

## May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee



### STAFF REPORT

#### Projects and Watershed Resilience Department

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	July 24, 2025
<b>PROJECT:</b>	May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) Items for Consideration for Strategic Planning
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Beth Lewis, Water Quality Program Manager

**REQUEST:** Town Staff requests the May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) recommend and prioritize a list of May River Watershed Action Plan initiatives as Fiscal Year (FY) 2027-2028 Strategic Plan recommended priorities for Town Council's consideration.

**BACKGROUND:** The Town of Bluffton's Town Council updates its Strategic Plan each year in conjunction with the annual budget process. The Strategic Plan provides Town leaders, staff members, and residents with the blueprint of the Town's work plan while providing a framework for budgetary and policy decisions. It is the guiding document used to help determine where and when to use the Town's resources. The WAPAC has been a part of this process by providing recommendations on May River Watershed Action Plan initiatives to be included as Strategic Plan recommended priorities for Town Council's consideration.

To provide context for WAPAC's discussion on the priority recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2027-2028 (FY27-FY28) Strategic Plan, staff have compiled a list of suggested priorities for consideration. This list includes initiatives from the Town's May River Watershed Action Plan Model Report, targeted Water Quality Program results, and outcomes related to the Town's Comprehensive Drainage Studies, May River Watershed Baseline Assessment Update, and Resilience Analysis. Once the priorities are agreed upon, the committee will prioritize them accordingly.

List of WAPAC FY27-FY28 Strategic Plan Priorities:

1. Evaluate the recommendations and projects that arise from the Town's stormwater model XPSWMM to PCSWMM conversion. This will include examining the 2021 May River Watershed Action Plan Model Report Impervious Surface Restoration Water Quality projects and locations to help demonstrate their effectiveness for both water quality and water quantity. (May River Watershed Action Plan Model Report)
2. Advance the development of targeted best management plans, both structural and non-structural, tailored to the needs of each sub-basin within the May River Watershed.

These plans should utilize insights from the May River Baseline Assessment Update, Resilience Analysis, Comprehensive Drainage Studies, Town Water Quality Program data, and other relevant sources. The objective is to develop specific solutions for each sub-basin that include but are not limited to seeking public-private partnerships, exploring education and outreach solutions, and strengthening ongoing collaborations with local governments and universities aimed at improving water quality and reducing flooding. (May River Baseline Assessment Update, Resilience Analysis, Comprehensive Drainage Studies, and Town Water Quality Program data)

3. Establish a Resilience Plan for adaptation to coastal impacts from changing environmental conditions (“rain bombs” and sea level rise) on stormwater runoff water quality and quantity. Develop strategies, policies, and ordinances aimed at increasing resilience and reducing long-term risks. Assess the environmental resilience of stormwater ponds to changing climate conditions for retrofit opportunities, e.g. ensuring ponds have capacity to hold rain events. (Town Fiscal Year 25-26 rollover)
4. Examine public-public partnership (PuPs) opportunities with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to focus on capturing stormwater runoff from bridges. Prioritize the SCDOT overpasses on Bridge Street at Heyward and Huger Coves, based on findings from the May River Baseline Assessment Update. Maintain communication with SCDOT to implement additional stormwater retrofits within the constraints of roadway improvement or maintenance projects. (May River Baseline Assessment Update and Town Fiscal Year 25-26 rollover)
5. Complete annual reviews of the stormwater regulations and Design Manual in the Unified Development Ordinance, particularly the Better Site Design element, to ensure intended outcomes are being met and modify the regulations if necessary (Town Comprehensive Plan, R2.1).
6. Examine opportunities at the time of Intergovernmental Agreements involving the Town of Bluffton, the Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority, Beaufort County Government, and any other parties to safeguard zoning densities of the May River Community Preservation (referred to as MRCP or the CP District). The aim is to preserve the low density and rural character of the existing corridor. Also, examine opportunities at the time of each agreement for bacteria source-reduction from septic systems (sewer extension & connection) and from the wastewater system, e.g. asset inventory, inspection, maintenance and prioritization for replacement plan. (Town Comprehensive Plan, R2.2 and Town Fiscal Year 25-26 rollover)
7. Establish a policy to guide public-private partnerships to implement Action Plan projects/retrofits within neighborhoods, utilize stormwater ponds for irrigation, and coordinate with property management companies to capitalize on forecasted private

improvement projects to incorporate stormwater retrofit opportunities. (May River Watershed Action Plan and Town Fiscal Year 25-26 rollover)

**NEXT STEPS:** The next steps include the following:

1. October 23, 2025 WAPAC Meeting: Discussion and vote on Fiscal Year (FY) 2027-2028 WAPAC Strategic Plan recommended priorities for Town Council's consideration
2. November 6, 2025 Town Council Strategic Planning Meeting: Town Council discussion.
3. Budgeting and prioritization of work plans for Fiscal Year (FY) 2027-2028.