

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT

Projects and Watershed Resilience Department



MEETING DATE:	April 11, 2023
PROJECT:	May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee Recommendation for Town Council Consideration to Establish a Green Space Policy and Program
PROJECT MANAGER:	Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience

REQUEST: May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) requests Town Council consider their recommendation to establish a Town of Bluffton Green Space Policy and Program containing elements as outlined in the attached Memorandum (Attachment 1).

BACKGROUND: At the February 10, 2022 meeting, WAPAC unanimously voted on a list of recommendations for Town Council's consideration to include in the Strategic Plan Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024. During the February 15, 2022 Town Council Strategic Planning Workshop, Staff provided Town Council with a Memo summarizing these recommendations. Council agreed to add the Memo of WAPAC's recommendations into the FY 2023-2024 Strategic Plan and to consider each WAPAC recommendation once prioritized and fully developed.

At the June 23, 2022 meeting, WAPAC prioritized "Develop a Town policy and program with clear structure, identified and formalized organizational collaborations, and goals for green space or preservation area acquisition, and/or retirement of development rights" as a Town Strategic Plan recommendation. The Committee unanimously voted to recommend Town Council establish a Town of Bluffton Green Space Policy and Program as outlined in Attachment 1 at their January 26, 2023.

NEXT STEPS: If Council agrees to implement WAPAC's recommendation:

- Staff will evaluate existing Town policies and programs and develop, as necessary, a Green Space Policy and Program with the elements outlined in the attached Memorandum titled "WAPAC Recommendation to Establish a Town of Bluffton Green Space Policy and Program."
- Town Council considers adopting 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.

SUMMARY: This project originated from the 2023-2024 Strategic Plan and WAPAC recommendations. It is supportive of the following guiding principles of the Town:

- Community Quality of Life #5. Foster town policies and practices that encourage environmentally conscious initiatives, policies and town codes that support a clean, well-

maintained, sustainable community that protects our natural resources including the May River.

- 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 protect and improve the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watershed.
- May River & Surrounding Rivers and Watersheds Guiding Principle #4. Support active planning and management for resilience of natural resources and our response to weather events, future disasters and changing environmental conditions.

Consistent with these Guiding Principles, WAPAC is recommending Town Council establish a Town of Bluffton 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.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. WAPAC Memorandum “WAPAC Recommendation to Establish a Town of Bluffton Green Space Policy and Program”
2. Proposed Motion