

Local\_news

# Update to regional plan to examine coastal issues

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A local environmentalist says the state's regional plan for Coastal Georgia must address a number of environmental concerns.

The regional plan, created to help Coastal Georgia develop policies and projects to ensure a high quality of life for residents over the next quarter century, is being upgraded this year. It includes topics of regional importance such as infrastructure, intrinsic resources, regional growth management issues, economic development, preservation of agricultural lands and resilient communities.

David Kyler, director of the Center for a Sustainable Coast, said the plan must address hazardous waste sites. He said the sites are vulnerable to increased public risk from a rising sea level that will raise and possibly extend the water table.

Kyler also expressed concerns about the disruptive impacts of proposed land uses, such as Spaceport Camden that's in dangerous proximity to several hazardous disposal sites on land owned by Bayer Chemical and Union Carbide.

He criticized the Federal Aviation Administration and Georgia Department of Natural Resources for their opinions regarding a proposed spaceport in Camden County.

He said the risks were "either ignored or superficially dismissed by both FAA in its recently released EIS and DNR in CRD's so-called 'coastal consistency certification.'"

"A responsible policy recommendation is to adopt mandatory independent review by rigorously qualified environmental specialists of all projects or land-use changes proposed within 1,000 yards of any landfill or hazardous waste site," he said. "Such assessment must require continuing groundwater sampling and seismic testing to determine potentially disruptive impacts related to proposed activities."

Another issue of concern is coastal erosion, he said.

"Coastal erosion must be carefully assessed as mapped on the Coastal Hazards Portal, an online site created and maintained by Georgia Southern University," he said. "Parcels and lots at risk of erosion should be identified and monitored as justified by erosion trends that are documented on the Portal website, augmented by ongoing assessment of rising sea level."

Areas at risk by proximity to eroding shorelines should be flagged and the list should be updated annually, he said.

"Special review requirements must be rigorously implemented to prevent or reduce loss of property and/or safety hazards to residents," he said. "All real estate transactions must be required to include references to any documented erosion risks."

A public hearing will be held to discuss the regional plan at a date to be announced.