



Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island

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Recommendations to the Jekyll Island Authority in Response to RFI 266

September 17, 2010



INTRODUCTION

In an effort to provide the Jekyll Island Authority with a wide body of public input on the upcoming revision/refinement of the Jekyll Island Master Plan, the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island sampled the views of a number of its members on how to improve the Master Plan so that it can better provide for what most Georgians desire in a beach destination and help ensure that the island's heritage and fragile environment remain protected. The recommendations that follow are an expression of those views and have been personally endorsed by more than 1,300 people from across the state and around the country. We trust that the Jekyll Island Authority will give these recommendations careful consideration, and that the revised Master Plan will reflect the input given to the Authority in good faith by the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island.

Thank you for opening up the Master Plan review process to the public.

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Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island

IPJI's official response to the Request for Information issued by the Jekyll Island Authority to help assist in revising the Jekyll Island Master Plan

1. RFI Topic: Public Participation in the Planning Process

IPJI Recommendation: Draw upon best practices in the field of public land planning to establish an official JIA policy on public involvement in the process of planning for Jekyll Island's future; implement this policy prior to the revision of the Master Plan

Engaging the public in park planning is the most fundamental and crucial component in successful park planning. Successful park planning is a process of envisioning the desired park future and laying out a plan to help realize that future. The desired park future is one that provides visitors their desired recreation and educational experiences and protects the integrity of park natural and cultural resources. Collaborating with the public in park planning requires involving representatives across the full spectrum of citizens in all steps of the planning process from design of the process to critique of management of the park once the plan is implemented. There are no secrets or undisclosed proceedings, written, verbal or otherwise.

The benefits of fully collaborative planning are many. Among them is the realization by members of the public that they have gained knowledge and expertise concerning their parks and how they function. Also, benefits are realized by the broader community of citizens by way of enhancement of their credibility and seeing pride in its accomplishments. The benefits to the managing park agency are gains in credibility, defusing of controversies, and opening doors to opportunities and resources very likely not to have been there had a closed process been employed.

Effective public participation spelled out in a number of published studies (especially transportation planning, e.g., Shively 2007) has these characteristics:

- Use of a mixed-methods planning and design process
- Employment of a local champion in the processes of visioning the future and organizing members of the public and stakeholders

- Clear identification of the desired outcome of public participation and park planning
- Emergence of political leadership working toward needed institutional change and addressing public opposition
- Use of professional experts to supplement local knowledge
- Employment of visualization techniques to educate participants so that there is a clearer vision for the future (Shively 2007).

There is no one approach for properly engaging the public and collaborating with them in park planning. Generally, however, the following are widely accepted as best practices:

1. Select a group of unpaid, neutral citizens and professional experts to collaborate with the park management agency in setting up an initial set of procedural steps for conduct of the park planning process and to work with the park management agency throughout the planning process.
2. Standard and professionally accepted park planning frameworks and best practices are a recommended starting point. Usually this framework needs only be refined to fit the specific park context and any special park purposes. If a planning consultant is employed, they should be intimately familiar with and in agreement with these best practices. No shortcuts should be permitted. Collaboration with the public is central to professional planning.
3. Conduct a random-selection public survey to identify a vision for the future of the park that is consistent with park establishment purposes. Survey procedures are well documented. A neutral surveying entity (e.g., a university human dimension research laboratory) should conduct the survey. Careful professional review of the survey process, survey instruments, analysis approach, approach for use of results and the reporting process is essential. This vision can and should be refined as planning proceeds and new information is gained.
4. Before further public participation processes begin, conduct two or more focus groups for the purpose of refining and clarifying the park vision and further public engagement processes. Members or member characteristics of the focus groups must be selected by a neutral entity who is viewed by the public, by park management, by stakeholders and by politicians as neutral (having no interests other than the welfare of citizens and the park). Focus groups must be conducted by neutral and disinterested facilitators.
5. Throughout the planning process, take steps to assure that everything is kept documented and that documentation is open and easily available. Updates on what has been accomplished, who has been involved, options being identified and documentation should be posted frequently. Social networking is recommended.
6. Conduct appropriate qualitative research to clarify and better understand survey, focus group, political feedback and any other information seeming to not fit the park future vision.

7. With the help of the unpaid panel of citizens and professional experts, monitor and refine planning and public participation processes and breadth of engagement.
8. Layout the full scope of park vision implementation options. Widely solicit public comment on these options. Actively use public comment and the unpaid panel to evaluate the options thus far identified and to identify their priority.
9. With the unpaid panel, describe the process for monitoring implementation and management of the park after the plan is approved and management toward the identified future is underway.

A Jekyll Island Authority official policy on engaging members of the public and collaborating with them in park planning should be established **prior to** revision of the Master Plan so that the public can fully participate in this important endeavor.

– By **Dr. H. Ken Cordell, Senior Research Scientist** [kencordell@gmail.com]

2. RFI Topic: The definitions of the terms “developed” and “undeveloped” land in relation to the legal requirement that no more than 35 percent of Jekyll Island can be developed

IPJI Recommendation 2: Align the Master Plan’s definitions of “developed” and “undeveloped” land with national standards in land use classification

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority Act, as amended in April 1971, provides that the JIA may only “survey, subdivide, improve, and lease or sell” up to 35 percent of the land area of Jekyll Island which lies above water at mean high tide. It is arguably the most important piece of legislation passed by the Georgia General Assembly because this law has helped to preserve what the Jekyll Island Master Plan describes as the island’s main attraction, namely “the accessibility it provides to an unspoiled microcosm of the coastal environment.”

There is virtually unanimous support for maintaining the 65/35 law. However, to ensure that the spirit and intent of the limitation placed on development provided in the Act and the will of the people are fully realized, the definitions of “undeveloped” and “developed” land provided in the 1996 Master Plan must be revised. Those definitions do not currently conform with regularly and widely accepted practices of land planning and state park management.

IPJI, therefore, recommends that the terms “developed” and “undeveloped” be defined in the Master Plan in accord with how they are widely understood among professionals in the field of land use classification and planning. The American Planning Association and its affiliates, including the Georgia Planning Association, along with the National Resource Inventory and various federal agencies involved with land use definitions and planning, rely on the Land-Based Classification Standards (LBCS) for defining “developed” and “undeveloped” land, a system created in 2000.

The JIA's definitions of developed/undeveloped land, as stated in the Master Plan, are, in some cases, inconsistent with the LBCS. For example, the 65 acres of man-made lakes that were engineered to provide fill dirt to contour Jekyll Island's golf courses and to help with drainage are classified as "undeveloped" in the 1996 Master Plan.

According to the LBCS, however, all interior land or water areas less than 10 acres that are completely surrounded by golf course land are defined as built up, or developed, land. In addition, the LBCS states that water bodies less than 40 acres that are artificial (defined as "created by human activity") are to be classified as "developed."

The Master Plan's definitions are also inconsistent with one another in some cases. For example:

- Some "borrow pits" that have been filled with water—such as the ones just to the north of Jekyll's landfill—are classified as "developed," whereas the golf course borrow pits (now lakes) are not.
- "Cleared golf course areas" are defined in the Master Plan as "developed," but sizable areas of woodland and savannah that were cleared to build Jekyll's golf courses are classified as "undeveloped."
- "Active use recreational areas," including lakes and ponds, are classified as "developed" by the Master Plan, but the golf courses' man-made water bodies, many of which serve as hazards (penalty stroke areas) and are a functional part of an active use recreational area, are classified as "undeveloped."

3. RFI Topic: The further development and redevelopment of Jekyll Island

IPJI Recommendation 3-A: Establish an ideal carrying capacity for Jekyll Island State Park based upon visitor preferences as well as the impacts of development on park resources and the visitor experience

The Master Plan has not yet addressed how to determine Jekyll Island's ideal carrying capacity, a term which is typically defined as, *"The type and level of visitor use that can be recommended while sustaining acceptable resource and social conditions that complement the purpose of the park."*

The one attempt by the Jekyll Island Authority to deal with carrying capacity – the February 2009 "Analysis of Long-Term Impacts of Development on Jekyll Island" conducted by the Bleakly Advisory Group – fell well short of the mark. In discounting the question of how much resource or social impact is too much, how much is appropriate and acceptable, the Bleakly Advisory Group started with the unjustified assumption that a 65 percent increase in the all-time high number of Jekyll's lodging units and a peak season daily population of 15,000 people would not affect Jekyll's traditional character. Bleakly went on to rationalize the proposed increase in Jekyll's built environment by comparing the built-out Jekyll of the future to a number of coastal vacation destinations that are not at all comparable to Jekyll, and by basing per acre density

calculations on a Jekyll Island more than twice its actual acreage. Furthermore, the environmental and ecological impacts of the proposed build-out were not considered in Bleakly's analysis.

Efforts to establish carrying capacity for public lands have often resulted in frustration, but few have failed as badly in this regard as the Bleakly Group's analysis of the impacts of development on Jekyll Island. The Master Plan update, therefore, should address the question of carrying capacity and follow a professional approach to dealing with this important issue.

A number of planning and management frameworks have been developed to address carrying capacity, all of which include a description of desired future conditions for park resources and visitor experiences; the identification of indicators of quality experiences and resource conditions; establishment of standards that define minimum acceptable conditions, and the formulation of monitoring techniques to determine if and when management action must be taken to keep conditions within standards. Perhaps the best known and most widely followed of these planning and management frameworks is the Limits of Acceptable Change model, or LAC.

LAC—which is geared toward promoting a compromise between the absolute protection of environmental conditions and the visitor experience, on the one hand, and the unrestricted access to resources for recreation or other purposes, on the other—has as its hallmark intimate, substantive public participation in the planning process as a practical means of blending management requirements and public preferences. By closely involving citizens throughout the planning process, public land managers, in case after case, have been more able to reach responsible and defensible decisions on park operations, changes and improvements.

If public participation programs across the nation have enhanced opportunities for mutual learning, created ownership in land planning, resulted in better planning in the long run, and have contributed to successful implementation of plans for public land management, they can do the same for Jekyll Island State Park.

In short, a sense of ownership in park planning is clearly essential to its success -- people simply cannot be expected to support that which they do not understand, and they do not understand that in which they have not been involved. Likewise, people lose interest and confidence in an administrative process when a plan they were ostensibly involved in fails to reflect the positions, remedies, and concerns they voiced. This is particularly true for an issue as complex as planning for – and properly administering – controls on carrying capacity, especially when private development projects and profit motives are part of the mix, as is the case with Jekyll Island State Park.

IPJI Recommendation 3-B: Preserve Jekyll Island's remaining open beachfront in its natural condition

The 1996 Master Plan states that, *“All previous plans have consistently recognized that Jekyll Island's principal attraction is the accessibility it provides to an unspoiled microcosm of the*

coastal environment. It is this unique opportunity upon which all future plans for the island's viability should be based."

Ensuring that Jekyll Island's currently unobstructed beachfront remains open and accessible to the general public rather than developed for commercial purposes is a goal that is consistent with the Master Plan statement above and with the accessibility mandate in Jekyll Island State Park's founding legislation. It is also in line with the development recommendations made in Jekyll Island Comprehensive Land Use Plan (prepared for the JIA in 1983 by the Institute for Community and Area Development, University of Georgia) and with the 1996 Jekyll Island Master Plan and the 2004 Master Plan Update:

- *"A linear belt of land lying along the beach shall be classified as 'zone of no encroachment.' This zone is to be left in a natural state or restored to its natural state. Crossover structures may be permitted, if the Authority approves them.... No new development along the beach will be permitted. Existing facilities may be rebuilt, except those classified as non-conforming uses." -- Jekyll Island Comprehensive Land Use Plan (1983)*
- *"The focus of this Master Plan for Jekyll Island is on providing new programmed activities and enhancing existing facilities and amenities rather than stressing development of new accommodations or major attractions.... Jekyll Island's lodging and accommodations have abundant capacity, and no new major additions are needed until occupancies and revenues improve significantly." -- "Program Recommendations," Jekyll Island Master Plan (1996)*
- *"The Authority should pursue options to enhance revenue within the 35 percent parameters of the 35/65 rule through a program of primarily redeveloping sites already considered developed while implementing a plan to assure conservation of the island's natural resources." -- Jekyll Island Master Plan Update (2004)*

The preservation of Jekyll's open beachfront as a natural amenity and a visitor attraction gathers added importance in view of the growth of public demand for access to Jekyll's beaches that will come with the 50 percent increase in Georgia's population that is projected over the next 20 years.

IPJI Recommendation 3-C: Provide for a Jekyll Island State Park that is affordable for citizens of ordinary income

Jekyll Island's accommodations should provide a range of price points, but if the state park's affordability mandate is to be honored, the majority of the island's lodgings should be affordable for the majority of people. The upscale Jekyll Island Club Hotel and the soon to be built four-star Jekyll convention hotel will account for nearly one-third of the island's hotel rooms, more than enough to accommodate high end Jekyll visitors. Lodgings priced with average income citizens in mind should, therefore, be the norm for future hotel redevelopment projects, four of which are likely to be undertaken during the next few years.

IPJI Recommendation 3-D: Justify, prioritize and establish the cost-effectiveness of all future infrastructure and commercial development or redevelopment projects as part of a reassessment of the JIA’s analytical framework for determining the appropriate level of future development on Jekyll Island

In February 2009, the Jekyll Island Authority released an “Analysis of Long-Term Impacts of Development on Jekyll Island,” the purpose of which was to “estimate the level of future visitation and related redevelopment necessary to both maintain the Authority’s financial viability and financed investments in visitor amenities and public assets to secure the island’s future as Georgia’s Jewel.” Produced for the Authority by the Bleakly Advisory Group, the visitation analysis/business plan projected a substantial increase in Jekyll Island’s built environment as a means of generating revenue to fund over \$100 million of projects that the JIA believes should be addressed in coming years. Among those projects are various amenity improvements (\$23 million), beach renourishment (\$13 million), and interpretive programs, preservation of historic structures, and adaptive re-use of dormant buildings within the Historic District (\$30 million).

The Bleakly Group’s business plan assumed that the items on the JIA’s project list are both feasible and justifiable; that an increase of roughly 150 percent in the current number of Jekyll’s overnight accommodations is necessary to generate project funding; and that there are no sources of funds to cover these projects other than JIA revenue. Cost/benefit analyses and market/demand studies were not considered in the business plan; neither were alternative means of increasing JIA revenue nor sources of project funding other than JIA income.

Most importantly, the Bleakly Group failed to conduct a qualitative analysis of what Jekyll visitors seek and prefer, making the Bleakly business plan more fitting for a private coastal destination than for a state park in which public preferences must be a vital part of long-term planning

In view of the shortcomings of the Bleakly Advisory Group’s analysis as a guide for JIA planning, the revised Master Plan should include a provision calling for a thorough reexamination of the analytical framework adopted by the Jekyll Island Authority in considering the appropriate level of future development on Jekyll Island. Public preferences, meaningful visitor experiences, and sustainable natural resource stewardship should be key factors in this revised framework.

IPJI Recommendation 3-E: Revise the Jekyll Island Authority’s Design Guidelines to further limit the height of new buildings on Jekyll Island

The non-intrusive, low-slung look of Jekyll Island’s commercial structures, particularly its oceanfront hotels, has long been one of the island’s more endearing characteristics, giving it a low key feel as a state park and helping its natural elements overshadow its built environment. This special ambiance is part of what brings visitors back to Jekyll year after year, yet it is now

threatened by the Jekyll Island Authority's recent adoption of design guidelines that will allow for buildings up to 64 feet in height, or six stories tall.

If the commercial footprint on Jekyll Island is to remain a relatively small one, and if the integrity of Jekyll's beachfront is to remain in tact, the JIA's building height guidelines—which are the most liberal in the Golden Isles area—should be revised to limit new buildings on Jekyll Island to four stories or less.

Low-height, unimposing development nestled into the native landscape should be the norm on Jekyll Island; not beachfront structures that will dwarf the natural environment and change the look and feel of the island for the worse.

-- By David Egan, Co-Director, The Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island [degan@igc.org]

4. RFI Topic: Long-Range Conservation and Preservation

IPJI Recommendation 4-A: Adopt a Jekyll Island Conservation Plan prior to beginning the process of revising the Jekyll Island Master Plan

One of the three main recommendations made in the 2004 Master Plan Update was that, “The JIA initiates a Conservation Plan for the island soon after the development plan process begins.” Now, six years later, that plan still remains in draft form while major plans for redeveloping and further developing Jekyll Island—including the town center project—have moved forward. If one of the purposes of the Conservation Plan is, in the words of the 2004 Master Plan Update, to “identify the critical issues and impacts development and redevelopment of the island can have on the island's ecology,” then clearly the plan must be in place before the renovation of Jekyll Island proceeds any further.

Moreover, since development and redevelopment issues—particularly as they relate to the preservation of Jekyll's natural assets—will be a major subject of discussion during the Master Plan revision process, and because the Conservation Plan would help guide the Master Plan team in dealing with these issues in a responsible, island-friendly manner, it just makes good sense that the adoption of the Conservation Plan should precede work on revising the Master Plan.

IPJI Recommendation 4-B: Add a full-time Conservation Manager to the JIA staff who has background and training in ecosystem management and protection

The 2004 Jekyll Island Master Plan Updates states that, “*America's coastlines are rapidly disappearing due to development, and the environmental and ecological attributes of Jekyll Island have been, and will continue to be, one of its greatest attributes. Remaining a good steward to Jekyll's environmental attributes, through both protection and enhancement, should be paramount to the Authority.*” In view of the priority that the Master Plan attaches to the

protection of Jekyll Island natural attributes, and when considering the importance that the Jekyll Island Authority assigns to its conservation mission, it appears axiomatic that a full-time professional Conservation Manager should be hired to oversee the implementation of the Jekyll Island Conservation Plan. The specific responsibilities and duties of the Conservation Manger should be spelled out in the Jekyll Island Conservation Plan

IPJI Recommendation 4-C: Clearly define the 65 percent of Jekyll Island that is required by law to remain in its natural condition; place the 65 percent natural area of Jekyll Island in a conservation easement to permanently protect it

The 65 percent of JI that is ineligible for development should be established and mapped to ensure that it cannot be infringed upon. Since all previous plans for Jekyll Island have recognized that the island’s foremost attraction is its natural environment and ecology, it would make sense that Jekyll’s development-free zone should consist of the island’s most environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas. Establishing a hierarchy of land use areas based upon their sensitivity would not only protect the island’s natural assets but identify for the JIA those areas that could be developed up to the 35 percent cap. Such a step would prevent the further occurrence of mistakes like the one made by the JIA in accepting a development plan by Linger Longer Communities which would have destroyed wetland areas, infringed upon the maritime forest, and commercialized an area designated by the 1996 Master Plan as a “nature preserve.”

An ideal way to secure the 65 percent natural area of Jekyll Island would be to place it in a conservation easement or land trust which would create a legally enforceable land preservation agreement for the purposes of conservation. The agreement could designate the forms of land use that would be acceptable within the protected areas of the island—such as nature trails or pervious surface bike paths—and help guarantee the preservation of Jekyll’s natural areas in perpetuity.

IPJI Recommendation 4-D: Ensure that the salt marsh adjacent to Jekyll Island remains in optimum health and is not adversely affected by redevelopment or further development of the state park

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has worked long and hard at defining the edge of the salt marsh ecosystem because of the great importance of protecting that healthy and productive ecosystem, of which all Georgians can be very proud. The Jekyll Island State Park Authority should, in its Master Plan update, join with the DNR in seeking to ensure that the salt marsh adjacent to the island remains in optimum health and suffers no impact from redevelopment or further development of the state park. To do so, the Master Plan must ensure that no salt marsh acreage is included as part of the land area of Jekyll Island. This goal can be achieved by asking the DNR to have its experts use the state’s legal definition of the edge of the salt marsh ecosystem to establish by survey the highland/salt marsh boundary of Jekyll Island.

IPJI Recommendation 4-E: Adopt additional measures that will help secure and further promote sea turtle nesting success

The Jekyll Island Authority has clearly recognized the importance of loggerhead turtle habitat with its establishment and support of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center. The Authority has also taken a major step in the right direction with its adoption of the 2008 Beach Lighting Ordinance, which enables prevention of light pollution on the island's beaches, a pollution that can result in failed nesting and in misdirection and death of hatchlings. Further steps, though, are needed to secure Jekyll Island's beaches for loggerhead turtle nesting. The adoption of a protection plan for sea turtle nesting habitat would be one good step in this direction. The plan could include measures that would provide for:

- Strict enforcement of the new Jekyll Island Beach Lighting Ordinance, including a required schedule of beach-lighting surveys during loggerhead nesting season
- Enhancement of the dune structure in areas of the beaches where dunes have been altered or destroyed (since nest building takes place at the dunes' edges)
- Education of Park visitors, via handouts and beach signage, regarding the types of lights that are and are not acceptable on the beach at night during loggerhead nesting season and the importance of staying off the dunes
- Reduction of loggerhead-nesting obstruction caused by the beach armoring on the northern portions of the island's beaches
- Keeping new development well back from the beach, behind the sand-sharing system on the back side of the dunes

IPJI Recommendation 4-F: Showcase Jekyll Island's unique plant communities and extraordinary ecosystems; ensure that they are not negatively impacted by human contact or commercial development

Like the other Georgia barrier islands, Jekyll Island State Park has freshwater wetlands in its interior, the result of natural erosion/deposition of the islands and the conversion of saltwater beach sloughs into freshwater systems. Within the freshwater wetlands of the Park are at least three stands of a beautiful and unique flowering plant, the swamp mallow, or giant aquatic hibiscus. In the Park, the hibiscus grows alongside Carolina willow trees and dotted smartweed plants, composing a plant community that botanists have described as unique to the Park. The giant hibiscus, with bright pink and red blossoms nearly a foot across, grows only in ecosystems that have standing water present during at least some of the year. This hibiscus is considered critically imperiled in Georgia (which means that its habitat has been reduced to five or fewer sites in the State). The Park Authority should provide visitors with visual access to these gorgeous flowers, without allowing visitation to damage the plants' chances of thriving in the Park, and make it clear that no real-estate development will ever impinge upon the hibiscus' ecosystems.

A second special and unique freshwater plant community has been described within Jekyll Island State Park, the combination of aged, 40+ feet-tall red maples with a subcanopy of woodwardia ferns. This plant community harbors freshwater crayfish within its sediments. The maple/fern/crayfish community is located in the central part of the Park, not far west of the

Convention Center, and is therefore especially susceptible to negative impacts of real-estate redevelopment. The Park Authority should take steps to ensure that no negative impacts eventuate, and that the Park's visitors have a chance to view this ecosystem without damaging it.

IPJI Recommendation 4-G: Expand efforts to educate the public about endangered bird species that nest on the island, and take further steps to prevent human traffic from interfering with bird nesting success

An important conservation goal for the state park should be to protect the endangered bird species that nest and rest on Jekyll Island. This would include, but not be limited to, the endangered plovers that nest on the beaches at the island's south end, and the wood storks that nest in the area of the amphitheatre. Handouts to all visitors entering the park; additional and more strongly worded signage near nesting areas; and limits on the degree of proximity achievable by visitors to wood stork nests are among the steps could be taken to protect bird nesting habitats and rest areas.

- By Dr. Steven Y. Newell, Professor Emeritus, University of Georgia/former Director of Marine Institute at Sapelo Island [synewell@yahoo.com], and Mindy Egan, Co-Director, the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island [degan@igc.org]

5. RFI Topic: Preservation of Jekyll Island's archaeological resources

Recommendation: Include provisions in the Jekyll Island Master Plan for a comprehensive program for the identification, preservation and management of archaeological resources

The 1996 Master Plan does not include consideration of archaeological resources in the management, preservation, protection, and development of Jekyll Island. However, these resources are among the vital cultural and natural assets of Jekyll Island, and their full integration into a revised Master Plan is necessary to ensure their preservation for the enjoyment of all Georgians now and for future generations.

Archaeological resources are the preserved physical remains of past cultures and this fragile evidence is vulnerable to the ground disturbance associated with most development activities. These resources, properly managed and interpreted, also provide unique opportunities to engage visitors in the rich cultural heritage which spans more than 4,000 years on Jekyll Island.

At least 44 archaeological sites have been recorded thus far on Jekyll Island and its nearby hammocks. These represent an impressive array of Native American, British Colonial, Plantation, and Industrial period occupations. However, as these known sites are the result of the sporadic and limited professional research conducted over the last 50 years, it is certain that they account for only a fraction of the total archaeological resources that exist on Jekyll Island.

As it is public policy of the State of Georgia to preserve significant archaeological properties (O.C.G.A. § 12-3-50.1) and whereas the State Archeologist has statutory responsibilities (O.C.G.A. § 12-3-52; O.C.G.A. § 12-3-53; O.C.G.A. § 12-3-58) for archaeological resources located on lands owned or controlled by the State of Georgia, it is recommended that the Jekyll Island Authority develop, in consultation and cooperation with the State Archeologist, a comprehensive plan for archaeological resources within the Jekyll Island Master Plan. This plan should identify both policies and procedures for the protection, preservation and management of Jekyll Island's archaeological resources and also include:

1. A program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination of archaeological properties on Jekyll Island to the Georgia Register of Historic Places to further the protection of such properties (O.C.G.A. § 12-3-55). This would involve systematic archaeological survey to record the locations and characteristics of previously undocumented archaeological sites.
2. A program of information and publicity as to the archaeological resources on Jekyll Island designed to attract tourists and visitors (O.C.G.A. § 12-3-32). This could consist of development of public archaeology and heritage tourism programs which include interpretive trails, educational signage, and opportunities to participate in archaeological excavations.

-- By Dr. Ray Crook, Professor Emeritus, University of West Georgia; former Director of the Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Archaeological Laboratory [rcrook@westga.edu]

6. RFI Topic: Education Opportunities

IPJI Recommendation – Provide for integrated planning for the state park's educational opportunities, including its natural environment, existing and needed facilities, and existing and future programs

State parks can and should play a role in supporting the environmental or science education of their citizens. A quick Google search revealed that at least 29 states support environmental or science education in their state parks. Georgia, unfortunately, was not listed among them, with the exception of the educational programs offered by the Hike Inn in North Georgia.

A leader in state park environmental education, Pennsylvania offers a desirable model for state park environmental education:

Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of State Parks' environmental education program aims to develop a citizenry that is aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, attitude, motivations, commitment and skills to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones. To achieve these goals, a program of services is offered for the citizens of Pennsylvania and visitors to the state that promotes:

- An understanding that humankind is an inseparable part of the ecosystem and whatever humans do may alter their surroundings.

- A basic knowledge of the natural laws which govern the environment, skills to permit solving environmental problems, and recognition of each individual's responsibility toward finding solutions to environmental problems.
- The development of a stewardship ethic toward the conservation of Pennsylvania's natural, historical and cultural heritage, and the prevention and correction of continued environmental degradation. (<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/education/index.aspx>)

Jekyll Island State Park, with its 4-H Center, Tidelands Nature Center, miles of walking and biking trails, marshlands, and maritime environment set on a barrier island is the perfect setting for an innovative model outdoor classroom. Already, the state park is an unofficial outdoor classroom for college students from around Georgia. It is indeed unfortunate that Jekyll Island State Park does not now offer a series of Ranger-led interpretive programs, walks, video presentations, and more formal curriculum-based programs (with the exception of the programs now offered by the Georgia Sea Turtle Center).

The upcoming master planning process offers an opportunity to engage the public as well as educational and interpretive experts in integrating a vision of Jekyll Island State Park as an outdoor classroom. Jekyll Island's disciplinary offerings should focus on environmental education as described above by Pennsylvania, but could also include the scientific process, environmental science, biology and life sciences, geology and earth sciences, geography, and sociology, among others. This vision should be developed as a part of the overall state park master planning process, and should include the public and experts from the outset to ensure that the educational process is citizen-driven and citizen-inspired, as well as grounded in the best practices in environmental and science education.

-- By Dr. Barbara ("Babs") McDonald, Chairperson, Board of Directors, Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island [mcdonaldbabs@gmail.com]

7. RFI Topic: Creation of Nature-Based and Ecotourism Opportunities

IPJI Recommendation 7-A: Provide clear definitions of ecotourism and nature-based tourism and identify events and activities that should either continue to be emphasized or inaugurated in order to promote nature-based tourism and ecotourism opportunities within Jekyll Island State Park

Introduction

The 1996 Master Plan concluded that Jekyll's environmental assets, especially walking, hiking, and biking activities, had not been appropriately emphasized. In addressing this shortcoming, the Master Plan recommended that the Jekyll Island Authority seek *"a balance...in preserving the natural setting, while serving as a classroom of the barrier, coastal island environment easily accessible by the general public."*

The 2004 Update to the Master Plan also emphasized the importance of Jekyll's natural assets, stating that, "*Jekyll Island's first and foremost amenity is its natural environment and island ecology. To complement the Development Plan recommended in this master plan update, we recommend the JIA initiate a Conservation Plan for the island soon after the development plan process has begun. This conservation plan should provide an in-depth examination of Jekyll's flora and fauna and identify the critical issues..... Finally, this Conservation Plan should provide for means by which island visitors, residents and other interests can further engage the island ecology, reaping its educational and relaxation benefits while limiting impacts. Doing so can further Jekyll's natural image and enhance visitation and revenue potential.*"

In 2010, Jekyll's main attraction continues to be its special environment. The revised Master Plan should take this obvious fact into account and develop comprehensive plan for showcasing the island's natural features by providing non-intrusive ways for visitors to experience, interact with and learn from nature.

As part of a new Master Plan, a clear understanding of ecotourism and nature-based tourism should be established. In *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development* [Martha Honey. Washington: Island Press, 2008, p. 7], Kurt Kutay, a tour operator who promotes green tourism, says: "*Real ecotourism...is more than travel to enjoy or appreciate nature. It also includes minimization of environmental and cultural consequences, contribution to conservation and community projects . . . environmental education and political consciousness-raising, such as the establishment of codes of conduct for travelers as well as a wide variety of certification program as of the travel industry.*"

Generally, ecotourism:

- promotes conservation in ecologically fragile regions
- benefits the economies of local communities
- promotes partnership between local people and tourist industry to save and protect natural surroundings
- provides the public with a nature-based educational experience
- introduces visitors to local cultures
- minimizes environmental impacts
- promotes conservation of the natural ecosystem
- protects cultural heritage

Jekyll Island State Park possesses the leading characteristics to make it Georgia's premier, affordable destination for nature-based and ecotourist activities. What follows are some suggestions for development, events and activities that should either continue to be emphasized/expanded or be inaugurated as part of the nature-based/ecotourist objectives of any new Master Plan:

Providing eco-friendly accommodations and businesses

There are many models for this type of ecotourism experience, but two particularly successful ones are Len Foote Inn in Dawsonville, GA, and Maho Bay in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Both of these ecotourist centers could serve as models for accommodations in the campground area or south beach area of Jekyll Island. Among their features are:

- tent cottages on platforms connected by elevated walkways, leaving surrounding soil and plant-life undisturbed
- pull-chain showers
- low-flow or composting toilets
- ice coolers
- collected water from rooftops and cisterns to water plants and gardens
- gray water recycling
- composted garbage generated at the lodge for fertilizing plants and gardens
- solar panels to supplement power

Newly constructed hotels on Jekyll Island, though far from complying with the accepted definition of ecotourism, could still do a great deal to minimize tourist impact on the environment and contribute to the island's image as an eco-friendly state park:

- Encourage or demand Green Hotels Practices in newly constructed hotels
- Require all hotels to join Green Hotels Association (about \$100.00 annually), which provides hotels with ideas that save water, energy and reduce solid waste while saving money
- Encourage hotels and restaurants to use Green Seal approved products
- Provide incentives for newly constructed hotels and restaurants and shops to have LEEDs certification

Reducing Auto Emissions

With increased tourism, there will also be greater congestion and greater automobile emissions. Many "resort" communities (Holmes Beach, Florida) and parks (Zion National Park) have natural gas buses and trams that shuttle residents and guests from location to location, which eliminates parking problems as well.

Providing eco-friendly activities for residents and visitors:

- Healthy Lifestyles and Music Festival, promoting year-round health and helping visitors make a connection between good health and adopting a greener lifestyle, including exhibitions of health and beauty products, agricultural products, green clothing, green construction practices, artwork, green household products, gardening techniques, demonstrations of green energy production and practices, healthy-cooking classes and demos, vendors, speakers from the health and medical community, active living events, yoga and tai chi demonstrations and classes
- Renewable Energy and Music Fair (Southern Energy and Environmental Expo in Fletcher, NC, has had over 50,000 participants over the past 10 years; Vermont has been holding a successful Solar Fest for 15 years) with speakers, exhibitions, solar cars, educational forums, hands-on demos, workshops, vendors, live music, natural building construction info, sustainable land-use planning, sustainable living topics
- History/heritage tours originating on Jekyll Island (There are 20 National Park Service historical sites along Georgia's coast.) These could be self-guided tours where guests buy/rent a CD that guides them from site to site and provides information about each site, or they could be fully guided small bus tours originating from Jekyll.

- Camps for underprivileged children who live in the nearby Brunswick area: ecology camps, tennis camps, kayaking, sailing, sports, bird identification, protecting wildlife and habitats, gardening, art
- Eco-tours of southeast Georgia originating on Jekyll Island (tourists make visits to Okefenokee Swamp, Raccoon Key, Cumberland Island, Harris Neck, Sapelo. Little St. Simons, etc.)
- Star-gazing nights with local residents/astronomers/hobbyists
- Fitness trails in the campground area
- Photography shoots in different seasons or of specific themes led by a local professional photographer (Invite photo clubs. Clubs in Atlanta willingly travel to distant locations to shoot.)
- Volunteer weekends to help maintain beaches and trails
- Canopy tour of maritime forest
- Tree climbing (Panola Mountain State Park offers this.)
- Earth Day Festival
- Maritime forest research center
- botanical garden/greenhouse of native plants
- Avian research center
- Interactive eco-museum, featuring renewable energy sources, composting, water collection, etc.
- Organic vegetable and herb gardens that produce local organic ingredients for island restaurants
- More birding outings during various times of the year
- Yoga on the beach with professional yoga instructor
- Bike club events (clubs frequently have week-long events that incorporate other activities, such as kayaking, walking, touring with cycling)
- Local artisan workshops that use local materials and traditions
- Guided and unguided educational bike tours of the island
- Guided walks through the maritime forest and night walks along the beach
- Guided beach walks for seashell collection

Promoting recycling by creating treasure from trash generated on the island through demonstrations, craft sales, hands-on classes in:

- Papermaking: creating paper from shredded paper from local businesses and clothes dryer lint
- Batiking from recycled fabrics
- Glass blowing from recycled bottles

Promoting water sports

- Kayaking
- Canoeing
- Windsurfing
- Wakeboarding
- Sailing lessons (maybe a fleet of small prams for kids)

Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction

The crown jewel of a comprehensive effort to attract tourists who wish to learn more about and experience nature could be the creation of a world-class “Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction” for Jekyll Island. For details on this exciting and innovative concept, see [IPJI Recommendation 7-B](#).

A Closing Thought

In considering all of the above-mentioned recommendations, we must always bear in mind that, *“Despite our wealth of marine and terrestrial areas still available for potential development of ecotourism operations, appropriate planning, regulation, promotion of education and best practices, and monitoring will be needed to ensure that demand for nature tourism and other forms of outdoor recreation does not degrade the resources and ecosystems on which they depend.”* -- (Martha Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2008, 439).

-- By Al Tate, Ecologist/Instructor at Fernbank Science Center, Atlanta [altate1122@gmail.com]; Brenda Constan [brencon@bellsouth.net] and Diane Shearer [djshearer@bellsouth.net] Board Members, The Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island

IPJI Recommendation 7-B: Establish a Jekyll Island Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction as a means of encouraging nature-based and ecotourism, protecting and enhancing Jekyll Island’s natural assets, and meeting the state park’s long-term financial needs

BACKGROUND:

Time and again over the years, plans to improve tourist traffic or enhance public use of Jekyll Island State Park have recommended better access and use of Jekyll’s natural environment. Some efforts to accomplish this include:

- An increase in bike and nature trails
- Tidelands Nature Center
- Nature tours around the island
- Georgia Sea Turtle Center

A measure of the success of this concept is the 50,000+ visitors to the Turtle Center in the first six months after it opened.

These efforts have had some results but are really small and insignificant when compared to something like the Linger Longer Beach Village proposal. The real potential for using Jekyll’s natural assets remains untapped. *The 1996 Master Plan for Jekyll points the way:*

- **P.3 Item IIB, Market Conclusions says,**
...Programming should include activities for children and adults, educational opportunities relating to Jekyll’s natural environment and history and special events.
...An objective situation analysis supports the conclusion that the JIA needs to enhance the existing assets it has rather than create major new amenities. There is an abundant

existing capacity in Jekyll's hotels, golf courses, historic district and tennis courts. Additionally, Jekyll's environmental assets have not been appropriately utilized.

Walking, hiking and biking activities have been under-emphasized. These activities are becoming increasingly attractive in today's vacation market and require little investment to become more significant benefits of visiting the island.

- **P.9 Item V Market and Economic Analysis: A.1 Last Paragraph**

Besides the beach, the natural environment is one of Jekyll Island's greatest amenities. This unique environment has not been capitalized upon as the unique amenity and attraction that it could be, particularly to the growing nature tourism segment. Jekyll is one of the few barrier islands left which has the ability to combine a largely intact coastal environment with abundant accommodations and other amenities. The increasing popularity of nature travel in the US indicates that this is a major opportunity at Jekyll Island.

- **P. 11 Item V C. JI Visitors Summary, 1. Par. 8:**

Nature-oriented educational programming dominated the list of amenities or activities winter visitors would like to see on the island. In fact, the top four activities visitors wanted added to Jekyll are nature-oriented:

-   Classes/tours about Jekyll and Barrier Island Ecology

-   Botanical Gardens, Nature, Plants

-   Nature Walks

-   Bird and Animal Watching

More recently, The Jekyll Island Conservation Plan (Draft) emphasizes this potential again: In the Introduction (p.M-2) it defines the word "edutainment" as a new tourism opportunity that entertains by educating visitors and states:

"Ecotourism or nature based tourism are current buzzwords for a suite of outdoor experiences. ... The important thing to recognize on Jekyll Island is that the island's natural heritage attracts large numbers of visitors and is used by the majority of the island's businesses in their advertising. **Maintaining those assets is critical to Jekyll Island's long-term economic health; enhancing the value of the nature based experience and visitor access to those value-added experiences ensures even more economic benefits.**"

Table M4 lists a number of nature-related activities which are currently available and could be enhanced to attract additional visitors and revenue. They include wildlife watching, organized tours, bird-watching, kids nature events, fishing, and kayaking. These activities could be enhanced to provide some truly unique opportunities on Jekyll Island. Figures M5 and J46 show a raised bird-watching platform and the Plan recommends (p. J-79):

"A series of 7 viewing platforms with spotting scopes should be constructed around the island to enable better viewing of shorebirds, wading birds, waterfowl, terns, gulls, and similar species."

Page J-73 summarizes the bird enhancement recommendations to include 2 birding windows, 1 fully enclosed blind, 9 semi-enclosed blinds, 7 raised viewing platforms...

A number of other ideas are presented in section J to attract visitors and enhance revenue.

As everyone knows, Jekyll Island is mandated by law to remain 65% undeveloped and is in fact a state park. The Jekyll Island Authority and JIA Board, while giving frequent vocal support to protecting Jekyll's natural environment, have done very little to support the natural

communities, wildlife, native plants, or marine life on or around Jekyll. There is no one on the Jekyll Board who is qualified to evaluate Board decisions as they might impact Jekyll's natural community assets. Detailed, specific information about Jekyll Island's natural environment is inadequate or nonexistent for many aspects of the natural community. **Serious expertise is needed to develop knowledge about Jekyll's natural environment and to provide ideas, advice and counsel on how to manage Jekyll's natural assets, conserve them, and utilize them to educate the public and to enhance visitor experiences on Jekyll Island.**

PROPOSAL

I propose a new idea that will encourage nature/ecotourism, protect and enhance Jekyll Island's natural assets, and meet the financial needs of Jekyll for the long term. If acted upon, this proposal can also make Jekyll into a truly unique educational asset and attract visitors from around the world.

The Jekyll Island Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction

First, to obtain credibility and provide the necessary expertise, this center must be operated by a well respected and recognized institution of higher learning, such as the newly created Odum School of Ecology at the University of Georgia (formerly the UGA Institute of Ecology), the first of its kind in the country. If the Odum School chooses to accept this proposal, I would like to recommend that the Center be named ***"The Eugene Odum Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction at Jekyll Island"*** because of Dr. Odum's landmark research and vital contributions to understanding the ecological importance of Georgia's coastal ecosystems, and his interest in Jekyll Island.

In Dr. Odum's later years, he wrote several books about the importance of understanding natural ecosystems and how the basic fundamentals of ecology apply to human society. He and his brother Howard contributed much to developing this field of study. The Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction would continue this work.

Current studies of biodiversity or the loss of biodiversity focus on species inventories and the loss of species. Major efforts are found in remote areas of the world where habitat loss is destroying whole ecosystems. As human populations increase and demand for resources increase, we continue to destroy habitat and resources needed for other species. Yet, our understanding of their needs and even the public awareness of other species that we are displacing is minimal to nonexistent. Many prominent scientists have identified the loss of biodiversity as one of the most, if not the most, critical problem(s) we face for long term survival on earth. Serious efforts are underway to address these issues around the world, but most of the work is being done in remote locations. Public awareness is increasing but the general perception is that this is a problem of the tropical rainforest, the African savannah, or other sites far away from us. If we are ever to seriously address this problem we must raise public awareness here at home and better understand our own natural ecosystems.

The strategy of preserving natural ecosystems by restricting human access is useful but avoids two core issues: 1) There will always be a future threat when human need and pressure for the protected area and its resources increases {e.g. oil deposits in Alaska and off shore} 2) human interest and commitment to save natural area will decline if public awareness, education, and understanding of natural ecosystems are not greatly increased from their current level.

Jekyll Island is a small Island with easy human access. It is truly an island ecosystem, with many isolated populations that could, with serious study, be completely inventoried and investigated over time. A biodiversity center at Jekyll Island which conducts species inventories and studies the natural communities there could also study the interaction of residents and visitors with the natural ecosystem. This would provide a unique contribution in two ways: first it could answer questions about the impact of human visitors on populations of flora and fauna; second, by helping Jekyll Island to develop innovative ways for the public to see and learn about Jekyll's natural environment, it could help educate the public and increase public awareness and interest in our native flora and fauna.

The mission of the Jekyll Island Biodiversity and Human Interaction Center would be:

- **To assess the natural resources of Jekyll Island, including an inventory of species and an understanding of natural community dynamics.**
- **To investigate, develop, and then evaluate innovative methods for people, including the general public, to learn about the natural world using the natural assets of Jekyll Island in ways that minimally impact these resources.**
- **To provide expert advice to JIA and the JIA Board on the health of the natural environment and natural communities of Jekyll Island, to assess the impact of any future development or JIA activities on Jekyll's natural resources, and to evaluate and recommend maintenance/conservation activities to JIA.**
- **To provide innovative educational opportunities for students (from public/private schools in Georgia and elsewhere) and the general public to learn about the flora, fauna, and natural communities of Jekyll Island.**

An explanation of these mission components is as follows:

- **Inventory and assessment of natural resources:** 65% of Jekyll Island is to remain in an undeveloped and natural state by law. However, even though Jekyll is a small island with an amazing diversity of flora and fauna, there is currently no inventory or monitoring program to determine exactly what species are present, and no baseline for comparison to determine the health and viability of Jekyll's natural communities. For example, in addition to the beach, marsh and maritime forest communities, Jekyll has populations of alligators, whitetail deer, raccoons, grey fox, opossum, squirrels, waterfowl, wading birds, raptors, and many other species. Some of these, such as raccoons, deer, and alligators, occasionally become nuisance animals. However, other than dealing with individual problems as they arise, there is no knowledge base for how best to deal with these animal populations. Do Jekyll Island raccoon or fox populations harbor any rabies virus? Do JI deer and forest mice populations have ticks that carry Lyme disease? Does anyone know what Jekyll alligators eat or where they are nesting? Is the location easily accessible to an unsuspecting public? Do the mosquito populations on

Jekyll carry any of the dangerous microbes for malaria, bird flu, encephalitis, or other vector borne diseases? Other questions of concern include: Are the tidal marshes on and around Jekyll healthy? Does Jekyll have species other than the sea turtles, plovers, oyster-catchers, or wood storks that are in trouble? What about rare plants, the health of the maritime forest, health of beach communities? What effect is human activity having on native plants and animals or the beach? Questions like these are often impossible to answer for large open geographic areas, but for a small island they may be difficult yet not beyond reach.

Many of the animals and natural communities mentioned above can and should be great assets for Jekyll to use in attracting visitors to the island; but their populations need to be monitored and well understood.

A long range program should be established to inventory all of Jekyll Island's species, to identify critical or keystone species, and to select critical community assets for long term monitoring and evaluation. A protocol should be developed with criteria to assess the overall health of Jekyll Island's natural environment and a periodic report (biannual) submitted to the Jekyll Island Board.

Species inventories and natural environmental monitoring protocols are excellent type studies to get young students at the high school and undergraduate level of education interested in ecology. The Biodiversity Center could attract graduate and post-graduate students from around the country and set up a work/study arrangement. They would then do preliminary studies, develop a framework for the whole project and ~~then~~ manage detailed studies to follow using high school and undergraduate students as a field work force. Students monitoring Jekyll ecology and inventorying the flora and fauna would be an excellent and available resource for educating Jekyll visitors or maintaining exhibits about the islands natural environment. Some temporary housing could be made available for visiting biodiversity students using existing facilities (which need renovation) on the island. Top notch Georgia high school students competitively selected to work at Jekyll for the Biodiversity Center would be prime candidates to pursue their education at the Odum School of Ecology at UGA.

- **To investigate and develop innovative methods for people to learn about the natural world on and around Jekyll Island in ways that minimally impact the natural environment:**

Loss of biodiversity is one of the key issues affecting our world today. This problem is rapidly getting worse and will demand more and more attention throughout the 21st century. Ignorance of this problem throughout the general public is a major and growing concern. If we are to save the other species of this planet from a resource-hungry human population, we must educate the public. Based on the growing demand for ecotourism, many are eager to learn. With its easy access from the main traffic corridors of I-95 and US 17, and its comfortable accommodations, Jekyll Island provides a unique opportunity to attract a considerable audience of ordinary people. By showcasing the flora, fauna, and natural communities of Jekyll Island and the surrounding estuarine environment in innovative ways, visitors can experience the amazing diversity of life on earth. Many species and communities can be displayed in easy-to-experience ways that will allow casual and even handicapped visitors to learn about and enjoy them. Exciting, original venues for public observation, education about, and interaction with Jekyll's natural

assets will attract a stream of ecotourists and provide the missing link for a sustainable revenue stream for JIA.

In addition to ideas presented in the draft Conservation Plan in sections M and J, here are some examples of specific venues that could be created on Jekyll:

1. **Marsh boardwalk and pavilion:** As you enter Jekyll Island on the causeway, there are tidal marshes on the left and right just out of view. These are filled with exciting wildlife and beautiful scenery, but they are not easily observed and few visitors pay any attention to them. One excellent possibility for this venue is the large marsh area between the causeway and Millionaires' Village that has a bike trail along its east side. A boardwalk could be built right out into the middle of this marsh from the Village side and a small pavilion, say 30ft. by 40ft, constructed there about 2ft. above high tide. The boardwalk (which should be 6-8ft wide to accommodate outdoor class activities as well as tourists) would continue beyond the pavilion through the marsh and connect back to the bike trail. Along the boardwalk railing a series of linear aquarium exhibits could be set up to show an up-close marsh community of plants (spartina, needlerush, glasswort, etc.) and animals (fiddler crabs, periwinkle snails, ribbed mussels, etc.) both above the soil level and below. Small pumps would be programmed to provide realistic tidal flow into and out of these exhibits with water coming directly from the tidal marsh the boardwalk is built over. A large aquarium would be built into the center of the pavilion which would display characteristic aquatic species of the marsh creeks and pools. (Juvenile shrimp, squid, whelks, killifish, comb jellies, juvenile marine fish, etc. would be exhibited here). This aquarium should be low, linear, and built into the floor of the pavilion for easy viewing by young children. Water circulation for this aquarium would also be provided directly from the estuarine water below the pavilion. Seating around the interior margin of the pavilion would give visitors a place to relax and enjoy the marsh in a personal, almost intimate, way. This pavilion would provide a readily available educational opportunity for casual visitors, nature tours, school groups and others.
2. **Movies in the Marsh:** By mounting a retractable all weather screen in the limbs of a nearby live oak tree, tourists could come right out in the marsh after dark and enjoy "Movies in the Marsh". Movies for all ages about Nature, especially topics about the wildlife and nature of coastal island ecosystems, could be shown and advertised in the brochure that is handed out at JI entrance. This would be an exciting and unique place to schedule special viewing events or other activities. As in theaters, ads shown before a movie could promote other JI opportunities and venues such as those described below.
3. **A canopy walk:** In Costa Rica and the Amazon a jungle canopy walk, though physically quite rigorous, is one of the most sought after experiences of ecotourists. While Jekyll does not have the flora and fauna of the rainforest, the experience of seeing a live oak forest from up inside the canopy would be a very neat adventure. This could be accomplished by carefully building a catwalk about 3-4ft. wide up into the live oak canopy. It would need to be constructed so that guests would have their head up into the lower part of the canopy and designed to meander through the trees for a distance of several hundred feet. An excellent

location would be in live oak treetops of the historic district or near one of the motels to provide easy access and high visibility for the public. Bird feeders could be used to attract some of the canopy birds and blinds or one way viewing from the catwalk built to shield bird feeder sites so visitors can get very close to the small birds at the feeders without scaring the birds or messing with the feeders. Also, several small cages or terrariums could be built in the canopy along the outside of the catwalk and just out of reach by visitors. These would be used to display other animals of the canopy such as Carolina anoles, skinks, tree frogs, cicadas, green snakes, large spiders, or even flying squirrels. These animals would be exhibited for a short time and released, to be replaced by others. Feeders, live animals, and exhibit information signage could be serviced by students from the biodiversity center. Periodic visitor surveys would be taken to determine exhibit popularity and ways to improve it. Animals would be examined before exhibition, cared for during their exhibition, and examined again prior to release to determine the consequences of such an exhibit on the live animals. For more active visitors (i.e. the teen set) zipline exits from the catwalk could be installed and used under supervision. The catwalk could also be used to help monitor populations of Jekyll's canopy species. This catwalk should be gated and locked when not under supervision, and a small fee charged to offset the cost of staffing and maintaining it.

4. **Bird-watching in Comfort and Style:** The Conservation Plan Draft proposes a bird-watching blind and some enhancements for the wading bird heronry in the borrow pit pond behind the old amphitheater. There are world class bird-watching opportunities there with nesting wood storks, black and yellow crowned night herons, anhingas, white ibis, great and snowy egrets, great blue herons, hooded mergansers, occasional roseate spoonbills, black vultures, and others. I would propose that JIA make a serious investment to create a unique enclosed, climate controlled, bird-watching facility there. This blind would be handicap accessible and climate controlled so that all Jekyll's visitors could watch birds in comfort. *It would have to be carefully designed and built to minimize disturbance to the birds.* The interior would be padded and soundproofed so the birds could not hear activities inside. Viewing windows should be one-way glass, camouflaged from the outside and protected from bird activity above. Roosts (that are proposed in the Draft Conservation Plan) could be added in the pond so that birds would be encouraged to land close to the window for great viewing opportunities. The structure should be pre-constructed in sections, then installed at the optimum time when the birds are gone to minimize bird disturbance. A staging area, entranceway and exit could be built in the old amphitheater. This staging area should have a classroom and retail area with handicap restroom facilities. It should also contain the climate control equipment for the observation blind far enough back and sound shielding to avoid disturbing the birds. The old amphitheater had lighting and restrooms, so this staging area should not be too difficult to create. The amphitheater itself might be reconstructed for outdoor presentations of wildlife. A unique bird-watching attraction such as this should draw visitors from around the world and generate considerable interest for our small island.

5. **A children's fishing pier:** A more interactive idea, especially designed to excite and teach young folks about estuarine fish, is to build a low level fishing pier. A great location appears to be along the Jekyll River near the newly expanded boat launch behind the old Ski Rixen Lake and near Summer Waves. There is already a newly expanded parking area and electricity available there, and DNR has recently installed some small fishing piers into the lake to encourage fishing there. This proposed pier would be much larger and more user friendly. It should be low (unlike the high rise pier at the north end of Jekyll Island) and extend for about 1500 ft. along the river with multiple fingers extending for 20ft. or so out into the water. A small, manned, activity center should be constructed at the entrance so visitors can obtain fishing supplies, bait, information on fishing techniques, and current knowledge on what species of fish are biting. The activity center should be stocked with flyers about the different fish being caught so that a family can find out about their child's catch of the day. On the landward side of the fishing pier, a series of aquariums should be built along the length of the pier. Water for these would be supplied from a small pump in the Jekyll River, delivering the same water the fish were swimming in to a settling tank and filter. Pipes running along the back side of the fishing pier would carry this water so that any tank along the pier could be quickly filled. When fish are caught, the pier staff personnel could provide the young fisherman with the unique opportunity to place his/her fish in a nearby aquarium and see it swimming around. They could provide the young fisherman with information about the fish. If the parents do not wish to clean the fish, it could be maintained in the pier aquarium for a brief period or released immediately back into the river. If a fish swallowed the hook or was badly injured and should not be released, it could just be taken by the young fisherman or to the activity center and processed to provide bait or chum for another fisherman. For those who do want to clean their fish, a cleaning facility would be constructed at the site and staff could provide information on the proper way to clean a fish. Also, along the interior side of the pier, several live wells with a variety of estuarine fauna, especially invertebrates, could be maintained for educational opportunities when fishing was poor or to take advantage of natural events or available experts and programming opportunities. These could be covered and locked until opened for observation/instruction by the pier staff and qualified naturalists. The pier should be lighted and, during the proper season, open for night fishing or instructional opportunities. Perhaps funds from the governor's "Go Fish Georgia" program could be used to establish this fishing pier. A small fee to fish from the pier should cover operational costs and JIA should pick up additional revenue from the increase in day visitors.
6. **Large species tracking and monitoring:** The popularity of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center suggests that other large species on Jekyll, such as alligators, deer, osprey, and eagles, could also attract visitors if they can be displayed in a safe manner. Trained ecologists from the Biodiversity Center, as a normal research program for population studies, would tag alligators, deer, fresh water turtles, eagles, osprey, raccoons, foxes, or even whales and manatees. Interactive

monitoring kiosks could be installed at Jekyll motels and/or the convention center for real time participation by Jekyll visitors. This could be enhanced by guided nature tours throughout the island and/or remote video feeds to observe the animals. Of particular interest: an alligator building a nest or carrying her hatchlings to the water; a pair of nesting eagles, osprey, or great horned owls raising young; a wading bird heronry with adults flying in and out and juveniles wandering about all over the place are special opportunities that can be found on Jekyll. Biodiversity Center Staff could provide lectures on the species inventory/monitoring program and make sure that the kiosks and exhibit information are kept up to date.

7. **Native Plant Interactive Center:** A native plant greenhouse and nursery could be built with public education in mind. Visitors would come and learn about native plants in their region, how to recognize local rare plants and techniques for propagation. A cooperative venture with the Georgia Botanical Gardens, Atlanta Botanical Garden, Garden Clubs of Georgia, Calloway Gardens, and /or others who work with rare plants for propagation and reintroduction into the wild with a mission of native plant recovery and restoration could be developed. The “**Jekyll Island Plant Center**” could establish a program with schools throughout Georgia so that school children could visit Jekyll, learn about the plants and select suitable species to take back to their school for a plant recovery project.
 8. **Invertebrate Displays.** One of the most important aspects of biodiversity that badly needs exposure to the public is the amazing diversity of invertebrates: terrestrial, aquatic, and marine. This is a whole world of life that is almost unknown to the general public. The Biodiversity Center should develop innovative new ways to show these life forms. Perhaps an exhibit hall at the Biodiversity Center with a long magnified tunnel at head height so that visitors can walk through and see giant ants, millipedes, beetles, and otherwise experience a real taste of “Honey I Shrunk the Kids.” Or perhaps a long linear aquarium constructed so that visitors could walk through the aquarium with its bottom at head level (for 6-10 year old children) and magnified to enlarge mollusks, crabs, tunicates, bryozoans, etc.
 9. **Small mammal displays** of similar nature could be set up and show Jekyll species like Eastern Moles, short-tail shrews, bats, and white footed mice; species of interest but very poorly known by the public.
- **Provide expert advice to JIA on the health of the natural environment and natural communities of Jekyll Island:** Without this kind of information, JIA does not have the knowledge it needs to properly maintain Jekyll Island’s natural assets and make wise use of or protect Jekyll’s natural environment.
 - Y A relationship between the Biodiversity Center and the JIA Board should be established which gives the Biodiversity Center responsibility and authority to monitor JI’s natural environment, inventory species, conduct field research,

educational programs, and provide expert advice to JIA about managing the natural environment.

- Y The Biodiversity Center should evaluate any proposed new development, maintenance, or other activities which may affect JI's natural communities. Visitor interactions with Jekyll's natural ecosystems, including new "edutainment" amenities, should be monitored by the Center and reports provided to the JIA on a regular basis.

- **Provide innovative educational opportunities:**

- **Competitive educational events.** Along a different thread that should be considered, the biodiversity center could host a variety of events designed to stimulate interest in biodiversity. Competition events similar to the Science Olympiad could be developed for students to demonstrate recognition and knowledge of taxonomic groups and other aspects of natural communities. Display and award events for taxonomic inventories and collections to include plants, invertebrate specimens and/or photos could be held across the state with finals at the JI Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction.
- **Research Program:** The Biodiversity Center could establish a summer research program for Georgia high school students (and students from around the country) to come to Jekyll Island and learn how to conduct scientific field research studies. Most students are interested in the natural world but have very little working knowledge of what is really out there or how to study it. A program of this type would attract attention and encourage many future scientists. Some of these students could help pay their way by working at Human Interaction venues on Jekyll Island or, after appropriate training, conducting natural area tours for the public. It is likely that such a program could provide an enthusiastic cadre of recruits for the UGA School of Ecology; students who would enter undergraduate school already equipped with a basic understanding of field research.
- **Volunteer Naturalists:** An active naturalist cadre already exists to some degree at Jekyll Island, especially birdwatchers. Providing a volunteer naturalist activity center at the Biodiversity Center would promote opportunities for learning about how to develop successful human interactions with the natural environment. With the right program design and emphasis, volunteers can be qualified and used to maintain attractions and extend educational programming. The Georgia Extension Service Master Gardner Program provides a good example. Casual visitors to Jekyll can have their Jekyll visit become extraordinary by learning when, where, and how to observe Jekyll's flora and fauna. Biodiversity Center Staff and volunteer naturalists would need to collate and distribute information about wildlife and natural community events to the convention center, motels, and the welcome center so that Jekyll visitors would have the opportunity to witness them. For example, bird migrations, dolphin, manatee, and whale sightings, alligators, wading birds in breeding plumage, showy flowers in bloom, fish runs, waterfowl rafting, or just the best locations to observe deer moving about at night are all opportunities that could be special if visitors knew something about them, where to see them, and guides to explain the events. Observation dates for natural phenomena are of particular interest for Jekyll

motels because many events occur in late winter and could attract more visitors to the island during the off season, especially if programs/special events were scheduled to take advantage of them.

The Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction, its students and volunteer staff will be essential to developing and maintaining these activities. A high level of knowledge and an ongoing program of education would be necessary to provide manpower and input for successful activities of this nature. Because the Center would include a mission of Human Interaction, some of its work would be focused on finding ways to interest the general public and educate students in Jekyll's diversity of life. Jekyll Island would benefit by having a unique draw for visitors and the revenue they bring, an expert staff to help explain, maintain, and preserve the natural environment of Jekyll, and a way to avoid further and unnecessary destruction of Jekyll's natural communities.

COMMENTS?

The Center for Biodiversity and Human Interaction concept has great potential for the future of Jekyll Island. However, it is of no value without a broad base of support and without funding. It will take careful thought and considerable marketing if it is to be realized. If you are interested in promoting this concept, have comments or ideas, or are otherwise willing to help, please contact The Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island at degan@igc.org.

-- By Al Tate, Ecologist/Instructor at Fernbank Science Center, Atlanta
[\[altate1122@gmail.com\]](mailto:altate1122@gmail.com)

ADDENDUM

An Analysis of Fifty Recommendations Submitted by Citizens to the Jekyll Island Authority in Response to RFI 266

By Dr. Barbara McDonald

What Advice Do Citizens Have for the Jekyll Island Authority in 2010?

Babs McDonald, PhD

September 11, 2010

Introduction

Following the Jekyll Island Authority's (JIA) Request for Information (RFI), published June 30, 2010, the Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island (IPJI) invited members to respond directly to the JIA or provide comments to IPJI, which would then be forwarded to the JIA. IPJI is a non-profit organization with a mission to insure that the citizens of Georgia have a voice regarding the planning and management of Jekyll Island State Park. I selected 50 responses received by IPJI in July and August 2010 regarding the RFI to analyze and summarize. I identified major themes or categories emerging from the data itself, a common goal of qualitative analysis. The method I used to analyze these 50 responses is provided at the end of this paper. The purpose of this

analysis was to summarize citizen responses sent to the JIA via IPJI. The primary question addressed was: What are the primary concerns expressed by these respondents to the RFI? Following coding and category development, I placed the categories into a planning/management recommendation format for the JIA, as this appears to be the format of choice for responses requested in the RFI.

In the RFI, the JIA offered 8 categories to which citizens could respond. I contacted the JIA on July 25, 2010 and asked for definitions for each category, which I had planned to use to guide my analysis. I received the following response from the Executive Director Jones Hooks on July 26, 2010:

Realizing that the RFI request is to provide an opportunity for anyone or group to supply any information they would like regarding the Master Plan, **I encourage you to provide any comments using your own definitions.** As you know, this step in the process is an “add on” effort on my part to try and secure as much relevant information and input as possible prior to proceeding with the formal Master Plan update process. As you know, that process is one that will be lengthy and will involve professional guidance as well as public information and input. [Emphasis added]

I therefore developed a set of definitions, which I planned to use in my analysis, for each of the 8 categories. I sent these category definitions for review by a professional in public land planning and outdoor recreation. The resulting final list is given below.

- Jekyll Island operation – The planning and management philosophy and decisions made by the JIA and the JIA board
- Jekyll Island management – The management actions taken by the JIA and JIA board
- Jekyll Island protection – Any planning, management decision, or action that protects or enhances the current environmental condition of Jekyll Island
- Jekyll Island conservation – Any planning, management decision, or action that conserves the environmental sustainability of Jekyll Island’s physical environment.
- Jekyll Island preservation – Any planning, management decision, or action that preserves the current environmental condition of Jekyll’s environment.
- Jekyll Island redevelopment – Any planning, management decision, or action that involves development of existing or new areas with the intent to add new infrastructure.
- Jekyll Island program initiatives – Any planning, management decision, or action that introduces a new physical development, program, plan, or concept to Jekyll Island.
- Jekyll Island resource management – Any planning, management decision, or action that impacts the natural resources of Jekyll Island.

As I began a qualitative analysis of the 50 responses, I collapsed some of the categories, as they appeared to address related factors. This is a common and desirable feature of qualitative analysis, and it is the main method used to summarize a volume of textual data. For example, Jekyll Island protection, conservation, preservation, and resource management appeared to be closely-enough related to collapse them into one category – which I initially called “environmental concerns,” as did Jekyll Island operation and Jekyll Island management – which I called “planning and management.” Redevelopment, as well, appeared to be a facet of planning

and management. As I analyzed the text, I discovered new categories which seemed to be of recurring interest to citizens but which did not fit well into the existing list. As I continued with my analysis, my category list was further refined to fit the emergent concerns and recommendations from the respondents. Ultimately, I found that a list of categories emerging directly from citizen responses was more useful and more representative of citizen concerns. Basing a qualitative analysis of text on such open coding, a type of constant comparative analysis, is often the recommended method in qualitative methods.

Findings

RFI respondents to IPJI hailed from all over Georgia and the United States. This was an important finding because there has often been a misconception that IPJI represents only the residents of Jekyll Island, Georgia. The recommendations presented in this paper, therefore, are clearly those from citizens across Georgia and the North, Midwest, and Southeast United States. Samples of locations include:

Acworth, GA
Athens, GA
Atlanta, GA
Blackshear, GA
Carlton, GA
Darien, GA
Dunwoody, GA
Hartwell, GA
Jackson, GA
Jefferson, GA
Johns Creek, GA
Palmetto, GA
Rex, GA
Stone Mountain, GA
Warrenton, GA
Watkinsville, GA

Bluffton, SC
Chicago, IL
Espyville, PA
Glen Arbor, MI
Granville, MA
Libertyville, IL
Manorville, NY
Roanoke, VA
Sewickley, PA
Winston-Salem, NC

No other demographic information about respondents was available; however it appeared that a majority of respondents had visited Jekyll Island in the past, as most comments appeared to be based on direct experience of Jekyll Island. The exact percentage is impossible to discern; as many respondents did not specify or specifically describe specific experiences on Jekyll Island.

The greatest percentage of responses addressed the natural environment of Jekyll Island and concern for their degradation if additional development were to occur (15 percent of the total comments). LS from Acworth, GA, said, "The natural beauty, wildlife habitats, etc., should remain and not be encroached on by new buildings." KS from Roanoke, VA said, "There are so few 'natural' places to enjoy left, please keep Jekyll Island one of the best." D&GF commented, "There needs to be concern for where the many species of birds, turtles, and other wildlife would go, once they are driven off Jekyll." DC from Darien, GA said that, "The conservation of Jekyll's natural assets and preservation of wildlife habitats are of utmost importance."

Twelve percent of the comments concerned the land use definitions used by JIA to identify developed and undeveloped land and a possible violation of the Mike Egan law. The Mike Egan law stipulated that no more than 35 percent of the land area of Jekyll Island can be developed. SG (no city given) stated, "All they are trying to do is take what has [been] developed and call it undeveloped so they can build more things on the additional undeveloped area that this would give them that goes beyond the 35 percent. This must be stopped and stopped now." GL from Edinburg, NY observed that, "It seems that classifying the landfill as undeveloped is a giant stretch of the imagination. This area should properly be added to the developed category for future land use planning on the island." Going even farther and hinting at yet another category of concern, CS of Canton, Ohio noted that, "I am very concerned that Jekyll Island continues to maintain a balance of developed and undeveloped land in the ratio that currently exists."

Five percent of the responses expressed an opinion that the current footprint of the island is adequate and that any new development should occur within the existing footprint. An example is from JJ, Stone Mountain, GA: "Jekyll Island should be preserved. Once commercialization starts it never can be removed. Do not approve any updat[ing] for commercial other than replacing what [is] there or on spots that used to be developed." WB from Ontario, Canada recommended that, "I strongly urge that we simply prohibit any development on the oceanfront that is on land that has not already been used for development. Any new development would be restricted to the footprint of the old." Another example is from DI, Watkinsville, GA: "I would like to see development of Jekyll Island State Park restricted to no more than the current 'footprint' of development. Remodeling or destruction of current building and replacement within the old 'footprint,' yes. New construction, no."

Eight to eleven percent of total comments comprised a combination of three categories I called "upscale." The three categories comprising "upscale" are "Hilton Head St Simons Island," "affordable," and "average Georgian." The concerns that seemed to generate these comments were that (1) the simple and peaceful character of Jekyll Island would be ruined by turning it into a resort like Hilton Head, St Simons, Myrtle Beach, Amelia Island, etc., (2) Jekyll Island should remain affordable to everyone, and (3) Jekyll Island should remain easily accessible to average Georgians and people of everyday means. LS from Acworth stated, "This should NOT become a

resort type area for the upper class. There are plenty of places for that already.” CC in Jefferson, GA commented, “Please keep Jekyll Island a natural park and do not let it go the way of St. Simons and other sister islands.” CC continued, “Upgrading the hotels too much and allowing more condos and such will bring new, different clients and oust the families who currently can afford to visit...” MM of Carlton, GA added that, “As a state park, those of us, including me, should be able to come and enjoy the natural environment and not yet another St. Simons, Tybee, or Hilton Head. Keep it natural and affordable for the average citizen.” JB of Johns Creek, GA noted, “I believe it is essential that middle-income families have an opportunity to lodge and shop on Jekyll Island. Please make accommodations and eating establishments as well as shopping venues affordable for average Georgians.”

Six percent of the comments pleaded to keep Jekyll Island the way it is now. The people making these comments did not want to see the simple, peaceful, uncrowded, natural character of Jekyll Island change. SK from Bluffton, SC asked, “Please keep Jekyll Island as pure as it is now. No high-rises and condos please. It would spoil what we come to visit for the last eight years. I know you have to put some shops in but keep it simple and low-key. Thank you.” TH of Chicago, IL, summed up her feelings, “Your ‘It’s all good’ slogan says it all. It’s all good now, don’t change it!” NI from Rex, GA said, “Gentlemen, we are of the opinion that Jekyll must be preserved as it is now. We have enough resorts and condominiums. We need wild places, places that have not been manicured and changed and wrestled into the shapes that money-hungry developers want.”

The concerns listed in the paragraphs above represented 49 percent of the text (see “Method,” below for more information).

Other concerns mentioned somewhat frequently included a desire to keep the beach accessible, a rejection of the profit-driven perspective that seems to have guided the plans for new development, pleas for the JIA to listen to the public, and a desire to maintain Jekyll Island’s purpose as a state park. JDB from Dunwoody, GA incorporated many of these concerns into her statement: “Fundamentally changing the purpose of the island would be totally wrong. Definitely, the existing open beach front, as well as access for the general public (of average income) should be maintained. After all is IS a State Park and should NOT be in competition with other destinations.”

Citizen responses also indicated an opposition to any new condominiums, timeshares, and high rises, and supported the idea of basing Jekyll’s future on nature tourism rather than resort tourism. The current open view of the ocean appears to be highly valued by many of the citizens whose responses I analyzed.

Other citizen comments described favored family activities (usually nature or outdoor-based, such as bicycling or beach walking), expressed a desire to keep Jekyll Island as it is for children and grandchildren (highlighting Jekyll Island’s bequest value), described Jekyll Island as a place to learn about the natural coast, decried the coming development, expressed support for the current merchants of Jekyll Island, worried that visitors to Jekyll would cease to be average citizens and would become a more elite clientele, and threatened to abandon Jekyll Island as a destination if the planned changes go forward.

Jekyll Island Planning and Management Guidelines

To provide information to the JIA in a more useful format, I took these categories and transformed them into a planning and management format. Based on the RFI responses analyzed from a sample of citizen-owners writing to IPJI, the following appear to be important suggested guidelines for Jekyll Island planning and management:

1. Planning and management should give the highest priority to sustaining the natural environment of Jekyll Island.
2. Planning and management should constrain development to the existing developed footprint of Jekyll Island. Under no circumstances should additional development occur on the beachfront or in other sensitive natural areas.
3. Land use definitions of undeveloped land should not include man-made or modified environments. Under no circumstances should more than 35 percent of the island be developed.
4. Planning and management should keep affordability and accessibility paramount, especially for Georgians of average income.
5. When planning and managing the character of Jekyll Island, every effort should be made to keep it from becoming like Hilton Head, St. Simons, or other coastal tourist destinations. In fact, the current simple, uncrowded-feel, and peaceful character of Jekyll Island should be sustained into the future.
6. The original purpose for creating Jekyll Island State Park as a great public beach park for average Georgians should remain the guiding purpose underpinning all planning and management of Jekyll Island. Nature-based tourism, rather than upscale development, should guide planning and management of Jekyll Island.
7. New condominiums and timeshares should not be included in any planning or management of Jekyll Island State Park.
8. A height limit of just a few stories should be placed on all new development.
9. Easy beach access for all Georgians and the open view of the beach along Beachview Drive should remain an important feature of all planning and management.

Although I did not do a formal analysis, I informally triangulated these recommendations against earlier citizen comments received, both directly to the JIA via their 2007-2008 Villa Osipo request for comments to Linger Longer's original development proposal and to IPJI in 2009 in their request for comments regarding Linger Longer's second proposal. It appeared to me that citizen preferences for Jekyll Island's future have not changed over the past three years, and that the recommendations provided above are in line with what citizens have been saying throughout the Jekyll Island planning process.

Methodology

After defining the categories provided by the JIA at the suggestion of the Executive Director, I attempted to code responses using those categories. It quickly became clear that the categories as provided by the JIA overlapped and needed to be collapsed into a more parsimonious list. I developed a collapsed list based on the original JIA categories and once again began to code the responses.

In qualitative analysis, the text is usually the source for category (or theme) development. Typically, a qualitative analysis will start with no categories, allowing the respondents (or text) to suggest what is important. I quickly realized that my collapsed list of categories, created from a list provided by the JIA, was insufficient as it missed much of the concerns being expressed by the respondents. Therefore, I began a new list of categories, this one based on my reading of each of the 50 comments. Beside each sentence, group of sentences, or paragraph, I wrote a word that captured the essence of the comment. In qualitative assessment, this is called coding, and it involves a continual comparison of codes with the intent to collapse codes when appropriate and identify clearly separate codes. This process is what enables the qualitative summarization of a large amount of text.

My final categories included the following:

- Like It Is: I applied this label to any comment that indicated a desire to keep Jekyll Island the way it is now or not to change anything on Jekyll Island.
- Nature: This label captured a host of concerns for Jekyll Island's natural environment, including the ideas expressed in the JIA's list for preservation, conservation, protection, sustainable natural resource management, and nature-based activities and facilities.
- Simple: Keep Jekyll Island's character as it is now: simple, peaceful, uncrowded-feeling, family-oriented, low-key.
- Hilton Head St. Simons: I applied this label to any comment related to not turning Jekyll into a tourist destination like these and other coastal destinations. I also applied it to comments that suggested that anyone who desires that kind of experience should just go to those destinations. Often, this type of comment was embedded with a concern for affordability and a disdain for an upscale Jekyll Island.
- Average Georgian: I applied this label to comments about keeping Jekyll Island a destination for average Georgians and average citizens.
- Existing Footprint: I used this label for comments referring specifically to keeping to the existing footprint, to ones that said, "No new development," or related comments.
- Beach Access: This captures the comments that expressed concern that the beachfront remain open and easily accessible. I also applied this label to the comments expressing concern for the possible loss of the open beach view on Beachview Drive.
- 65/35: I applied this label to any comment referring to the law requiring that 65 percent of the island remain undeveloped.
- Land Use Definitions: I applied this label to any comment referring to the definition of developed and undeveloped land.
- No Elite: I applied this label to comments referring to the gentrification of Jekyll Island.
- Affordable: I applied this label to any comment made specifically about keeping Jekyll Island affordable or reference to it becoming unaffordable to average citizens.
- No Condo: I applied this label to any comment about condominiums, timeshares, or high rises.
- Listen: This refers to any comment made regarding the JIA's need to listen to the public.
- No Overdevelopment: I applied this label to comments that specifically stated that Jekyll Island should not be overdeveloped.

- Nature Tourism: I applied this label to any comments regarding nature-based tourism or activities.
- Merchants: I applied this label to any comments regarding the current merchants or the future character of the retail center on Jekyll Island.

After I completed the coding (the application of labels to lines of text), I counted the total number of lines comprising the 50 comments. Then, I counted the number of lines coded with each of the above labels. If only part of a line was included, I counted the line. If less than three words were on a line within a coded category, I did not count the line. I then computed the proportion of each coded category relative to all comments. In many instances, one “chunk” of text was coded with more than one label. Paragraphs, for example, may have been coded with two to three labels, but the specific lines attached to each code may have been different.

Finally, with an understanding (based on the JIA’s initial list of categories) that the JIA was looking for planning and management guidance from the public, I rewrote the emergent list of categories as a list of planning and management recommendations for the JIA.

Contact:

Dr. Babs McDonald

Athens, GA

mcdonldbabs@gmail.com

706-207-3451