



Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island

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Dear Jim,

We want to thank you for the thoroughness of Sand County Studios' August 28th public presentation of the draft of the Carrying Capacity and Infrastructure Assessment as well as for the time and patience you and Jim took in responding to questions from the folks in attendance. You certainly made the attendees feel that their input was being heard and considered.

Below are additional comments from David and me as Co-Directors of the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island. In addition, we have attached a few of the thousands of comments IPJI has received on the issue of affordability as it relates to Jekyll Island. Over the years, we have been impressed by how many of Jekyll's visitors (regardless of where they are from) know that Jekyll Island State Park was, by law, designated to be an affordable vacation destination. The attached comments offer a glimpse of the extent to which the public appreciates Georgia's commitment to providing folks of ordinary means with an opportunity to enjoy this unique barrier island state park.

We look forward to your final recommendations to the JIA.

Mindy and David Egan

IPJI COMMENTS:

The JIA should continue to aggressively seek state aid for capital improvement projects. While the state is not legally obligated to fund all capital improvements within Jekyll Island State Park, the JIA is, by law, only responsible for day-to-day operation and maintenance of the state park, not capital projects. The state park's impressive impact on Georgia's economy, as clearly demonstrated in a recent study by University of Georgia economists, should be featured among the reasons why the state should continue to invest in "Georgia's Jewel." The state clearly recognizes the importance of funding capital improvement projects, as demonstrated by its investment in the renovation of Pine Lakes golf course, a new Convention Center, infrastructure improvements to the island's entryway, the Jekyll 4-H Center, the Beach Village retail center, and, most recently, rehabilitation of a section of the island's rock revetment.

More should be done to ensure that additional commercial or residential development of the island is consistent with the state mandate that Jekyll Island be affordable for people of average means. Concern for the dwindling affordability of Jekyll Island is paramount among many of the

state park's visitors, as can be seen in the vast majority of the comments submitted by the more than 13,000 people who have participated in an IPJI survey on the affordability issue. *Attached is a file containing a small selection of the comments dealing with Jekyll's affordability that have been sent to IPJI.

To reduce the pressure on the JIA to generate ever-more revenue, care of Jekyll Island's Landmark Historic District should be the financial responsibility of the state. The island's Historic District is by far the largest National Historic Landmark in Georgia and is one of Jekyll Island's biggest visitor attractions. However, because of the age of the buildings and years they had been neglected, repair and maintenance of these structures is extremely expensive. To date, the state and private investors have shouldered much of the cost, but the Historic District remains a large item on the JIA's list of future capital expenses. Due to the importance of Jekyll Island State Park and its Landmark Historic District, the JIA Board should pursue a legislative solution to funding the renovations and maintenance of the Historic District so that the JIA can concentrate on daily operational concerns, conservation needs and enhancing the state park's amenities

The visitor experience could be enhanced by better signage directing visitors to the island's leading attractions. Although the JIA is aware of the need to improve "wayfinding" on the island and has that as a future goal, inexpensive interim steps should be taken to help people in this regard. For example, there are no signs in the historic district to indicate how to get to the Georgia Sea Turtle Center. Signs at the intersection of Pier Road and Old Plantation Road, at the Commissary, the sign bank at the Morgan Center and the circle by the Club Resort bike barn are needed. Horton Pond and Driftwood Beach need signs. My husband and I have given directions to hundreds of frustrated visitors who would very much welcome some signs to direct them to Jekyll's great attractions.

Given the importance of the JIA's revenue needs, the Carrying Capacity study should include an estimate of how the Authority's current income should be affected by the growth of revenue that will come from the projected 2% growth in visitation.

There are a number of public safety problems that will be exacerbated as visitation to Jekyll Island continues to grow. These problems include landscaping obscuring visibility on the bike paths and Jekyll's roundabout; bike path maintenance and repair; and warning flags for rip tides and dangerous surf conditions. *For a detailed list of safety concerns, see IPJI's comments sent to SCS in May, 2018,

Marketing for golf and tennis as a means of enhancing revenue generated by those amenities should be increased. For example, at the 2016 public meeting for the Golf Course Study, participants encouraged the JIA to market golf more aggressively locally, with billboards, golf packages, social and print media, and on relevant websites, but, to date, little has been done in this regard.

Jekyll Island should be promoted as a venue for bird-watching, nature photography and bicycling enthusiasts, which are three of the most popular outdoor activities in America.

There should be formal procedures established for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of how the impact of the final recommendations made in the Carrying Capacity and Infrastructure Assessment ‘Jekyll experience.’ Included in this regard are a ‘top-down’ procedure followed by the JIA and a grassroots one regarding how the measures taken by the JIA to enhance revenue, through further development of the island or by other means are affecting the ‘Jekyll experience.’ With respect to grassroots input, the JIA should offer convenient ways for visitors to give feedback regarding their experience on the island, such as a display rack with comment cards at hotels, shops and JIA venues, a comments option on the Authority’s website and social media outlets, and online surveys of the state park’s visitors and residents. Questions that could be asked in this regard might be: “*How do you feel about the changes experienced by Jekyll in recent years;*” “*Tell us how we are doing;*” and “*Do you have any suggestions for how we can serve you better?*”