

2023 CERN Partner Meeting Outcomes

Coastal Empire Resilience Network Partner Meeting September 13, 2023

Our 2023 Partner Organization Meeting was a success with almost 50 attendees from counties all along the Georgia Coast and South Carolina Lowcountry. Participants discussed eight different topics in a round table format. Our object was to revisit the mission, geographic scope, and actionable goals to move CERN into the post-grant era, with a focus on equity and environmental justice and becoming a self-sustaining organization. Below is an overview of the outcomes of those conversations. Let's keep making a network that works for our members!

1. CERN's Mission

- The mission statement generally works for partners, and only minor changes may be needed.
- A vision statement is needed to describe our future goals and aspirations.

2. Geographic Scope

- All coastal counties can benefit from CERN resources
- Establish connections in "base" counties of Bryan, Bulloch, Chatham, Effingham, and Liberty and then expand
- Coordinate with the Golden Isles Resilience Network in Glynn County and South Carolina Lowcountry counties
- There is a need for a "point-person" at the county-level

3. Network Goals

- Write a strategic plan help guide goals
- Continue outreach and education with targeted messaging
- Meaningfully engage with partners, public, officials, and local governments
- Leverage partnerships for grants
- Create a resource hub with examples of successful projects
- Form a listserv to share updates

4. Equity and Environmental Justice

- Focus on relationship building
- Identify and contact community groups & use a snowball technique for contacts
- Work alongside of each other to align missions & strengthen the infrastructure that already exists
- Compensate individuals for time and expertise
- Demonstrate the need for municipalities to engage in this work

5. Partner Needs

- Strategic plan laying out a clear vision
- Access to Resiliency 101 Course for elected officials & completion certificate
- Inventory of grants and assistance to coordinate & leverage partnerships
- Educational and learning opportunities with graphic representation for quickly and effectively communicating resilience
- Greater connection with public and elected officials

6. Groups to Engage

- Military (Sentinel Landscape)
- Gullah Geechee Community
- Youth: high school groups, FFA, Boy and Girl Scouts
- Tide to Town
- Local neighborhoods
- ACCG/GMA
- Development Authorities
- Public school systems
- Higher Education: GSU, SCAD, SSU, Savannah Tech, Local Campuses
- Chatham Area Transit
- GEMA and CEMA

- Georgia Port Authority
- Georgia Power
- Coastal Regional Commission
- GDOT
- Local Sustainability Departments

7. Benefits of a Network

- Align regional goals
- Facilitate formal collaboration to identify and apply for regional grants
- Compile best practices for the region
- Help eliminate duplicate efforts
- Learn more about local environmental and social justice efforts

8. Ideas to Become Self-Sustaining

- Grants
- Sponsorships
- Municipality budgets
- Modest membership dues
- Non-profit status and accept donations