

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Council Chambers and via Zoom

October 11, 2023, 1:00 PM

Minutes

I. Call to Order: *Mr. Jordan called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.*

Present: Jim Jordan, Chairman
Lynne Sager
Pam Wilson
Jane Ellis

KINHC: Lee Bundrick
ARB: Tommy Manuel

Present via Zoom: Jim Chitwood
Jack Kotz

Absent: Pam Wilson
Jane Ellis

KIGR: Liz King
KICA: Matt Hill
TOKI: Aaron Given

Also Present: Michael Heidingsfelder

II. **Approval of Minutes:**

A. Minutes of the August 9, 2023, Environmental Committee Meeting

The August 9th minutes were deferred to the next meeting.

III. **Citizen's Comments:**

None

IV. **Project Updates:**

A. Shorebird Stewardship Program

No updates

B. Grow Native

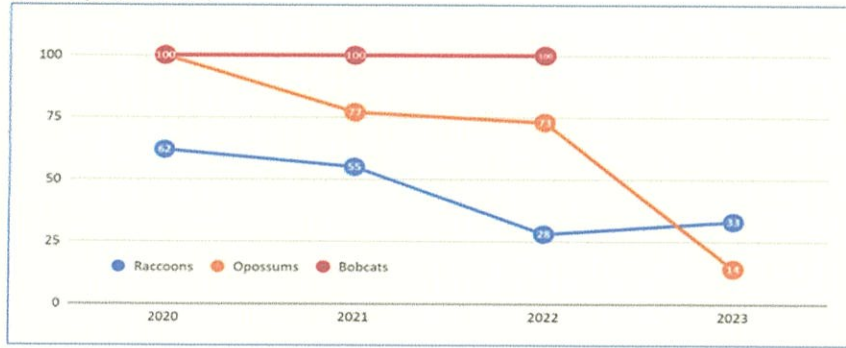
Mr. Jordan stated the work in the Grow Native nature trail behind the Municipal Center has been completed, and the trail reopened.

C. Rodenticides/Wildlife

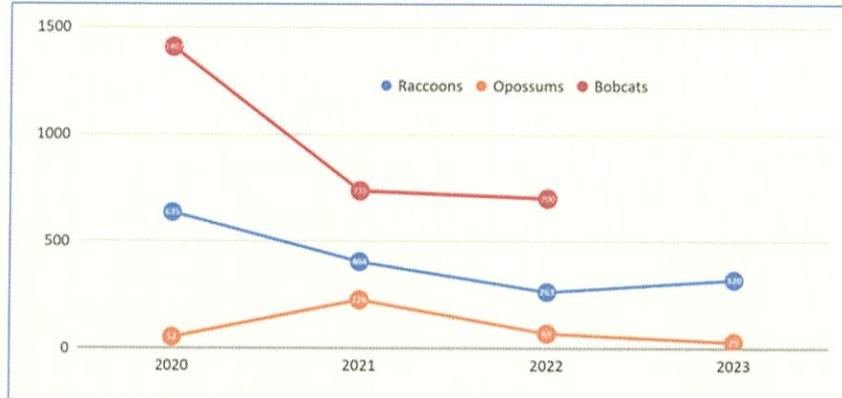
Mr. Jordan stated that an additional thirty-three animals were tested since the last meeting, bringing the total number tested to 164. The graphs on SGA (Second Generation Anticoagulants) exposure rates and average exposure levels for raccoons, opossums, and bobcats were updated to include the additional tested animals.

Mr. Jordan reviewed the graphs, which continued to show positive trends outlining the reductions in opossums going from a 100% exposure rate to 14% and raccoons going from a 62% exposure rate to 33%. All the bobcats tested showed exposure, but there is no data for 2023 because there were none to test.

SGA Exposure Rates



SGA Average Exposure Levels



Mr. Jordan noted that overall, the testing indicated that there are a lot fewer SGAs in the environment than there were three years ago.

D. Kiawah Conservancy Projects

Mr. Bundrick reported:

- the Groundwater Table Study was still running. Data collected from each well site is being analyzed, and the study should be completed by the end of the year. He also stated
- he had requested information on oyster mapping and if 2022 aerial imagery could be used to identify oyster beds
- the Maritime Forest topographic analysis continues by obtaining satellite imagery to compare and analyze.

E. Clemson PhD Bobcat Anticoagulant Study

Mr. Jordan reported that camera trap analysis continued on the over 2 million photos taken by the cameras. There have been 1623 bobcat scats collected for testing to run genetics to type to an individual bobcat and exposure to SGAs. There is one more year of fieldwork, then approximately one year for the dissertation to be written.

F. Marsh Management Plan

Mr. Jordan stated that the Committee is still working on the three main areas: Kiawah River Bridge Public Access, Pervious/Impervious, and Comprehensive Communications, and is slowly making progress on all three.

G. Kiawah Go Green Initiative

Mr. Jordan stated that the workgroup is still actively meeting on a number of initiatives.

H. Kiawah River Bridge Access Feasibility Study

Mr. Jordan stated that the study is in Phase 2, Environmental Review. The subcommittee would be scheduling a Critical Line Survey to be completed within 30-45 days and has released an online survey to assess use patterns by property owners, visitors, employees, and residents of neighboring communities. The survey was released on September 26th and closed on October 10th. The results will be presented to the subcommittee at their next meeting.

V. Old Business:

A. Kiawah River No Wake Zone

Mr. Jordan presented a map of the proposed “No Wake Zone” that extends from the first bend in the Kiawah River all the way to Captain Sam’s Inlet, where it flows into the Atlantic Ocean and includes 19 docks.

Mr. Heidingsfelder asked that the Cassique dock also be included in the map. While not on the Kiawah River, most of the traffic from the dock flows into the river. Also discussed was the suggestion that the docks be coded with different sizes and colors according to the traffic they create.

Mr. Jordan highlighted the history behind the request for a “No Wake Zone” in the Kiawah River, which most recently focused on dolphins and strand feeding. The current will include the strand feeding aspect but will focus mainly on the safety of recreational boaters, kayakers, and standup paddle boarders.

Committee Members reviewed the letter drafted to be sent to the DNR (Department of Natural Resources). Discussion included contacting organizations like the Resort, the Club, and the Community Association to obtain usage data and/or letters of concern focusing on safety concerns of community members and visitors to be attached to the letter, along with contacting regimes along the river, the County Park, Cassique, and Seabrook. Also discussed was a letter of concern from the Low Country Mammal Network focusing on the safety of Dolphins rather than strand feeding, a letter from the Conservancy on any environmental issues or concerns, and an in-depth discussion of the list of individuals and legislators the letter should also be sent to.

B. Storage Boxes, Chairs, and Trash Cans on the Beach

Mr. Jordan stated that an internal meeting was held with Mr. Gottshalk, the Public Works Director, and with Mr. Trevor with Island Beach Services to begin the discussion of this issue. Included in the discussion with Mr. Cyrulik was the need for the storage boxes for the 1000 umbrellas set up on the beach during the busy season, potential changes, and better alternatives. Mr. Heidingsfelder indicated that also included in the discussion were environmental, turtle, and aesthetic issues.

Committee Members engaged in a discussion of the concern that storage boxes are impeding nesting turtles. It was noted there is almost no data indicating that the boxes directly impact those turtles and that boxes are moved if a nest is found behind a box. It was agreed that the issue with storage boxes was more aesthetic rather than the impact on turtles; therefore, the focus should be shifted to the Public Works Department.

Mr. Jordan stated that the separate issue of trash cans on the beach was discussed in the internal meeting. He stated that the pilot program of removing trash cans off the beach in boardwalk areas would be taking place in the near future but required more discussions with the Community Association on potential pilot locations to place trash cans at the roadside or boardwalk side along with and the ARB on a can or enclosure design.

VI. New Business:

A. Watershed Master Plan RFQ

Mr. Jordan stated that included in the meeting materials was an RFQ to develop a Watershed Master Plan for Kiawah, which came out of the Building Department and was tied to the CRS (Community Rating System) program. The development of a plan is a critical part of the CRS program, and Mr. Spicher had requested that the Environmental Committee play a role in reviewing the submissions received in response to the RFQ.

B. Tallow Tree Control Program

Mr. Jordan stated that when the Town first developed the Tallow Tree control program in 2013, there were MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding) with all the entities along with funding contributions from all the entities. Over the years, the Town has remained committed to the program, but with no maintenance, many of the areas that were initially treated have shown significant growth. He indicated that a great deal of progress had been made, and in order not to lose it. He asked for the Committee's help to work through getting the entities back on board and recommit to the Tallow Tree issue by the next treatment cycle, typically in September/October.

Mr. Jordan reported that this year, treatments were conducted from September 26th through the 28th with 64.1 acres being treated. A number of areas have been treated over many years, but it was discovered that there was a significantly higher number of big trees found, especially in the Ocean Course natural area, than originally predicted.

Mr. Jordan reviewed the areas that were treated, noting that the areas surrounding:

- River Course wetlands – not too bad
- Rhetts Bluff – fairly bad
- Indio Park – fairly bad
- Osprey Beach - not too bad
- Canvas Beach - not too bad

The Preserve was found to have many small trees, along with some larger ones. Area 10 was the worst, having been found to have hundreds and hundreds of larger trees in a low spot behind properties. He noted that the area is difficult to treat without permission from the property owners, but the contractor spent one entire day and a half of the total herbicide used to treat that area.

Mr. Jordan reviewed the three-phased approach used in the initial treatment program.

- Phase 1 – Treat all big Tallows on community wetland properties, which were retreated this year
- Phase 2 – Treat golf courses, roadways, and leisure trails, which was done in 2014 but not maintained
- Phase 3 – Treat private homesites and undeveloped lots, still to be completed

Mr. Jordan reiterated the need to refocus on the Tallow Tree issue and the control program.

VII. Reports:

A. Town of Kiawah Island

Mr. Jordan reviewed his report as follows:

⚡ **Alligators**

- five nuisance alligators removed in 2023 (6, 7, 8, 9, 12 feet)

✚ Bobcat GPS Study

- Six bobcat collars ordered for deployment January-March 2024
- Four bobcat/coyote collars to be ordered for January-March 2024

✚ Fall Migration Banding

- Daily banding began August 15 and will continue through November 30.
- Banding sites include Captain Sam’s Spit and Little Bear Island.

2023 Fall Cumulative Banding Stats	Captain Sams	Little Bear	TOTAL
# Birds Banded	2741	1962	4703
# of Recaptures	627	299	926
# of Species	63	71	80
Effort (net-hours)	9024.25	5368.8	14393.05
Capture Rate (birds/100 net-hours)	37.3	42.1	39.11
# of Days	55	45	-

✚ Tallow Tree Control

- Conducted September 26-28
- 64.1 acres treated
- Lots of big trees found, especially in the Ocean Course natural area

✚ Bobcat Week

- October 2-6
- Bobcats and Bluegrass event on October 6
 - 71 attendees
- 131 Guardian repledges
- six new pledges

B. Kiawah Island Community Association Land & Lakes Management

No report.

C. Kiawah Island Golf Resort

No report.

D. Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board

No report

E. Kiawah Conservancy

Mr. Bundrick stated that the Conservancy had just purchased two properties along Betsy Kerrison, a total of 79 acres. He noted that work was being done to secure county Greenbelt funds. With the approval of South Carolina Conservation Bank funds, approximately 75% of the properties would be paid for with grants.

Mr. Bundrick reviewed the upcoming Conservancy events, which included the Gala on the following Tuesday; on Thursday will be a presentation by Mary Reynolds, a native plant guru from Irland, and on November 3rd is the native plant sale at Freshfields.

F. Turtle Patrol

Ms. Sager reported the Turtle Patrol was still waiting on one nest to hatch. Of the 438 nests, 49 were lost, 41 were due to Tropical Storm Idelia, and eight were lost due to coyotes. There were an additional seven nests that were predated by coyotes but not totally destroyed. She noted screens had not been used since 2014, but next season, nests will be screened from day one to prevent any coyote predation.

Committee Members further discussed the areas where the coyote predation took place, if there was any idea of the number of coyotes currently on the island, and how many the island is likely to support.

VIII. Citizen Comments:

None

IX. Chairman's Comments:

None

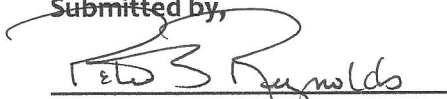
X. Committee Member Comments:

None

XI. Adjournment:

Mr. Bundrick motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:23 pm. Ms. Sager seconded the motion, and it unanimously passed.

Submitted by,



Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,



Jim Jordan, Chairman

2-23-24
Date