



## Citizens Beware: County sets irresponsible standard for coastal development

On January 21, Glynn County's Islands Planning Commission (IPC) approved the first plan review of a highly controversial project for developing eight exclusive residential lots on a rapidly eroding sand-spit on the south end of Sea Island along Gould's Inlet. The approval came despite extensive testimony against it from experts and public interest groups, including the [Center for a Sustainable Coast](#).

The proposed sand-spit project should be opposed because:

- Erosion rates on this part of Sea Island are at least three times greater than the average along Georgia's coast. In the past decade at least 100 feet have been taken by the ocean from this shoreline, and all high land on the project site could be gone within 30 years.
- The tract of land is so narrow that, between zoning setbacks from the access road and adopted requirements to build behind the shore-protection jurisdiction, there won't be enough area for foundations. (That may be why there have been recent efforts to weaken the shore protection law.)
- The site is so low that it must be filled at least 6 feet to reach the planned elevation of 12 feet above mean sea level. This will entail hauling in at least nine thousand cubic yards of dirt per acre, or nearly 50,000 cubic yards of fill over the five acres proposed for development. That's equivalent to 5,000 large dump trucks making round trips along public and private roads leading to the project.
- The narrow spit of land where the project is to be built was totally inundated by a 2009 storm that hit at high tide. A well-qualified coastal geologist warns that even a moderate nor'easter could engulf the tract in wind-driven waves. If developed, debris broken loose by such an "over-wash" could severely damage nearby properties that would not be harmed otherwise.
- In the aftermath of a destructive storm, taxpayers undoubtedly would be expected to shoulder the cost of damage recovery and clean-up, whether flood insurance is available or not.

The IPC chairman summarized by saying that the public should rest assured that Sea Island Acquisition was essentially saying "let the buyer beware" when purchasing the approved lots – where no federally subsidized insurance will be available and erosion rates are severe.

He and other planning commissioners refused to address substantial harm to the public caused by this kind of project, including hazards to public safety, valuable fish and wildlife, and neighboring waterways and marshes – all essential to surrounding quality of life as well as the economy.

Given the take-away message made by the planning commission chairman, those attending the meeting wondered if the county should start posting signs for newcomers, saying "Welcome to Glynn County, Georgia – where home buyers should beware!"

Not only should buyers beware, but so should citizens and taxpayers.