



STEWARDS OF THE GEORGIA COAST

COASTAL CONSERVATION
PROJECT LIST
MARCH 2020

VERSION 3.0

Stewards of the Georgia Coast
Coastal Conservation Project List – v.3
Published March 2020

Stewards of the Georgia Coast is an informal donor network for coastal conservation. **Stewards** is modeled on donor networks across the country in which donors with a common focus share resources, learn together, and build community, all in the interest of making greater impact with their philanthropy.

When meeting with people new to coastal conservation, we're often asked, "How can we help?" To answer that question broadly and responsibly, we set out to curate a list of high priority conservation projects with strong leadership and immediate needs for private philanthropy. Nominations were solicited from more than 25 trusted conservation professionals currently serving on the Georgia Coast.

Projects were selected based on **Stewards'** working knowledge of coastal conservation priorities and confidence in the leadership and organizations involved. Nevertheless, donors are encouraged to engage in their own due diligence when making contributions.

Projects have been grouped in the following categories: Advocacy; Environmental Education; Land Conservation, Stewardship & Restoration; Sustainability & Climate Resilience; Watershed Protection; and Wildlife Conservation. While most are highly collaborative, a single point of contact has been provided for each project for use when donors would like more information or want to make a donation. If this resource proves to be helpful, **Stewards** will update it periodically.

Your input and suggestions are welcomed and appreciated. Please contact Burch Barger (stewardsofgacoast@gmail.com or 205-643-8121), Scott Coleman (scott@littlessi.com or 229-724-9202), or David Weitnauer (dweitnauer@rhdobbs.net or 404-574-2970). Also, if you choose to support a project from the list, please consider letting us know as it will help us to assess the value and impact of this effort.

Thank you for your interest in and support for coastal conservation in Georgia.

Stewards of the Georgia Coast
www.stewardsofgacoast.org

Stewards of the Georgia Coast Curated Coastal Conservation Project List (March 2020)

- **General operating support.** General operating support is the lifeblood of every non-profit. In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, non-profits are being stretched and challenged as never before due to widespread impact on working conditions and declining revenue in the face of damage to our economy. As you're able, donors are encouraged to provide general operating support to conservation non-profits serving the Georgia Coast. For a list of those non-profits, see Stewards' Directory of Conservation Organizations Serving the Georgia Coast at <https://stewardsofgacoast.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Conservation-Organizations-Serving-Coastal-GA.pdf>

Advocacy

- **Okefenokee Forever (\$30,000):** More than 25 local, regional, and national conservation organizations are working collectively to protect the Okefenokee Swamp from current and future threats. The Swamp is the headwaters of the St. Marys River, serves as a home to many threatened and endangered species, and is the largest blackwater swamp in North America and one of the largest remaining intact wetlands in the Southeast. Nonetheless, Twin Pines Minerals (TPM), LLC, an Alabama company, poses a significant threat to the ecosystem based on their plans to mine a 12,000-acre tract that is located on the very doorstep of the Swamp. Our hydrology and wetlands experts have revealed that the studies that TPM has prepared do little to show that the mine will not adversely impact the Swamp. As a result, we seek to persuade the Corps of Engineers it should deny the wetlands permit that TPM is seeking, or at least require TPM to conduct more extensive studies. The coalition has already spent thousands of dollars on expert fees and will have to spend thousands more. We also would like to hire someone on a part time basis who lives in the area around the Swamp to raise awareness about the economic benefits of the Swamp and the threat the TPM mine and future projects could cause to the Swamp. We are seeking \$20,000 for expert fees/science and \$10,000 to hire a part-time organizer to get the word out. For more information or to make a donation, contact Bill Sapp with the Southern Environmental Law Center at (404) 521-9900 or bsapp@selcga.org.
- **Golden Ray: After-Action Review and Policy Recommendations (\$18,000):** The capsizing of the Golden Ray has caused significant environmental challenges and serves as a good example of the ecological risks and liabilities presented by maritime activity. Georgia Conservancy seeks \$18,000, during the calendar year 2020, to fund a timely, local level (Glynn County) "after action" review of the Golden Ray disaster. If funded, we will form a nonpartisan blue ribbon panel to seek information from coastal-focused nonprofits, environmental attorneys, county emergency response staff, pilots, the United States Coast Guard, the State of Georgia

Environmental Protection Division, the Georgia Ports Authority, Coastal Resource Division (GA), and others. The panel will issue a peer-reviewed white paper outlining state/local-specific policy recommendations and best practices to minimize future risk from maritime shipping. We believe engaging key local stakeholders in a formal after-action review will be critical to minimizing the potential for future issues relating to maritime accidents in and around coastal Georgia. For more information or to donate in support of this work, contact Charles McMillan, Coastal Director, (912) 447-5910 or cmcmillan@gaconservancy.org.

Environmental Education

- **Scholarships for Youth Environmental Leadership Program (\$750 per student or \$9,000 total):** In 2019, One Hundred Miles launched a new youth leadership program called Youth Environmental Leadership Program (YELP), an innovative conservation leadership initiative for high school students who have a strong interest in deepening their environmental knowledge, cultivating leadership skills, and making a positive impact on our coast's future. Using the lessons learned from our pilot year, we plan to grow the program in scope and impact for the 2020-21 cohort. Ten to twelve 9th-12th grade students from across our coast will be selected via a competitive application process. During the nine-month YELP experience, students will take part in monthly field trips to better understand the issues impacting our natural and cultural resources and skill-building meetings that help them learn critical leadership skills. The group will also work together to develop and lead a coast-wide environmental action project. To ensure that YELP is accessible to deserving students across our coast, we are intentional about selecting an economically and racially diverse cohort of students and eliminating barriers to participation. We offer the program at NO COST to participants (including free transportation to and from field trip sites and free access to all activities). Funding covers basic non-personnel costs and will ensure that students from all backgrounds have access to these hands-on environmental experiences. For more information or to make a donation, contact Kate Grinalds at 404-395-7423 or kate@onehundredmiles.org. Kate serves as VP of Philanthropy for One Hundred Miles.
- **NESTS Sea Turtle Education Program (\$5,000):** St. Simons Island (SSI) is the most populated barrier island across Georgia's 100-mile coast. As a result, the island's loggerhead sea turtles (nesting females, their nests, and hatchlings) frequently experience negative impacts due to human activities. Yet SSI's ample beach access also provides one of the most accessible options to engage the public in wildlife viewing and one of the only locations offering free programming for all ages. In summer 2020, One Hundred Miles and the St. Simons Island Sea Turtle Project plan to build upon our earlier efforts to launch a new community-wide education initiative called *Neighbors Ensuring Sea Turtle Survival (NESTS)*. This project will be designed to help residents and visitors understand the impacts their choices have on sea turtles and how they can take action to conserve sea turtles and other wildlife. We will create new interpretive signage and educational materials across the Golden Isles, purchase red flashlights to distribute

to hotels and condo associations for use by their visitors, and create a wildlife certification program for local neighborhood associations, businesses, and other community groups. This pilot project will be designed as a model which can be replicated across the coast. For more information or to make a donation, contact Catherine Ridley at 912-222-3140 or catherine@onehundredmiles.org. Catherine serves as VP of Education and Communications for One Hundred Miles and as project leader for the St. Simons Island Sea Turtle Project.

- **Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Foundation ROV Program Sponsors (\$1500 to \$25,000):** Beginning in 2004, Gray's Reef partnered with the Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) Center to offer underwater robotics as a vehicle to teach science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), which prepares students for technical careers. Ocean habitats, particularly marine sanctuaries, serve as backdrops for real life scenarios of exploration, rescue and research, upon which annual competition missions are based. Working in partnership with the Marine Technology Society ROV Committee, MATE created the ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) competition to:

- Engage students in STEM and expose them to science and technology careers;
- Encourage students to develop and apply technical, teamwork, and problem solving skills;
- Provide funds, materials, and technical expertise to support student learning;
- Provide industry with skilled individuals who can fill workforce needs.

The MATE competition challenges K-12, community college, and university students from all over the world to design and build ROVs to tackle missions modeled after scenarios from the ocean workplace. The competition's class structure of beginner, intermediate, and advanced complements the education pipeline by providing students with the opportunity to build upon their skills—and the application of these skills—as they engineer increasingly more complex ROVs for increasingly more complex mission tasks. In addition to engineering their ROVs, the students are required to prepare technical reports, poster displays, and engineering presentations that are delivered to working professionals who serve as competition judges. Sponsors are listed on our website and on all promotional materials at competitions and workshops and from the podium. For more information or to make a donation, contact Jody Patterson, Chapter Director, at (912) 572.2219 or jody@marinesanctuary.org

- **Tybee Island Marine Science Center Exhibits Sponsors (\$5000 to \$100,000):** Our capital fundraising effort will create an outdoor marine science education experience — indoors. With our new building under construction, we now face our final challenge of obtaining the exhibits, displays, and nature-based play spaces that will bring the Tybee Island Marine Science Center to life. Through the generosity of the City of Tybee Island, the W.C. Fleetwood family, the Makel family, and IKEA we have raised \$6.2 million. The remaining \$1.3 million is our shared responsibility. We cannot raise this amount alone, but with the right people and the right partnerships, we can complete a center that fosters, educates, and celebrates our special environment.

What we need for our Campaign are the following; all are naming opportunities:

- \$100,000 - Flagship Leader partners fund gallery spaces, Shark School, River Rampway, signature exhibits, and the outdoor amphitheater;
- \$75,000 - Marine Champion partners fund lab and classroom spaces, the audio-visual auditorium, solar energy, and interactive digital exhibits;
- \$50,000 - Island Sentinel partners fund the Sky Loft and Husbandry spaces, Harbor Viewing Deck, shark tanks and turtle habitats;
- \$25,000 - Ocean Guardian partners fund Overlook spaces, presentation kiosks located throughout the Center, and internships for future marine educators;
- \$10,000 - Coastal Curator partners fund exhibits that reveal the intricacies of life in our ocean with focus on marine animals and plants;
- \$5,000 - Sea Steward partners fund our all-important program carts, which carry artifacts and hands-on educational materials that connect our learners to our ocean.

Sponsors are named on the particular sponsored exhibit or education program as well as listed on the Tybee Island Marine Science Center website and on all promotional materials and social media outlets. For more information or to make a donation, contact Maria Procopio, Executive Director, at 912-272-5008 or maria@tybeemarinescience.org

Land Conservation, Stewardship, and Restoration

- ~~Altama Conservation Gateway – Master Site Plan: (\$30,000 total, \$10,000 committed/\$20,000 still needed):~~ In 2015, The Nature Conservancy acquired 4000 acres in the Altamaha watershed, strategically positioned where the river meets the salt marsh in Glynn County—the historic Altama tract. The property is owned and managed by the GA Department of Natural Resources as the Altama Wildlife Management Area with The Nature Conservancy as a permanent resident. In addition to the extraordinary landscape, Altama is home to historic buildings and other structures. Given the location of the property and the opportunity these structures represent, TNC is exploring restoration of the facilities and the possibility of using the buildings for management purposes, research and to anchor a coastal conservation center to be known as the Altama Conservation Gateway. Altama is strategically located to become a gateway for the coast and a center for conservation, land management and coastal resources education in the region. A master site plan for the property and core building area is needed to engage stakeholders and donors in the planning process. The planning process would include but not be limited to assembling and digitizing information on the property’s natural, historical and cultural features; artist renderings of the project; formation of an advisory committee to assess historical structures, landscaping, public use and conservation issues related to the transformation of the property; conceptualization of programs outside of traditional conservation such as historic preservation efforts, cultural and artistic uses of the center, and a collaboration with the region’s robust tourism industry; and an economic analysis that considers the cost to bring the buildings to usable condition, ongoing maintenance expenses, and potential for revenue generation. For more information or to make

a donation, contact Brian Wills, 404-403-9777 or bwills@tnc.org. Brian serves as the senior associate director of development for The Nature Conservancy in Georgia. **Funded**

- **Stewardship Service Work on Ossabaw Island (\$12,000):** Ossabaw Island, rich with thousands of years of human history, is protected by the island's heritage preserve designation which limits recreational activities to those focusing on research, study, or education. Middle Place is an area on Ossabaw that has been inhabited for the past two thousand years. There, layers of cultural resources are hidden and threatened by underbrush and growth. There are the foundations and walls of nine tabby slave houses, circa 1820, that were destroyed in the 1898 hurricane which was one of the deadliest in our history. In this hurricane, over 4,000 died on the barrier islands of the Georgia and South Carolina coast. There are other plantation remnants including an ice house built in the 1820s for food preservation – the 19th century version of a refrigerator – constructed of brick and tabby brick. Currently the ruins are overgrown with cedar vines, sawtooth palmettos, and cabbage palms that threaten to destroy what remains. Middle Place also has the remnants of a steam operated saw mill from the plantation era that is covered over with fallen trees from Hurricanes Matthew and Irma. In addition, there are tabby cattle dipping vats from the 1920s that are covered with vines and overgrowth. These structures are impossible to see unless you scramble through thick growth to get to them. Uncovering these structures to better preserve them and allow visitors to see them and learn about the history of the place is a priority for the Ossabaw Island Foundation, and the Georgia Conservancy is excited to partner with them on this project. The Georgia Conservancy seeks \$12,000 to send a 40-60-person volunteer force to Ossabaw Island to support service needs. Funding would help cover equipment, food and lodging for volunteers, ferry transportation to the island, and associated staff time to manage the project. For more information or to donate in support of this work, contact Clark Harrison at 404-876-2900 ext 131 or charrison@gaconservancy.org. Clark serves as the Stewardship Trips Director for the Georgia Conservancy.
- **Hitting the Ecological Reset Button - Collaborative Preparation to Recreate Large Scale Terrestrial and Wetland Ecosystems on Jekyll Island (\$60,000):** The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) is currently engaged in development of a Master Plan for the future of golf on Jekyll Island. Jekyll is a state-owned barrier island lying between Saint Simons Island and Cumberland Island. The majority of land on Jekyll Island is set aside for conservation. About 35%, or 1,609 acres, is developed land. The current land area occupied by golf on Jekyll is over 450 acres for 63 holes of golf, which has been determined to be financially unsustainable. The Golf Master Plan will be finalized in the Spring of 2020 and is expected to recommend that substantial acreage be re-allocated to conservation and passive outdoor recreation uses. The total acreage available for recreating ecosystems and landscapes from land currently in golf is likely to be between 50 and 100 acres with substantial potential for collateral enhancement of existing adjacent and embedded natural areas. The total area with potential to be enhanced by restoration activities is very likely to exceed 100 acres. Actions to be planned could include rebuilding freshwater wetland systems and salt marsh headwater systems that were disrupted

and displaced by golf course construction. Terrestrial restoration opportunities could include creation of maritime grasslands, establishment of coastal longleaf pine or pond pine systems to be managed with prescribed fire. Wildlife species that could be supported include grassland-dependent bird species, waterfowl species, and predatory species of birds, snakes, and mammals – notably, the island’s naturally reestablishing small bobcat population. A new wildlife corridor has already been identified in preliminary plans. Opportunities for reintroducing native wildlife such as wild turkey warrant consideration.

Successfully bringing forgotten Georgia barrier island landscapes back to life while creating newly diverse habitats that support rare, threatened, or keystone species has the potential to be an international conservation success story with ramifications far beyond Jekyll Island and the JIA – but not without smart collaborative planning. For more information contact Ben Carswell, JIA Director of Conservation at bcarswell@jekyllisland.com or 912-242-6222.

Facilitated Planning and Plan Preparation: \$50,000

Environmental measurements and analysis to support planning: \$10,000

Project Total: \$60,000

- **Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative**

Gopher Tortoises are one of the most important species in the coastal region of Georgia due to their function as a keystone species. As a keystone species, like a keystone in a door, if they were removed from the ecosystem, the system would collapse. This critical role is due to the burrows they engineer. Tortoise burrows are used by over 300 wildlife species including many that are endangered. The Gopher Tortoise is a declining species and is currently being reviewed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for listing under the Endangered Species Act. To prevent Gopher Tortoises from becoming listed, an unprecedented partnership has formed to protect a minimum of 65 out of 122 viable tortoise populations in Georgia. The unique strategy involves the purchase or permanent protection via easement of over 100,000 acres of Gopher Tortoise habitat, many of which will become Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Management Areas and be open to the public. An essential part of the strategy involves developing a system for restoring and managing those lands with prescribed fire indefinitely. Much of this work is focused on the coastal region. In sum, this is a land conservation strategy for the sake of wildlife conservation. Partners include The Conservation Fund, The Georgia Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, The Orianne Society, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, among others.

- ~~**Gopher Tortoise Relocation Fund (\$7,282 committed; \$17,718 needed):** Each year Gopher Tortoises are entombed underground as land is developed. The Orianne Society, in partnership with Georgia DNR, is developing a fund that can be used to translocate tortoises that are about to have their habitat destroyed. Tortoises are translocated to sites where viable tortoise populations are being built up as part of the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative. A group of private donors is currently working on raising \$25,000 to launch this fund. Orianne Society is working to raise an additional \$25,000 to \$75,000 which would allow us to implement one or two large scale translocations. The funds would be held by Orianne Society and used as tortoise translocations are needed. For more information or to make a donation, contact Chris Jenkins~~

at 208-241-9124 or cljenkins@oriannesociety.org. Chris serves as CEO of The Orianne Society. **Funded**

- **Gopher Tortoise Strike Team (\$40,000):** The Orianne Society is currently fundraising for a Gopher Tortoise Strike Team to restore and create habitat for Gopher Tortoises through groundcover restoration, prescribed fire, and the planting of Longleaf Pine. The Gopher Tortoise Strike Team also will be focused on implementing Gopher Tortoise translocations. This additional team will complement Orianne's current Strike Team, located in Telfair County, Georgia but will be located on the coast, potentially at Cabin Bluff. To implement the Gopher Tortoise Strike Team, Orianne is seeking funding in the amount of \$40,000 to hire a Strike Team leader who will manage activities such as tortoise inventories, prescribed burning, and translocations. For more information or to make a donation, contact Chris Jenkins at 208-241-9124 or cljenkins@oriannesociety.org

- **Land Conservation and Public Access to Wilderness Preserves on St. Simons Island (\$15,000 to \$25,000):** One of fourteen barrier islands on Georgia's coast, St. Simons is the only one without broad federal or state protection. With growing concern about high-density development and congestion, a group of community leaders founded the St. Simons Land Trust in 2000. During the past two decades, the Land Trust has protected more than 1,000 acres including the 608-acre Cannon's Point Preserve. Nearby **Guale Preserve** is a 258-acre wilderness area that was part of the former Musgrove Plantation and was purchased in three phases over three years. Significant infrastructure improvements – including the 1.5-mile Polly's Trail and the ¼ mile waterfront Janet's Trail -- have been completed thus far. Additional plans include:
 - **Guale Preserve, Phase III Trail System.** The southernmost 110-acre section of Guale Preserve is dense with saw palmetto and other upland vegetation, thus making it unnavigable for hikers, birders, cyclists and others to access this important tract on the island's north end. A grant of \$25,000 would provide the means to design, excavate, and create a one- to two-mile-long hiking trail through Phase III that would then be connected to Polly's Trail from Phase II. The funds would also help support the design, fabrication, and installation of interpretive signage along the trail.
 - **Guale Preserve Family Picnic Pavilion and Educational Building.** On Phase I at Guale, along the shoreline of Musgrove Creek, is a former boat house that the Land Trust will renovate to provide a safe, family-friendly structure that includes a view of the creek and marshlands and that will include interpretive signage regarding the history of the former Musgrove estate, the indigenous peoples who lived on the island for nearly 4,000 years, and the rare plants, animals, and migratory birds that are abundant in this natural habitat. The Land Trust has already received a \$25,000 grant from the Terry Thomas Foundation to start the renovation. An additional \$15,000 contribution would provide adequate funding to fully complete the project.

To learn more about these projects or to make a donation, contact Emily Ellison, Executive Director of St. Simons Land Trust, at (912) 638-9109 or emellison@sslt.org

Sustainability and Climate Resilience

- **Ocean Exchange Sponsors & Partners (\$10,000 to \$150,000):** Ocean Exchange’s sole mission is to help advance the adoption of solutions in the field of sustainability. We seek solutions with working prototypes that reduce waste and the use of nature’s resources while increasing productivity and respecting cultures around the world. Ocean Exchange hosts an annual event each fall where at least ten finalists compete for one of two \$100,000 cash awards. Presentations are done in front of 100-150 hand-selected delegates from business, government, and academia who vote on the two top award winners. At this same event, eight collegiate finalists pitch for the \$10,000 Broward College Innovation Award. In addition to cash awards, we open our large ecosystem to all who compete to help connect them to business, government, or financial market resources that can move them along the path to commercialization. Ocean Exchange is largely sponsor-funded by Gulfstream (General Dynamics), Wallenius Wilhelmsen, the Marine Research Hub, Oceaneering, and others. Sponsors of Ocean Exchange are industry leaders committed to moving our world forward through empowering innovation to leap across boundaries and geography. Ocean Exchange invites all to work together collaboratively around transformational solutions to drive real-world impact. A \$10,000 minimum secures a board seat. Sponsorships begin at the \$25,000 level and can range up to our worldwide sponsor designation at \$150,000 annually. Sponsors are acknowledged on all promotional materials and media programs as well as at our annual event from the podium. For more information or to make a donation, contact Milly Pitts, CEO, at 912-257-0209 or millicent.pitts@oceanexchange.org
- **Brunswick Georgia’s Community Rating System Explorer (\$20,000).** To assist planners with identifying land that qualifies for credit in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) developed the first version of the tool in 2015 in Coastal North Carolina, where it has been successful in identifying additional OSP (Open Space Preservation) credits across the 8 pilot communities, with 3 communities raised at least 1 CRS class (resulting in an additional 5% savings for residents on flood insurance annually). Following the app’s success in North Carolina, the tool has already been expanded to other communities in NC, the Gulf of Mexico, and all 30 coastal communities in South Carolina. Georgia’s pilot, the Camden County CRS, will be completed in August 2020. Brunswick will be the next community in Georgia. The CRS Explorer app is part of the Coastal Resilience decision support system, a suite of web-based tools to help communities explore where nature can reduce risk. The app provides planners with exportable maps and information necessary for the CRS application. It also allows planners to interactively explore areas that aren’t currently eligible for credit in this federal program, but could be in the future if they are legally protected from development. Planners can overlay additional data, like habitat assessments or flooding frequency, to further make the case to protect these areas and support community planning decisions. The CRS Explorer app allows planners to prioritize nature-based solutions like open space preservation to reduce their community’s flood risk. For more information or to make a

donation, contact Brian Wills, 404-403-9777 or bwills@tnc.org. Brian serves as the senior associate director of development for The Nature Conservancy.

Watershed Protection

- **Homeowner Septic System Education in the St. Marys River Watershed (\$5000):** A large portion of the St. Marys River watershed remains rural, and as such many homes use septic systems for wastewater treatment. Often these septic systems are outdated or not maintained well, resulting in increased runoff and septic system leakage. Many tributaries in the St. Marys watershed have elevated levels of fecal coliform as a result. This outreach program aims to educate homeowners on best septic system maintenance practices. Contact Anna Laws at anna@stmarysriverkeeper.org
- **Capacity Building for St. Marys Riverkeeper Water Quality Monitoring Program (\$10,000):** The St. Marys Riverkeeper has collected water quality data throughout the St. Marys watershed since 2017. Because several tributaries in this watershed are impaired for fecal coliform, initial data collection revolved around bacterial monitoring. Our watershed is also impaired for elevated levels of mercury, excess nutrients, and high levels of dissolved oxygen. In addition to our bacterial data, we want to collect chemical and macroinvertebrate data to expand our ability to identify sources of pollution in our watershed. In order to expand our water quality monitoring program, purchases of chemical testing kits and macroinvertebrate sampling supplies are needed. Contact Anna Laws at anna@stmarysriverkeeper.org
- **Satilla Riverkeeper Vehicle (\$30,000):** Satilla Riverkeeper serves as the "eyes and ears" of the Satilla River watershed, keeping an eye out for threats to the water quality and ecological function of the river, its tributary and estuary. The 4,000 square mile Satilla River watershed touches 14 counties in rural southeast Georgia. Many of the river access roads are unpaved and prone to flooding. Satilla Riverkeeper staff drive about 14,000 miles a year to monitor water quality, lead paddle trips, river cleanups, and investigate pollution issues. We need a reliable 4-wheel drive SUV to tow our patrol boat, kayak trailer, and facilitate water quality monitoring and site visits. Contact Laura Early, Satilla Riverkeeper and Executive Director, at riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org or (912) 462-5094.
- **Satilla Riverkeeper "King of the River" Fishing Tournament and Eco-festival (\$5,000):** Satilla Riverkeeper hosts an annual fishing tournament that encourages youth and families to participate in outdoor recreation and celebrate the bounty of the Satilla River. In 2020 and future tournaments, we intend to grow this tournament to include educational opportunities for participants and spectators. The eco-festival portion of the event would take place at the tournament weigh-in with exhibits on waste reduction, recycling, water safety, native wildlife, environmental stewardship, watershed science, and other topics. Contact Laura Early, Satilla Riverkeeper and Executive Director, at riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org or (912) 462-5094.

Wildlife Conservation

- **Gopher Tortoise Conservation Through Education, Research, and Rehabilitation at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center/Jekyll Island State Park Authority (\$60,000):**

The biggest threats to gopher tortoises in Georgia include habitat loss and degradation, automobile injuries and mortality, and disease. The Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC), a department of the Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA), integrates education, research and rehabilitation to benefit native turtles including gopher tortoises. Gopher tortoises are presented to our hospital for a variety of problems including trauma from several causes (e.g. automobiles, predators, heavy machinery, etc.), disease, starvation, and a variety of miscellaneous issues. Over 1.3 million people have had the opportunity to learn about native turtles through interactive educational exhibits and programs at the GSTC since its opening 13 years ago. St. Catherines Island has been a release site for many of the displaced tortoises that have gone through rehabilitation over the years. The average time a gopher tortoise patient stays in our facility is approximately 1 year.

We are in need of dedicated enclosures for long term rehabilitation (\$15,000), which would be located outdoors to provide natural sunlight, natural vegetation to graze on, heated boxes to simulate a burrow and provide security, and secure from predators and prevent escape. As part of our education program, we would like to develop an exhibit that displays a captive gopher tortoise with associated graphics that describe its natural history, threats, conservation and research initiatives and the rehabilitation process. The exhibit would have an interactive burrow (\$30,000) that allows kids and adults to crawl into and would highlight some of the important animals that share this living space with the tortoise. The experience would end with a view of the enclosure (\$15,000) which contains the captive gopher tortoise. The exhibit would also have a burrow, natural vegetation, areas to dig, natural sunlight. For more information contact Dr. Terry Norton, Director and Veterinarian, GSTC, tnorton@jekyllisland.com, 912-230-9229

- **Caretta Research Project (\$1297 to \$7,000):** The sea turtle project on Wassaw has been coordinated by the Caretta Research Project since 1973. This project is particularly important because it is one of two islands in Georgia where researchers monitor the beach at night to intercept and tag nesting females. Tagging data is used to assess adult survival and site fidelity. The Caretta Research Project is in need of private funding for basic research supplies, including tags and applicators (\$1,297), as well as a new Kawasaki Mule 600 (\$7,000). For more information or to make a donation, contact Kris Williams at 912-704-9323 or wassawcrp@aol.com. Kris serves as Project Director for the Caretta Research Project.
- **Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative (\$25,000 to \$84,000):** Recent analyses of bird population trends have consistently shown shorebirds to be one of the groups undergoing the most significant and long-term declines of any bird groups in North America (and globally). The southeastern coast of the United States is vitally important to nineteen species of shorebirds of

the Atlantic and Central Continental Flyways. Georgia and South Carolina are in many ways the hub of shorebird abundance on the US Atlantic Coast, supporting breeding, migrating, and wintering populations of these birds. A highly collaborative group of federal agencies, state agencies, and non-profits believe the best way to maintain and restore shorebird populations is to ensure the effective management of key sites they depend upon.

The following initiatives reflect and serve this strategy. Led by Manomet, each will be implemented in a highly collaborative fashion. The total cost for this work over three years is \$420,000, or \$140,000 per year. Manomet hopes to raise a little more than half from the Stewards network, as detailed below. Funds would be allocated to Manomet staff leadership including a full-time position based locally on the Georgia coast. For more information or to make a donation to any of the following projects, contact Brad Winn at (508) 224-6521, ext. 225 or bwinn@manomet.org. Brad serves as Director of Shorebird Habitat Management for Manomet.

- **Developing a Regional Plan for Conservation Success (~~\$25,000~~ \$20,000 committed, \$5,000 needed):** Building on the success of Georgia Shorebird Alliance, Manomet staff will continue to cultivate relationships and facilitate communication and cooperation between and among state and federal authorities (Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, US Fish and Wildlife, National Park Service), private land owners and managers (including hunt clubs), coastal municipalities, and non-governmental organizations (One Hundred Miles, Coastal Conservation League, Audubon, etc.) to facilitate management activities addressing threats to shorebird populations dependent on the region. This will include developing a shorebird conservation plan for the Bight through gathering collaborative input from partners. We have received some external funding through a partnership with Georgia Department of Natural Resources and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, but seek resources to match that grant. The cost is estimated at \$25,000 for one year of support.
- **Strategic Protection of Shorebird Habitat (\$28,000 per year for 3 years):** Unfortunately, some of the most heavily used sites for large numbers of shorebirds throughout the year are within or adjacent to areas heavily used by people (e.g., dunes and beaches). For this reason, disturbance of shorebirds by human activity and dogs has become a widespread and chronic problem. Manomet is currently working to address human disturbance at public access beaches caused by recreational use and off-leashed dogs in a collaborative project with support from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Audubon and Virginia Tech. Manomet is also working on a second project that is implementing an educational certification program to reduce recreational disturbance caused by ecotourism groups at remote sites, with partners at University of Georgia Marine Extension/ Georgia Sea Grant. The third stage of our comprehensive plan to protect important shorebird habitat through disturbance reduction will focus on building an educational campaign aimed at recreational boaters who visit sandbars and inlets that are critical to feeding shorebirds during migration and nesting seasons. To implement the third phase of this comprehensive disturbance reduction plan, the cost is estimated at \$28,000 per year for three years, or a total of \$84,000.

- **Loggerhead sea turtle nest protection and management (\$6760 to \$10,672):**
 The loggerhead turtle population in Georgia is showing signs of recovery due to 30 years of intensive management. Approximately 10 years of additional surveys and management are necessary for loggerheads to reach recovery goals in the southeast. This project involves annual surveys on 13 barrier island beaches which include nest surveys, nest protection activities (nest relocation and screening and predator control), assessments of reproductive success and the monitoring of threats (strandings). We need to buy equipment (ATV's, bikes), hire seasonal personnel, and buy supplies (screens, stakes) to collect the data we need for management. This project provides the opportunity for donors to ride along with the researchers for the day to see how the money is spent.

 - **Ossabaw Island** is one of Georgia's three main nesting beaches monitored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Conservation Section. Monitoring sea turtle nesting and strandings on Ossabaw is difficult due to the remoteness of the island and rough terrain. We are in need of funds to support a single intern for the summer (\$10,472) and a Kawasaki Mule UTV for beach surveys (\$8,000).
 - **Sapelo Island** is a nesting beach monitored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Conservation Section. Monitoring sea turtle nesting on Sapelo will be difficult in 2020 due to damage from recent hurricanes which split a small section of the southern end of Blackbeard Island from Blackbeard proper (1.5 km). The Sapelo intern will be required to paddle a kayak across the inlet to Little Blackbeard and patrol the beach by bike. We are in need of \$10,672 to support a single intern for the summer and a bike.
 - **Little Cumberland Island Sea Turtle Project** is the longest running sea turtle conservation program in North America. Surveys were initiated by University of Georgia researcher Dr. Jim Richardson in 1964. This long-running project is critical for assessing the status of loggerhead turtles in Georgia. The project is funded by the Little Cumberland Island Homeowners Association and outside grants. The Little Cumberland Island Sea Turtle Project is requesting funds to support a single intern for the summer (28 hours per week) for a total cost of \$6,760.
- **Assessment of Sea Turtle Entrapment Risk in Poultry Cage Artificial Reef Material (\$2400):**
 Sea turtles are known to use artificial reefs for foraging and resting. Poultry transport cages deployed off the Georgia coast as artificial reef material could present a significant entrapment risk due to their size and configuration. Currently, over 1,094 cages have been deployed as artificial reef material off the Georgia coast on three artificial reefs including DRH, KC, and SAV. The cages were deployed over a 14-year period allowing an assessment of cages at varying levels of cage decomposition. Dives will be conducted during the warm weather months when sea turtles are known to be abundant in Georgia coastal waters (May – September.) Assessments will include photos of each cage, measurements of cage openings and an assessment of sea turtle use. Each cage will be tagged for future assessments. The cages will be inspected for entrapped sea turtles or evidence of sea turtle entrapment (sea turtle carcasses or parts). We are in need of two sets of dive gear including: tank, regulator, BC, dive computer. Total cost is \$2,400.

- **Diamondback terrapin conservation (\$6488):** The diamondback terrapin is an estuarine turtle that spends its entire life in the saltmarsh. Terrapins are listed as a species of concern due to mortality in the commercial crab pot fishery. The Georgia DNR is hoping to establish two long-term monitoring projects to assess trends in abundance of terrapins (Plantation Creek and Gould's Inlet). We are in need of seasonal help to complete surveys. An intern will travel to randomly selected creeks in Georgia and conduct abundance surveys. Total cost is \$6488, which includes a laser range finder for \$300.