

## TOWN COUNCIL

### STAFF REPORT

#### Projects and Watershed Resilience Department



<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	July 11, 2023
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Approval to Authorize a Contract to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to Update the 2004 May River Watershed Baseline Assessment (Fiscal Impact: \$155,000.00)
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience

**REQUEST:** Staff requests that Town Council authorize the Town Manager execute a contract (Attachment 2) with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) to update the 2004 May River Watershed Baseline Assessment.

The total contract amount is \$155,000 and is within budget.

**BACKGROUND:** The Town of Bluffton commissioned the Marine Resources Research Institute of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), the United States Geological Service (USGS), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Center for Coastal Environmental Health and Biomolecular Research (NOAA-CCEHBR) to complete a multidisciplinary study of the May River. The study assessed water, sediment, and biological quality of the river in 2002-2003 to provide a comprehensive baseline of conditions prior to any major development activities in the watershed. In 2004, a final report was delivered to the Town.

At the February 10, 2022 meeting, the May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) voted to recommend a list of Strategic Plan priorities for Town Council's consideration to include in the Strategic Plan FY 2023-2024. Staff provided Town Council with a Memo summarizing these recommendations at the February 15, 2022 Town Council Strategic Planning Workshop. Council agreed to add the Memo of WAPAC's recommendations into the FY 2023-2024 Strategic Plan and will consider each recommendation once prioritized and fully developed by WAPAC.

At the June 23, 2022, WAPAC meeting, WAPAC Strategic Plan Priority 2 was identified as: Update assessments of current environmental health status of the Town's watersheds compared to historical conditions to inform management opportunities. Thus, WAPAC's recommendation is to update the 2004 report "A Baseline Assessment of Environmental and Biological Conditions in the May River, Beaufort County, South Carolina" to compare current environmental and biological conditions to the baseline.

At the April 27, 2023 WAPAC meeting, WAPAC unanimously voted to recommend that Town Council include in the FY24 budget an update to the 2004 report “A Baseline Assessment of Environmental and Biological Conditions in the May River, Beaufort County, South Carolina” completed by SCDNR, the USGS, and the NOAA-CCEHBR.

At the May 09, 2023 Town Council meeting, Town Council moved to accept WAPAC’s recommendation to include the \$155,000 for the Baseline Assessment Update in the FY24 Consolidated Municipal Budget.

At the June 13, 2023 Town Council meeting, Town Council adopted the Consolidated Municipal Budget for FY24, including \$155,000 for the Baseline Assessment Update.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Execution of this contract with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR).
- SCDNR performs work associated with the Baseline Assessment Update by December 31, 2024.
- SCDNR provides the Town with a final report containing its findings within sixty (60) days of final staff comments.

**SUMMARY:** This contract is supportive of the following guiding principles of the Town:

- May River & Surrounding Rivers and Watersheds Guiding Principle #1. Support initiatives, such as the May River Watershed Action Plan, to improve water quality of the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watersheds.
- May River & Surrounding Rivers and Watersheds Guiding Principle #2. Seek collaboration and partnerships that project and improve the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watershed.

Consistent with these Guiding Principles, Staff is requesting Town Council authorize the Town Manager to execute the proposed contract with SCDNR to perform the Baseline Assessment Update.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Presentation
2. Contract
3. Proposed Motion