

CHATHAM COUNTY RESOURCE PROTECTION COMMISSION

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM
112 EAST STATE STREET**

September 24, 2009

3:30 P.M.

MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

**Dr. Dionne Hoskins, Chair
Felton Jenkins
Larry Miles
Meddy Settles
Dane Spencer
Kristina Williams
Paul Wolff**

MEMBERS ABSENT:

**Elizabeth "Chica" Arndt
Mark Bouy**

MPC STAFF PRESENT:

**Joanna Bounds, Resource Protection Planner
Ellen Harris, Preservation Planner
Shanale Booker, Administrative Assistant**

I. Call to Order

Dr. Hoskins called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

II. Meeting Minutes

CCRPC Action: Mr. Miles made a motion that the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission approve the July 16, 2009 minutes as submitted. Ms. Williams seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

III. RPC-20090827-09-1 Top Ranked Sites

Ms. Bounds stated that prior to discussing the staff report, she would review the properties that had been evaluated since the last meeting. The first property presented was the Brevard Tract, which totals 154 acres. The site contains a five acre hammock and 149 acres of salt marsh. Wood storks were identified on the property and very few invasive species were noted.

The second property reviewed was Horsepen Creek Hammock, which contains a 20 acre undeveloped hammock and one large pond. The site provides ideal habitat for Wood storks, Herons, Egrets, Ibis, Minks, and Alligators. However, the property is very difficult to access.

The third property evaluated is located off President Street near Fort Jackson and is bordered by heavy industrial areas. Several very old, beautiful oak trees exist on the site, but the remainder of the grounds has been recently cleared. This property is believed to have once been part of the Hermitage Plantation.

Ms. Bounds then began the Top Ranked Sites Staff Report by stating that the top five highest ranking sites had been determined. Each of these sites was originally chosen during a preliminary analysis and had received a subsequent evaluation.

The top ranking site was found to be Rose Dhu Island. In total, the property is 1225 acres. This includes 310 acres of maritime forest located on a single marsh hammock, and 915 acres of pristine salt marsh. The maritime forest within Rose Dhu is one of the largest intact tracts of maritime forest left in the County. In addition, several depressional wetlands were found within the forest that provide important breeding habitat for amphibians. The site also contains intact civil war earthworks. A confederate battery was originally built on the property.

The second highest ranking site consists of two parcels, Great Ogeechee Lakes and Great Ogeechee River Preserve, which together have over 2 miles of frontage along the Lower Ogeechee River. Together, the parcels contain 330 acres of mature Bottomland Hardwood Forest capable of supporting a variety of rare species. The site also contains 130 acres of upland area composed of several small patches of sandhill habitat and 85 acres of freshwater ponds, which were originally dug as borrow pits.

The third highest ranking site is the Bishop Property, which is immediately adjacent to the Savannah-Ogeechee Canal Museum and Nature Center. The site is very easy to access and offers great views of the Ogeechee River. In total, the property contains approximately 18 acres of Bottomland Hardwood habitat. In addition, portions of a brick cellar and well exist on the property, which are believed to have been connected to the original lock-tender's house.

The fourth highest ranking site is composed of over 200 acres of intact Bottomland Hardwood Forest and 168 acres of Longleaf Pine habitat. Because of the size of these habitats, the property is capable of supporting a variety of rare and endangered species, including the Gopher Tortoise, Green-Fly Orchid, and the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker. The property also has approximately half a mile of frontage along the Ogeechee, which helps to support the endangered Shortnose Sturgeon.

The fifth highest ranking site is also adjacent to the Savannah-Ogeechee Canal Museum Property. This site contains 55 acres of Bottomland Hardwood Forest and an extension of the Ogeechee River. The site also has half a mile of frontage on the River and contains Bottomland Hardwood habitat.

CCRPC Action: Mr. Wolff made a motion that the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission recommend the top five sites for protection to the Chatham County Board of Commissioners, with the condition that all protection options be explained to the Board.

IV. Update on Technical Advisory Committee

Ms. Bounds stated that the Site Evaluation Subcommittee had evaluated 23 sites and that they will continue to evaluate all identified sites. The Site Management Subcommittee had developed a draft management plan and visited the Demere Tract on Whitemarsh Island. This Subcommittee is currently working on finalizing a management plan for the Demere Tract. In addition, the Education and Outreach Subcommittee had set up information booths at three outreach events: Savannah's Earth Day Festival, Savannah Sand Gnat's Go Green Day, and Chatham County Day.

V. Commissioners' Items

Dr. Hoskins stated that the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission has three commissioners whose terms expired on June 30, 2009, but that each Commissioner wished to stay on for another three-year term. The Chatham County Board of Commissioners has yet to approve the appointments, which has not affected any Chatham County Resource Protection Commission votes thus far.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanna Bounds
Resource Protection Planner

JHB/sb