



MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Council

FROM: Stan Rogers, Chair, May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC)

RE: WAPAC Recommendation to Establish a Town of Bluffton Green Space Policy and Program

DATE: JANUARY 26, 2023

CC: Stephen Steese, Town Manager
Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager
Kim Washok-Jones, Director of Projects & Watershed Resilience
Bill Baugher, Watershed Management Division Manager
Beth Lewis, Water Quality Program Administrator

As voted on during the January 26, 2023, meeting, WAPAC hereby recommends that the Town of Bluffton develop a Green Space Policy and Program to protect and restore shellfish harvesting and water quality in the May River and achieve broader community and conservation benefits and address growth challenges. The Town's policy and program should:

- Create a land preservation, conservation and/or development rights purchasing and retiring program to meet goals of the May River Watershed Action Plan and achieve broader community and conservation benefits beyond the scope of the May River Watershed Action Plan;
- Develop program framework and guidance for prospective partners and participants;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities across Town of Bluffton Departments and within the Projects and Watershed Resilience Department to achieve the greatest efficiency and impact;
- Establish funding mechanisms within the Town of Bluffton's annual budget process;
- Identify and pursue external funding opportunities such as federal, state, and other local government programs and grants;
- Identify key federal, state, and local partners to implement the program;

- Establish criteria to identify and prioritize prospective properties for conservation and protection consistent with Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Lands Program;
- Develop, integrate, and socialize tools such as geographic information system (GIS) layers to:
 - Overlay Beaufort County Green Print Plan maps, South Carolina Conservation Bank maps, and other accredited land trust mapping tools with the Town of Bluffton land use maps;
 - Use associated model outputs that target possible Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project areas to improve water quality; and
- Provide comprehensive outreach of the program including policy and guidance, and the benefits of participation to landowners and developers.

If implemented, WAPAC believes, a Green Space Policy and Program will help achieve May River Watershed Action Plan objectives.