Wilson's Plover nesting sign from April to August Coastal Georgia Audubon Society puts these signs up

- Jekyll Island Bird and Butterfly lists
- Door hangers and posters for businesses and hotels on beach lighting
- CD for sale: Dr Dallmeyer's "Jekyll Island: An Audio of a Barrier Island," a self-guided nature tour of Jekyll Island (2004)
- Taylor Schoettle's books "A Guide to a Georgia Barrier Island" and "A Field Guide to Jekyll Island"
- Websites available with registration like <http://ebird.org/content/ebird> and <http://www.enature.com/fieldguides>. These sites allow people to explore what wildlife may be seen on Jekyll Island.

Proposed Passive Marketing

- Develop a rack card that has basic information and contact information of all educational programming available on Jekyll Island
- Develop a beach etiquette rack card
- Develop an informational kiosk/exhibit in the new retail area, visitors center, and new convention center highlighting all of Jekyll Island's environmental education opportunities
- Develop a marketing strategy with Geo-caching program
- TV channel of Jekyll Island environmental education opportunities
- Increase signage on Bike Trails
- A **QR Code** is a matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code), readable by QR scanners, mobile phones with a camera, and smart-phones. The code consists of black modules arranged in a square pattern on a white background. The information encoded can be text, URL or other data. These new technologies can be placed on signs, kiosk and printed material to help cut down on excessive use of paper and subsequent littering.

Staffing Needs:

- Staffing of various educational programs discussed in this section still needs to be addressed. The first step recommended from the JIA perspective is to place Alicia Marin in a lead role in coordinating island wide education programs to meet some of the goals of this committee.
- This committee, as well as its individual contributors needs to think about staffing as they expand their programs. This can include interns, volunteers, but there will be a need for full time staff and that ultimately needs to be budgeted into the various plans as we move forward.

Vision for Jekyll Island Nature based Education Programs

The goal of the Education Committee is to ensure that the public is aware and provided with the opportunity to engage in coastal environmental learning opportunities and conservation efforts during their visit to Jekyll Island. Jekyll Island will be used as a platform to educate the public about conservation of natural resources on barrier islands and beyond.

- To implement collaborative marketing and communication strategies showcasing all the Jekyll Island environmental organizations: Georgia Sea Turtle Center, Tidelands Nature Center, Jekyll 4-H Center, Dolphin Tours and Bird Rambles, etc.
- Upgrade Tidelands Nature Center, the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, the Jekyll 4-H Center and hire additional staff. Consider the Tidelands Center as the environmental education hub (See Appendix I for more detailed information).
- Attend and present at local civic clubs and EE educational organizational meetings, visitors bureaus: Rotary Club, Lion's Club, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Hotels Sales and Marketing, Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce. Develop a few power point slides that can be used in all JI-based education programs to promote all of the existing programs.
- Develop a formal volunteer program to assist in staffing various programs.
- Update and inform Jekyll Island employees who are in contact with the public (and others) on a regular basis regarding available environmental education programs on Jekyll (re-institute a Starfish-like program).
- Develop a collaborative monthly lecture series on Jekyll Island to educate public about a variety of topics related to coastal Georgia's natural resources that focuses on Jekyll Island.
- Collaborate with local research and conservation organizations and colleges such as College of Coastal Georgia, Savannah State College, Georgia Southern, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, University of Georgia Odum School of Ecology and Warnell School of Forest Resources. Develop education programs that depict ongoing research and conservation efforts in the coastal Georgia. Develop student-based projects and internships in environmental education.
- Develop collaborative programs encompassing Jekyll Island's environmental education opportunities and outreach: elderhostel, Boy and Girl Scouts, and teacher education.
- Develop Citizen Science program and partnership possibilities for additional avenues to communicate environmental education and conservation on Jekyll Island.
- Provide staff with time to research and write effective grants to meet these goals.
- Create a combined Environmental Education logo.
- Integrate conservation based research and management into education programs at all facilities. Use captive education animals to enhance the education process and to promote exploring the natural resources of Jekyll Island.

Expansion of existing education programs on Jekyll Island

UGA 4-H Tidelands Nature Center as an Island Orientation Center

- Staff: increasing the staffing of Tidelands will be critical to move forward with significant expansions
- Collaboration: Proceed with collaborative efforts considered by the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Science, Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resource Division, Jekyll Island Authority, and potentially the College of Coastal Georgia to enhance and upgrade the UGA 4-H Tidelands Nature

Center Facility as a environmental education orientation center/hub in support of Jekyll Island's (including GA DNR & GSTC) research and conservation efforts.

- User-friendly information access: Provide access, involvement, and a link for all user groups to Jekyll Island's coastal environmental education, research, and conservation efforts.
- Expanding existing visitor base: Continue to enhance, expand existing UGA 4-H Tidelands Nature Center program audiences; including school group, general public, scout groups, elder-hostels, motor-coach groups, convention groups, teachers, volunteers, college students, teacher education students, interns, Citizen Science volunteers, and research teams.
- Programmatic goals: Continue to enhance and expand existing programs, including nature walks, school and general public coastal ecology programs (kayaking , canoeing, fishing, sailing) for marsh ecosystem programs on adjacent salt pond and nearby intercoastal waterway elder-hostels, teacher workshops, internships, and Citizen Science initiatives. Incorporate coastal research efforts into these programs.
- Exhibitory goals included: Continue to enhance and expand existing coastal educational exhibits, including current displays highlighting a wide variety of live native coastal species (invertebrates, fish, and reptiles). Outdoor/indoor static/interactive displays highlight Jekyll ecosystems (beach, marsh, forest), fisheries, birds, and species of concern and conservation efforts (right whale, manatee, sea turtles), and provide access to and incorporate latest current coastal research efforts.
- New/Enhanced facility considerations: Platinum LEED Certified, model sustainability, class/meeting spaces, research/lab spaces, office and storage spaces, showcase area/exhibit hall for organisms and exhibits, large aquaria, sterile prep room (kitchen with drain in floor and freezer/fridge), –laundry facilities, public restrooms, trail around pond, “River to Beach” Trail from facility to beach w/viewing areas and interpretive signs, bike trail directly to center, kiosk with all EE opportunities, fishing center (with info. on licensing, bait, gear, access points, and support vehicles).
- Visit www.tidelands4h.org for further information.

The Georgia Sea Turtle Center

- Currently in the process of developing its 5-year plan which will include facility upgrades and expansion for education, research and rehabilitation. The focus will continue to be on native turtles.
- Develop new and exciting programs that integrate education and science in a way that the general public can understand and become engaged.
- Progress will be posted and updated on our website www.georgiaseaturtlecenter.org.

More to come for the other participants...