

THE REGIONAL



PLAN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Draft for Adoption

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Program Purpose and Introduction

The Coastal Regional Commission's (CRC) purpose is to serve the citizens of the 10-county coastal region, local governments and the broader regional community by providing services, support and leadership on issues that require comprehensive regional solutions. As part of this purpose, the CRC serves as the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) designated regional planning agency for the 10-county area. The CRC is a regional leader in identifying values, developing policies and executing plans that matter to residents and communities, and long term sustainability and livability. Its mission continues to demonstrate professional and forward-looking leadership to ensure sustainable growth, livability and a competitive advantage by focusing and balancing environmental responsibility, economic growth and social needs.

This Stakeholder Engagement Program supports the CRC's most comprehensive and interdisciplinary plan: The Regional Plan. This comprehensive plan is being developed for adoption in 2015/2016. The plan includes a vision for how the regional coast of Georgia can develop policies and projects that ensure a high quality of life for all residents over the next 25 years. The Regional Plan includes topics of regional importance such as infrastructure, intrinsic resources, regional growth management issues, economic development, preservation of agricultural lands, communities for a lifetime and a proposed topic of importance to include resilient communities.

The CRC seeks to ensure that the Update of the Regional Plan reflects the full range of regional values and desires by involving a diverse spectrum of Stakeholders. The program outlined below meets the requirements of the State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for the development and sharing of the Regional Agenda.

The guiding principles to this plan are as follows:

- Strong cooperation with public, private and non-profit partners
- Transparency of decision-making process
- Growing relationships and capacity with higher educational institutions
- Inclusiveness that reflects the region in its full diversity with equitable outcomes

- Involvement in processes
- Implementation of stakeholder events

Regional Plan Steering Committee

The Regional Plan Steering Committee include members of the Coastal Regional Commission Council who meet monthly and also established sub-committees to discuss transportation, economic development, military and region-wide issues. The CRC also benefitted from the regional partnerships of higher education institutions as these institutions are aligned with and dedicated to the livability and economic vitality of the 10-county coastal region.

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The Regional Plan Stakeholders

The planning region encompasses 10 counties and 35 cities, including urban and rural areas. The viewpoints, visions and goals can be a challenge for developing regional consensus on key issues, however this diversity is a trademark of the region.

Creating more livable areas means designing our communities in such a way that they address the needs of all residents and improve the general quality of life. This requires a careful and comprehensive accounting of the needs of a diverse population, people of all ages, occupations, income levels and physical abilities. Increasing the quality of planning by combining the insights of an informed citizenry with the guidance of professionals can enhance the relationship between citizens and government.

Coastal residents uphold their individual community needs and place a high premium on community choices which creates an opportunity for coastal Georgians to see the interconnections between local communities and issues of regional importance.

Our society's civic infrastructure is every bit as important as its physical infrastructure thus public participation is vital to the processes of community design, planning, and

development. Community involvement and citizen participation ensures the retention of good plans and policies through the important development of an engaged constituency

Regional planning must have a fundamental understanding of community input and proposed solutions that reflect the community's wants and needs. The Regional Plan participation process involves anyone expressing interest in its activities and outcomes. The following is a list of the Regional Plan stakeholders. A "stakeholder" is considered to be someone who has a vested interest in the process. Stakeholders are an integral part of the planning process. Key stakeholders include 1. Residents representing a diverse range of backgrounds of interests; 2. Vulnerable populations and/or those who have been historically left out the decision making process; business, industry and civic leaders; the development community including real estate professional, media representative and city and county and elected officials. Other stakeholders include agriculture and forestry interest, churches and church leaders, civic clubs, students, tourism officials, service organizations, members of the military with a vested interest in interest, local property owners, local business owners as well as higher institutions have been identified as stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement Techniques

The participation techniques proposed for the update of The Regional Plan represent a range of methods to effectively reach out to people in the region. The range of techniques varies from the use of direct conversation, to leadership retreats, to on-line surveys to group meetings.

- *Partnership: Stakeholders have shared responsibility and accountability.*
- *Participation: stakeholders are part of the team, engaged in delivering tasks. Tow-way engagement but limited to stakeholder interest area.*
- *Consultation: Stakeholders are involved but not responsible. Limited two-way engagement is used e.g., stakeholders are asked specific questions.*
- *Push communications: Stakeholders are sent/pushed information using various channels e.g., email, Facebook, or LinkedIn, or report.*

- *Pull communications: Stakeholder information is made available via website. One way communication.*

The goal of these techniques is to provide meaningful information or to have meaningful two-way dialogue on issues and potential solutions on a continuous basis throughout the planning time frame.

CRC Board Updates: These updates are held with the CRC Board at various milestones in the planning process.

Local Government Meetings: Meetings will continue to be held with local government officials and staff throughout 2015/2016/2017 utilizing the Regional Plan and the topics identified as regionally important to solicit input. Following each meeting, CRC staff review comments regarding identified issues and opportunities which are to be brought forward for discussion in proposed strategies, policy areas, and programs related to update of the Regional Plan.

The Regional Plan Open Houses: July through September 2015, the CRC in partnership with local governments throughout the region will host a series of open houses. These open houses will focus upon details of the Regional Plan update and expound on policy areas, existing programs, projects and actions underway by CRC and local governments to assess additional activities, new policies, projects or programs that may be needed.

A series of meetings will be held throughout the region. Each meeting will be planned in partnership with local governments to provide opportunity for input in the planning process. The information included at the open houses will include draft planning documents, information on proposed community resiliency standards as well as opportunities to engage in open dialogue.

Official Public Review and Comment: There will be a 30-day public review and comment period before completion/adoption of The Regional Plan.

Formal Public Hearings: These hearings will be held before the Regional Agenda at a monthly CRC Board.

Stakeholder Group Discussions: These targeted discussion groups endeavor to have specific conversations on issues and concerns leading up to the plan milestone points. Included in these discussions will be representatives from local governments, public/private organizations and advocacy groups, community residents, businesses, community based organizations, and the media.

MetroQuest Online Surveys: A series of online surveys will be conducted. These online surveys are to be used to get feedback on and results will be used to guide discussions in a series of open houses held throughout the region late 2015. Effort will be made to reach as many regional citizens as possible using online promotions.

The Regional Plan Presentations: These presentations are tailored to speaking engagements and used to present to various groups at their request.

GeoDesign Summit:

Plan Development/Participation Schedule

Although the elements are interdependent and implemented in a nonlinear order, the following framework provides the foundation to guide the engagement plan:

- Engage stakeholders/partners invested in what is to be learned early in the process.
- Clearly identify goals and objectives for engagement and include description of needs, expected outcomes, activities, resources, stage of development and content.
- Design the components of engagement to be useful and feasible.

The CRC encourages stakeholders to learn about regional issues, the depth and diversity of regional assets through hosting regional practicums, community surveys, on-line notices, workshops, lectures and one-on-one meetings.

The process for Stakeholder Involvement began in 2013 to provide preliminary input into the Regional Assessment; thus and many of the following activities have taken place. The following is the intent of the program:

Spring/Summer 2013 (accomplished):

- CRC board to create partnerships with UGA, GSU and EPD

- CRC internal multi-disciplinary staff discussions

Fall/Winter 2013 (accomplished)

- Local government and staff outreach
- Leadership Class of 2013

Spring/Summer 2014 (accomplished)

- Feb 6 – 8, 2014 CRC and UGA meet with Coastal GA Historical Society and key staff from Bryan County, Camden County, Glynn County, Liberty County, McIntosh County
- Local government and staff outreach

Fall/Winter 2014 (accomplished)

- CRC Resilient Community Practicum explored the implications to Georgia's coast as it relates to the research on shoreline movement, the science of sea level and the Coastal Hazards Portal.
- Green Infrastructure GIS Community Planning Tool goes hand-in-hand with other CRC initiatives especially as part of our regional ecosystem. Outreach using the tool as a hands-on exercise was demonstrated and participants evaluated a development proposal and used the tool to map green assets, help determine goals, analyze relevant data and identify opportunities for enhanced coastal zone management.
- Leadership Class of 2014
- Local government and staff outreach
- Plan Implementation meetings special emphasis on Regional Plan

Spring/Summer 2015: (accomplished)

The CRC is using an online engagement tool (<https://coastalplan.metroquest.com>) to collect input from a wide audience, and then using that input to guide more constructive public meetings, working with interested community members to come up with solutions, and finally taking those solutions back out online for broad community input.

- The Regional Plan Online Survey #1
- Local government and staff outreach
- CRC internal multi-disciplinary staff discussions
- The Regional Plan Online Survey #2

- Plan Implementation meetings special emphasis on Regional Plan

Summer/Fall /Winter 2015

- Regional Plan Open House(s)
- Local government and staff outreach
- CRC internal multi-disciplinary staff discussions

Spring/Summer 2016

- Development of Regional Plan website
- City/County Manager Meetings
- Regional Plan Open House(s)
- Local government and staff outreach
- CRC internal multi-disciplinary staff discussions
- GeoDesign Summit
- Planning Forum/Stakeholder Outreach targeted audiences
- Official Public Review and Comment
- Formal Public Hearing

Maintain a Project Website

The Regional Plan Website is to include the schedule and summaries of planning activities, maps of planning areas and activities to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The aim is for a broad spectrum to stay involved with contact information, calendar, and survey and comment archives.

- “How Should we Grow?” solicitation for responses to online survey
- Connection to CRC Facebook,
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Coastal-Regional-Commission-of-Georgia/203292686478817>

Evaluation of Engagement

To ensure success of the stakeholder engagement program, the CRC continually monitors the effectiveness of the techniques and evaluates the program by filtering results through the following:

- Number reached with information.
- Number responding to information.
- Number understanding their role in the process.
- Extent of feedback on the stakeholder engagement approach
- Number thinking their involvement is/was worthwhile.
- Number showing willingness to be involved in subsequent stages.



This quantitative data provides information that can be counted to answer such questions such as, “How many?”, “Who was involved?”, “What were the outcomes?”