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Coastlines

GEORGIA

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Making an Impression

CRD marine biologist mixes science with art

Also inside:

ASMFC sets redfish deadline • More than 300 attend resiliency conference
Former directors share insights • CRD seeks 2-month red snapper season

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Coastlines GEORGIA

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Common Acronyms

Throughout Coastlines Georgia, we have shortened the use of certain names of organizations to avoid repetition. The following acronyms are used for brevity:

ASMFC - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

CRD - Coastal Resources Division

DNR - Georgia Department of Natural Resources

NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

SAFMC - South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

WRD - Wildlife Resources Division

Cover photo: CRD Marine Biologist Britany Hall makes a gyotaku print.
CRD photo by Tyler Jones.



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION

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EDITORIAL

Fishing license gift offers year-long adventures

By Tyler Jones

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Every year, around this time, many of us face the same holiday dilemma: What do you give the person who already has everything? Another sweater destined for the back of the closet? A gadget that'll be outdated by spring? Before you click "buy" on something forgettable, consider a gift that connects your loved one to the very best of Georgia's outdoors — a recreational fishing license.

It may not glimmer under the tree, but a Georgia fishing license does something better: It opens the door to an entire world of coastal waterways, mountain streams, blackwater swamps and salt-sprayed marshes. It's a year-long passport to adventure, memory-making, and the simple joy of being outside. And for just a few dollars, it's one of the most meaningful gifts you can give.

Too often, folks think a fishing license is just for catching fish. But in Georgia, that same license unlocks far more. Want to drop a few crab traps off the Jekull Pier? You'll need a fishing license. Thinking about taking the kids to scoop minnows with a seine net on St. Simons? The license covers that, too. Planning to harvest a few oysters for a family roast or dig clams on a crisp winter morning? Again — that same simple license is your ticket.

It's not just for the coast, either.

A Georgia fishing license also grants access to Wildlife Management Areas and Public Fishing Areas statewide — places where you can hike, birdwatch, paddle, or simply unwind beneath a canopy of longleaf pines. It's a gateway to quiet trails, stocked ponds, and the kind of hidden corners of Georgia you don't find on postcards. For outdoorsmen and women, it's worth far more than it costs.



Tyler Jones/CRD

A fishing license is your pass to more than hook and line fishing. It can be used for castnetting, seining, crabbing, and even accessing public lands.

But perhaps the most important part of buying a license is what it supports. Every license sold directly funds conservation — real, on-the-ground work that protects our rivers, marshes, fish habitat, and the wildlife that depend on them. In a time when coastal development, changing weather patterns, and rising pressures on natural resources demand thoughtful stewardship, license dollars help biologists restore oyster reefs, manage public lands, and keep Georgia's fisheries healthy for generations to come.

That means your holiday gift doesn't just make someone happy today. It pays dividends long after the wrapping paper is gone. It helps keep red drum in our tidal creeks, striped bass in the Altamaha, and trout in rivers of North Georgia. It protects the very places that make this state worth exploring.

So this year, skip the ordinary. Give something that invites your loved ones — or yourself — to step outside, breathe salt air, and discover a Georgia that can't be ordered online. Give a fishing license. Because the best gifts don't sit on a shelf. They get your feet wet, your hands muddy, and your heart rooted just a little deeper in the wild beauty of our home. 🐟

WRD botanist snags CRD honor

Staff Report

COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION
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For the first time in the history of CRD's Employee of the Quarter program, the honor has been awarded to a staff member from outside the division. The recognition goes to Wildlife Resources Division biologist Eamonn Leonard, whose expertise, generosity, and hands-on spirit have made a visible and lasting impact on the Coastal Regional Headquarters campus.

In announcing the award on Oct. 2, CRD Director Doug Haymans praised Leonard not only for his technical knowledge, but for the way he embodies the DNR's commitment to partnership and teamwork. When CRD began planning a series of beautification projects around the Liberty Garden,

flagpole, Shipman Building, and rain garden areas, Leonard was the first person staff approached. He immediately stepped up.

Leonard designed and executed a native-planting plan tailored to the site, selecting species that support pollinators, enhance stormwater resilience, and reflect the coastal ecosystem. Just as importantly, he has continued to maintain these plantings as they've taken root, quietly nurturing the landscape without fanfare or expectation of recognition. His work has transformed the grounds into a more welcoming, ecologically meaningful space for employees and visitors alike.

"Talented individuals across DNR share the same dedication we value in CRD," Haymans wrote. "This quarter's EoQ exemplifies partnership and hard work."



Tyler Jones/CRD

Eamonn Leonard, left, a botanist with WRD, poses in front of the Liberty Garden with CRD Director Doug Haymans.

In appreciation of his contributions, Leonard will receive a framed certificate, a prime parking spot, and \$25 "cold hard cash."

CRD congratulates Leonard on this well-deserved honor and extends sincere thanks for his ongoing support and leadership. 🐼

Former directors share insights at all-hands

Staff Report

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On Nov. 18, CRD held a special all-hands staff meeting at the Brunswick-Glynn County Library, bringing together employees from across the division for an afternoon of reflection, learning, and connection. The meeting was highlighted by a rare and meaningful panel featuring three former CRD directors — Duane Harris, Susan Shipman, and Spud Woodward — who returned to share their experiences and insight from decades of service to Georgia's coast.

Each former director offered a personal look at the challenges and successes that shaped the division through the years. Duane Harris reflected on CRD's early growth and the foundation laid for science-based management of coastal resources.

Susan Shipman spoke about the evolution of key programs, from fisheries monitoring to coastal permitting, and highlighted how CRD strengthened partnerships with local communities and federal agencies during her tenure. Spud Woodward emphasized the importance of adaptability, noting how the division navigated hurricanes, policy changes, and shifts in public expectations while continuing to advance conservation and stewardship.

Together, the three leaders provided a living history of CRD — its origins, its milestones, and the dedicated staff who carried its mission forward. Their stories underscored a common theme: CRD's success has always been rooted in teamwork, innovation, and a deep respect for Georgia's natural resources.

Following their remarks, staff participated in an open question-and-



Tyler Jones/CRD

Former director Susan Shipman speaks to CRD staff members during an all-hands meeting Nov. 18.

answer session covering topics such as leadership, program development, and advice for early-career professionals. Employees asked about lessons learned, the future of coastal management, and how CRD can continue building on its strong legacy.

The meeting closed with appreciation for the former directors' time and perspectives, and for the staff whose work continues shaping CRD's next chapter. 🐼

CRD seeks 2-month Snapper season

By Tyler Jones

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CRD on Nov. 10 submitted a federal Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) request that would establish a two-month recreational Red Snapper season in federal waters off Georgia's coast beginning in 2026.

Under the proposal, submitted to U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Nov. 10, anglers would be allowed to harvest one Red Snapper per person per day with no minimum size limit, marking the longest potential season for Georgia anglers in more than a decade.

The extended season—aligned with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) two-month Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) sampling waves—is designed to give anglers more flexibility and reduce “derby-style” rushes while enhancing the quality of fisheries data.

Mandatory Reporting to Support Better Fishery Data

To operate during the proposed season, private anglers and for-hire guides would be required to register trips and report catch information using a new state-managed electronic reporting system. The platform would collect harvest, discard, effort, and location data in real time, improving the precision of estimates compared to traditional surveys. Yamaha Rightwaters, a sustainability initiative created by the Yamaha Motor Corporation, USA, has committed to funding the platform's development.

The South Atlantic states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida, have met several times since 2024 to explore alternative data-collection methods due to longstanding concerns about MRIP's large margins of error for Red Snapper. Georgia's EFP would test a system modeled after successful state-run programs in the Gulf and South Carolina.



CRD photo

Marine technician Ashley Haymans measures a red snapper during the 2025 mini season.

Expanded Season, Proposed Angler Requirements

If approved, the EFP would:

- Establish a two-month recreational Red Snapper season aligned with NOAA MRIP sampling periods (one season in 2026 in either May-June, July-August, or September-October).
- Allow anglers to harvest one Red Snapper per person per day, with no minimum size limit.
- Require all participating anglers to register trips and report harvest and release data through Georgia's new electronic reporting platform, which will be available as a smartphone application.
- Continue CRD's carcass-donation stations to collect biological information throughout the season.
- Apply consistent requirements to private anglers and for-hire guides.

Under the proposal, anglers must obtain a trip authorization number prior to fishing and submit a post-trip report detailing harvest, releases, fishing effort, and approximate location or depth fished. Anglers found out of compliance may be denied future EFP participation.

A Key Step in Advancing Better Red Snapper Management

CRD Director Doug Haymans said the EFP directly supports President Trump's April 2025 Executive Order 14276, “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness,” which calls on states and NOAA to expand the use of EFPs to modernize data collection and improve access for anglers.

“Georgia anglers have expressed frustration for years with extremely short Red Snapper seasons,” Haymans said. “This proposal creates a longer, more predictable season while giving us far better data to support responsible management.”

CRD Marine Fisheries Section Chief Dr. Carolyn Belcher added that the extended season also improves opportunities for biological sampling. CRD will continue operating carcass-donation freezers along the coast to collect age, size, and reproductive information from harvested fish.

Red Snapper stocks in federal waters have been managed by NOAA and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council since 1983.

Low Risk to Stock

According to the 2024 SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) 73 stock assessment update, Red Snapper in the South Atlantic are not overfished, overfishing may no longer be occurring, and the stock is ahead of schedule on its rebuilding timeline. Because overall recreational effort is not expected to increase (and retained fish would otherwise be discarded) the EFP poses low risk to the stock.

Next Steps

Georgia has requested prompt approval from the U.S. Department of Commerce to allow program development ahead of the 2026 season. If approved, the state anticipates applying for two additional years of EFP renewals covering 2027 and 2028. ▀



CRD photo

Marine biologist Cameron Brinton uses a front-end loader to prepare the Montgomery Cross Road shell recycling station in Savannah for a new collection bin on Oct. 8.

Shell recycling areas added

By Cameron Brinton

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As part of the multi-partner We Recycle Shell initiative, CRD has opened two new public oyster shell recycling centers and refurbished an existing site in Savannah.

New recycling centers are now open at the North River Boat Ramp in Camden County and the South Newport River Boat Ramp in McIntosh County.

In addition, the recycling station on East Montgomery Cross Road in Savannah has been upgraded through a partnership between DNR and the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Georgia.

The We Recycle Shell program is a statewide partnership dedicated to collecting used oyster shells from restaurants, community events, and the public to support oyster reef restoration projects along Georgia's coast. Recycled shells provide the hard surface young oysters need to attach and grow, creating new reefs that improve water quality, stabilize shorelines, and provide critical habitat for fish and crabs.

"Every oyster shell that's recycled helps grow a healthier coast," said Cameron Brinton, a CRD marine biologist who coordinated the recycling

NEW SHELL RECYCLE LOCATIONS

North River Boat Ramp

I-95 Exit 3 East on GA HWY 40 towards St. Mary's (approximately 8.5 miles). Turn left on Meeting St. East and the ramp is at the end of the road.

South Newport River Boat Ramp

I-95 Exit 67 south on U.S. HWY 17 for 0.5 miles. Bear to the left on old U.S. HWY 17 (now ramp access road).

Montgomery Cross Rd. Savannah

Intersection of Thomas Ave and Montgomery Cross Rd.

centers. "These new centers make it easier than ever for residents to return their shells and play a role in restoring Georgia's oyster reefs."

The new drop-off locations are available to the public seven days a week for disposal of trash free, shell-only materials. The collected shells will be cured and later used in oyster reef restoration projects.

To learn more about shell recycling locations and how to participate and how these shells help Coastal Georgia, visit WeRecycleShell.com or CoastalGaDNR.org/HERU. To view photos of the new recycling stations, visit CoastalGaDNR.SmugMug.com. 🐚

CoastFest art contest returns with patriotic theme

By Brooke Vallaster

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CRD is excited to announce the theme for the 2026 CoastFest Art Contest: "Stars, Stripes, and Sea Life – Celebrating Our Coast and Country." CoastFest will return to Mary Ross Waterfront Park in Brunswick on Saturday, March 21, 2026.

Each year, CRD invites Pre-K through 12th-grade students to showcase their creativity and love for the natural world. The 2026 theme aligns with our nation's 250th anniversary, offering students a unique opportunity to blend patriotic inspiration with Georgia's vibrant coastal ecosystems. From marshes and maritime forests to shorebirds, sea turtles, fish, and marine mammals, students are encouraged to highlight the coastal habitats and wildlife they cherish most.

Artwork submissions will be accepted Feb. 2 to 20, 2026, and must be delivered to DNR's Coastal Regional Headquarters at One Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31520, by 4:30 p.m. on February 20.

Student artwork will be displayed at the Brunswick-Glynn County Library in mid-March and showcased during CoastFest. Full contest guidelines, age categories, and award details can be found at: <https://coastalgadnr.org/CoastFest/ArtContest>.

We look forward to celebrating Georgia's coast—and its young artists—with you! 🐚

Retired barge enhances reef

By **Cameron Brinton**

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CRD's Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Unit on Oct. 21 deployed a 130-foot retired barge to Artificial Reef A, located approximately seven nautical miles east of Little Cumberland Island in about 40 feet of water.

The steel-hulled vessel was thoroughly cleaned and inspected by the U.S. Coast Guard prior to deployment to ensure all hazardous materials and pollutants were removed. The barge now rests on the seafloor, where it will soon begin serving as essential fish habitat, providing shelter and structure for a wide variety of marine life, including snapper, grouper, sea bass, and other reef-associated species.

"Artificial reefs like this one play a critical role in supporting Georgia's



Cameron Brinton/CRD

A retired barge sinks at Artificial Reef A approximately seven miles east of Little Cumberland Island on Oct. 21.

coastal fisheries," said Paul Medders, CRD's Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Unit lead. "They not only improve fish habitat but also

create exciting new opportunities for anglers and divers."

The project was funded by the sale of Georgia recreational fishing licenses and through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, a national program that reinvests excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat fuel back into conservation and public access projects.

Artificial Reef A is one of more than 30 permitted reef sites managed by CRD off Georgia's coast. Each reef is carefully planned and monitored to promote healthy marine ecosystems and to enhance recreational fishing and diving experiences.

Coordinates and details about Georgia's artificial reefs are available on CRD's website at CoastalGaDNR.org/OffshoreReefs.

Coordinates for the barge are 30.94898°N 81.24750°W (30° 56.939'N 81° 14.850'W) 📍

Woman establishes new record category

Staff Report

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CRD has certified a new women's state saltwater game fish record for Graysby grouper (*Cephalopholis cruentata*).

Mackenzie L. Hendricks, 20, of Savannah, established the record Sept. 7 with a 1 pound, 5.8 ounce Graysby caught while fishing at the Snapper Banks offshore of Chatham County. She is the first woman to hold this record; no previous record existed in the women's category.

Hendricks was fishing aboard a charter captained by Zach Holick of Savannah when she landed the fish using a Daiwa Saltist rod with an Avet reel,

spooled with 80-pound braided line. The rig was a chicken rig baited with squid. The Graysby measured 12 7/8 inches in total length with a girth of 10 1/4 inches.

For comparison, the men's state record for Graysby is 2 pounds, 2.24 ounces, set by Justin Bythwood of Waycross in May 2024.

To commemorate her achievement, Hendricks will receive a state record certificate signed by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, DNR Commissioner Walter Rabon, and Coastal Resources Division Director Doug Haymans. Her name will also appear in the next Georgia Hunting and Fishing Regulations Guide and on the CRD's state saltwater records webpage at CoastalGaDNR.org/SaltwaterRecords for as long as the record stands. 📍



Submitted photo

Mackenzie Hendricks poses with her Graysby grouper while fishing offshore on Sept. 7.



Tyler Jones/CRD

About 70 people attended the ASMFC's public hearing in Townsend at the Sapelo Saltwater Fishing Club in October.

April deadline set for redfish plan

By Tyler Jones

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has approved Addendum II to Amendment 2 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Red Drum, bringing major updates to how the species will be managed along the Atlantic coast.

These changes follow the findings of the 2024 Red Drum stock assessment, which showed that the southern stock (found in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida) is overfished and experiencing overfishing. This means there are not enough adult red drum to reproduce at healthy levels, and too many fish are being caught each year.

Because red drum migrate and move across state boundaries, they are managed cooperatively through the ASMFC.

Earlier this fall, Atlantic coastal states held public hearings to collect input on the draft addendum. Georgia's hearing took place Sept. 24 at the Sapelo Saltwater Fishing Club in Shellman Bluff. During the event, ASMFC staff reviewed the draft plan, and CRD explained possible Georgia-

specific options. CRD will discuss potential responses to the new rules at a later date.

What the Stock Assessment Showed

The stock assessment, presented by Dr. Jared Flowers of CRD on Nov. 20, analyzed data through 2021 and evaluated juvenile, subadult, and adult red drum. The assessment found:

Red drum are overfished, meaning there are not enough spawning-age fish. Overfishing is occurring, meaning too many fish are being removed (through harvest or discard mortality) from the population.

The spawning potential ratio (SPR), a measure of reproductive potential, is below 30 percent, which is the threshold that defines overfishing. The sustainable target is 40 percent.

Juvenile recruitment has generally declined since the 2000s, likely due to environmental changes or spawning problems.

Limited data on adults makes it hard for the model to estimate adult population trends, partly because red drum can live 40 years, but Georgia's slot limit protects older fish from harvest.

Fishing pressure and discard mortality have both increased over time.

The assessment stressed that recovery could take decades if adult numbers continue to fall.

What Addendum II Changes

Addendum II gives states a clear process for responding when new scientific information becomes available. It also allows the ASMFC Board to use improved methods to estimate how different management strategies will affect fishing mortality.

For the southern stock, the Addendum sets a management goal called F30 percent, meaning fishing pressure must be low enough to maintain at least a 30 percent spawning potential ratio. This is the minimum level needed to end overfishing. The long-term goal of reaching 40 percent SPR remains in place.

To meet the new requirement:

- Georgia and South Carolina must reduce red drum fishing by at least 14.4% and submit management plans by April 1, 2026.
- Florida, which adopted stricter red drum regulations in September 2022, is already expected to meet the required reduction.

The ASMFC will review Georgia and South Carolina's proposals during its May 2026 meeting. ▀

Making an IMPRESSION

Marine biologist combines love for science and passion for art with gyotaku

By Tyler Jones

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On a breezy weekday afternoon in Brunswick, long after the nets from the morning's trawl have been hung to dry, marine biologist Britany Hall stands in her kitchen—the same place where most people might prep dinner or pack a lunch—and lays a flounder gently across a sheet of Styrofoam.

Her countertops are broad and spotless, which she jokingly calls her “Thanksgiving kitchen” because of how much room it offers. It has become her studio, her lab, and her quiet place to think.

She pins the fins carefully—“that part’s time-consuming,” she says—and with the same precision she brings to her work on the water, she begins brushing the fish with inky black pigment. Horsehair brush. Sumi ink from a hobby store. Each stroke soft, deliberate.

She leans in. Dab, dab—sponge to scale—to lift the excess and leave only what should be transferred.

When she’s satisfied, she drapes a piece of muslin cloth over the fish (a

23 inch flounder), smoothing it gently from head to tail. She pauses, palms flat, and then lifts.

A perfect imprint appears: the curve of the jaw, the rise of the dorsal fin, the faint dapple of pigment where the scales divide. A ghost of the fish, but truer in some ways than a photograph.

Hall smiles.

“You never know the reveal until you peel it back,” she says. “It’s either good, or it’s not, and you start over. Every print is different—no print is ever the same.”

This is gyotaku, an old Japanese technique for documenting fish catches. For Hall, it has nothing to do with bragging rights or record-keeping. It’s something else entirely—a bridge between the science she practices for

a living and the art she creates simply because it brings her joy.

A Childhood on the Water

Hall grew up far from Georgia’s marshes—Gainesville, up around Lake Lanier—but water shaped her long before she ever studied fisheries or set foot on a research boat.

“I grew up on the water—that was just in my life,” she says. “My grandpa was my best friend, my Papa. He taught me everything about the outdoors.”

He lived right across the street. Fishing poles were never far from reach.

“I always tell everybody I’ve been fishing since I could walk,” she says, laughing. “And I’ve got the picture to prove it—little hat, little glasses, little fishing pole.”

That childhood—the lake, the quiet mornings, the time spent with someone who saw the natural world not as something to observe but something to share—set the foundation for everything that came later.

Finding Her Way to CRD

Hall didn't plan on gyoatku. And she didn't exactly plan on becoming a marine biologist, either—not at first. But one step led to another.

She majored in Environmental Science at the College of Coastal Georgia in Brunswick, then took on part-time work with CRD marine biologist Donna McDowell on the longline survey.

"I was her 29-hour a week employee on the longline survey," she says. "Then I graduated, went off to do my master's at Iowa State."

Iowa, she admits, was an unexpected detour—cornfields instead of coastlines—but it's where she first tried fish printing. The lab there had a huge freshwater buffalo and a carp mounted on the wall. She

made a couple of prints for fun. Nothing serious. Not yet.

When she returned to Georgia, she saw an opening at CRD.

"I applied, and the rest is history," she says.

Today Hall is part of the Ecological Monitoring Trawl Survey, the backbone of Georgia's long-term fisheries data. The work is challenging—physically, mentally, sometimes emotionally.

"The hardest part is the time away," she says. "It takes a big mental toll."

But the rewarding parts outweigh it many times over.

"Every day we go out on the water, you have the opportunity to see something new," she says. "And we've got a really great team. I wouldn't want to work with anybody else."

Bad weather? Engine trouble? Uncertain conditions?

She lights up.

"I work well under pressure," she says. "Any kind of emergency situation—I actually thrive in that. I love the hard stuff."

An Artist Hiding in a Scientist's Job

Hall's interest in gyoatku first saw piqued when she saw it online: social-media influencers pressing tropical fish onto rice paper. Later she saw prints again in professors' offices in Iowa. Then pottery—her longtime side hobby—pulled her closer.

"I do pottery on the side," she explains. "And part of that is I do transfers. It reminded me of the fish printing."

A couple freshwater prints in Iowa. A carp. A big buffalo fish. Then, after moving back to Georgia, the idea resurfaced.





Tyler Jones/CRD photos

Marine biologist Brittany Hall, right, helps public affairs assistant Fisher Medders make a gyo-taku print on muslin cloth.

"It came back up on social media," she says. "And I thought, I'm going to try that with a flounder."

Before the flounder, though, came a cutlassfish she caught. Long, chrome-bright, almost metallic.

She printed that one first.

Then, one day, she printed her first saltwater flounder in Georgia.

"It's a fun little hobby," she says, but her tone—and her meticulous printwork—hint it might be more than that.

How a Print Comes to Life

Hall walks through the process like she's teaching a class, which she very well might someday.

Step One: Clean the fish.

"You've got to get all the goo and slime off," she says. "Make sure it's really dry."

Step Two: Work quickly.

"There's a limited time," she explains. As fish relax on ice, fluids seep out. "You need to be quick."

Step Three: Prepare the fins.



A carefully done print will reveal details like fins and even scales.

Spread, pin, arrange. "If you want all the details of the fin rays, that's pretty time-consuming."

Step Four: Ink.

She uses sumi ink—"really potent"—either straight or diluted like watercolor. Paint with a horsehair brush. Dab with a sponge.

Step Five: Transfer.

Muslin, not rice paper, is her preferred medium.

"I like muslin better," she says. "You get more detail, and it's easier to work with. Rice paper gets creases."

Lay the cloth from the top of the body downward. Press with a dry sponge over delicate areas.

Step Six: Reveal.

"Then you pull it up and see how you like it."

In an hour or two, she'll get maybe three or four good prints out of fifteen tries.

But when one is perfect, it's unmistakable.

What Science Brings to the Art

At first, Hall hesitated when asked whether her scientific background affects the way she approaches gyo-taku.

Then she reconsidered.

"I guess I have more respect for the characteristics of a fish," she says. "The details of what makes a fish a fish."



Britany Hall, a marine biologist with CRD, carefully spreads sumi ink onto a flounder before pressing muslin cloth onto the fish.

Someone without a background in anatomy might see only shape. Hall sees structure: fin rays, gill plates, scale patterns, the rise and fall of the body line.

Does gyotaku make her see fish differently as a scientist?

She shakes her head.

"I haven't thought of it on that deeper level," she says. "For me, it's more of an art form—turning what I love about my job into something I can hang on the wall."

A Trend at CRD?

Gyotaku has become quietly contagious among her coworkers.

"They like it," Hall says. "I've gotten them started on it. I think I've started a little trend."

She grins.

"Sean Tarpley [a marine technician with CRD's Marine Sportfish Population Health Survey] just did another one the other day."

People have begun asking if she'll sell her prints. Some want to hang them in homes or offices; others say she should try an arts-and-crafts fair.

"I haven't advertised anything," she says. "The few I did here, I gave away."

She's not rushing.

Bucket-List Fish and Backyard Surprises

There's one species she dreams of printing—mahi.

"The first time I ever saw anything related to this art form was with mahi," she says. "That's my bucket-list fish. When I get to catch one, I'm going to do a print of it. I'm going to bring the stuff with me the first time I ever catch one."

She laughs at the thought of hauling muslin and ink onto a boat offshore.

"You're gonna need a bigger piece of muslin," I told her during her interview.

"Yep," she replied.

Her most unusual print, though, wasn't offshore. It wasn't even from a trawl, net, or an other CRD survey. It was from her backyard.

A few months ago, she and her fiancée, Benson, took his son fishing in the pond behind their house. He landed a bluegill.

Hall hesitated only for a moment.

"I did a print on a live fish," she says.

No pins. No stiffening on ice. Just a little fish with its fins up, holding still long enough for her to work quickly. Paint, press, print, release.

"Washed it off in a bucket and released it back into the pond," she says.

"First time I ever did that."

Respect for the Water

Out on the trawl survey, Hall sees a lot—beautiful species, rare catches, surprising finds. But she sees something else too:

Trash.

"We see so much trash," she says. "It gets pulled up in the trawl, gets stuck in the chain or the bag."

She doesn't mince words.

"Try to keep the ecosystem clean. It's the fishes' home. You wouldn't want someone coming into your home and trashing it."

It's a message she knows sounds cliché, but one that matters.

"It's always going to be an important message," she says.

What Comes Next

Hall doesn't know exactly where gyotaku will take her, and she likes it that way.

Maybe someday she'll lead a workshop. She's already brainstormed how CRD might introduce the art form at CoastFest using silicone molds and washable paints so kids can try it without using real fish.

"It could be a fun activity," she says. Though she adds, "We'll see," with a smile.

For now, she prints after work or on weekends—"anytime the opportunity presents itself"—building a quiet collection of flounder, cutlassfish, bluegill, and carp.

What she's really building, though, is something harder to categorize: a practice, a ritual, a way of seeing.

Back in her kitchen, the prints dry in soft afternoon light. She lifts one, admiring the delicate lines.

"I love moments like this," she says.

On the water, she studies fish to understand an ecosystem. Here, she studies them to honor their beauty.

And in both places, she is doing what she does best:

Looking closely.

Paying attention.

Leaving an impression long after the tide goes out. ▀



Tyler Jones/CRD

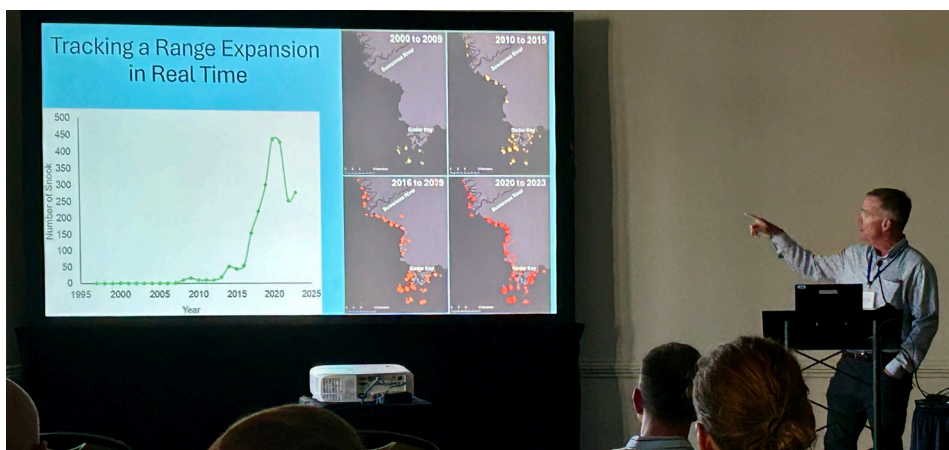
Monica Thornton, executive director of The Nature Conservancy, gives a keynote address during lunch on Oct. 21.

Resiliency conference draws crowd

Participants keep eye on future while discussing broad swath of topics

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When coastal Georgians talk about resilience, they're not trading in buzzwords. Along our barrier islands and marsh-lined rivers, resilience is something you can feel—salt marsh grass bending in the wind, communities rallying after storms, agencies learning from the last high tide to prepare for the next. That spirit was at the center of the Georgia Resiliency Conference, held Oct. 20–21 on Jekyll Island, where CRD brought together scientists, planners, emergency managers, engineers, educators, and local officials



Brooke Vallaster/CRD

This year's Georgia Resiliency Conference featured more than 120 speakers from a variety of backgrounds and fields.

to talk about preparing our coast for the changes ahead.

Hosted against the backdrop of Jekyll's quiet beaches and sprawling live oaks, the two-day event served as both a working meeting and a reminder of what's at stake. More than 300 attendees, from Glynn County commissioners to state and federal partners, spent the conference trading ideas, comparing data, and building

new relationships across agencies and disciplines. The goal was simple: ensure Georgia's coastal communities have the tools, science, and strategies they need to withstand rising seas, stronger storms, and the rapid pace of coastal development.

CRD Director Doug Haymans said the conference was about highlighting the importance of collaboration. "No single agency or community can



Brooke Vallaster/CRD

CRD's Jim Long and Jan Mackinnon speak in between panel sessions.

tackle coastal resilience alone," he said. "Success comes from working together—local knowledge, state support, federal expertise, and the on-the-ground partnerships that make ideas real."

The conference moved through a fast-paced slate of presentations and workshops. Researchers from the Georgia Southern University shared the latest findings on marsh migration and shoreline erosion. CRD biologists discussed new tools for assessing the health of tidal creeks and oyster reefs—habitats that act as natural buffers during storm surge. Planners from coastal communities talked about their own challenges: aging stormwater systems, high-tide flooding in places that never used to flood, and the rising cost of disaster recovery.

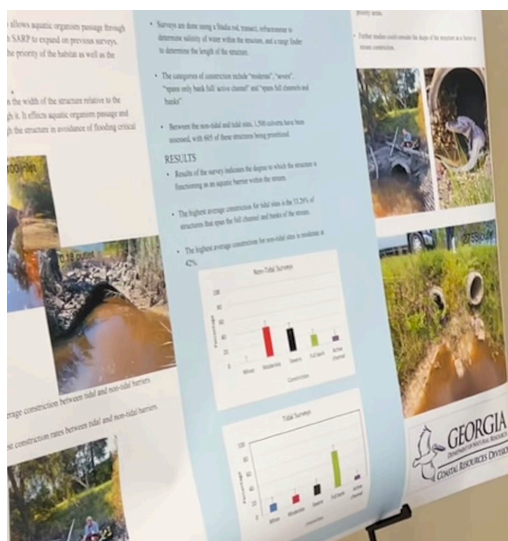
One of the most talked-about sessions came from state agency officials, who represented not just DNR, but the Georgia Emergency Management Agency, and Department of Transportation. Together, these officials looked at the impacts of climate change through the lenses of energy usage, emissions, beneficial use of sediment projects to create habitat, and even computer modeling.

But the conference wasn't all maps, charts and models. It also highlighted success stories—projects that show what resilience looks like when partners work together. Attendees heard about living shoreline installations



Brooke Vallaster/CRD

From left, CRD's Diana Patrick, Cheyenne Osborne, Jim Long, Jennifer Kline, and Shy Duncan man the welcome booth at the Georgia Resiliency Conference.



Brooke Vallaster/CRD

Wetlands technician Alana Johnson, left, shows off her poster display during the Georgia Resiliency Conference.

in McIntosh and Chatham counties, marsh restoration projects supported by the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program, and local governments finding creative ways to elevate roads, redesign drainage basins, and protect vulnerable neighborhoods. These examples served as real-world reminders that resilience isn't abstract. It's practical, tangible, and increasingly urgent.

A broad expanse of expertise was present at the conference, which featured more than 120 speakers. Although they came from different backgrounds and fields, and even as

far away as Atlanta and Columbus, the panelists agreed on one thing: Georgia's coast is changing, and the state's response must change with it.

As attendees filtered out beneath Jekyll's twisting oaks, the feeling was hopeful. Not because the challenges are small, but because the people facing them are committed. In a world where coastal issues often feel overwhelming, the Georgia Resiliency Conference offered something rare: a reminder that resilience doesn't happen by accident. It's built—patiently, collaboratively, and one coastal community at a time. ■

Et Cetera ... *News Briefs from Across DNR*



DNR Exhibits at the 2025 Georgia Recreation and Park Association Annual Conference & Trade Show

CRD joined with State Parks and the Commissioner's Office recently to exhibit at the 2025 Georgia Recreation and Park Association Annual Conference & Trade Show on beautiful Jekyll Island. As the state's largest gathering of parks and recreation professionals, the event gave DNR staff a great opportunity to connect with attendees, share everything DNR has to offer, and highlight our Outdoors Beyond Barriers (OBB) initiative, which empowers people of all abilities to explore Georgia's natural resources.

Georgia House and Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committees' Environmental Policy Academy

Assistant Director Karl Burgess, Program Manager Dominic Guadagnoli, and Coastal Resources Specialists Kelly Hill and Jennifer Kline participated in the Georgia House and Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committees' Environmental Policy Academy at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. Burgess provided the group with an overview of CRD,

while Hill and Kline presented information regarding coastal resilience partnerships. In addition, Burgess and Guadagnoli accompanied the group on a field visit to Tybee Oyster at Bull River Ranch, an oyster farm in Georgia.



Georgia Department of Corrections Visits CRD for Coastal Education and Team Building

CRD hosted representatives from the Georgia Department of Corrections at Coastal Regional Headquarters on Oct. 16 for a trawl demonstration, marsh walk, and fish biology presentation. Assistant Director Karl Burgess gave an overview of DNR and CRD, followed by a visit to the Earth Day Nature Trail with Marine

Educator Brooke Vallaster, and a talk by Marine Biologist Donna McDowell about CRD's Age and Growth Lab. The visitors also went aboard the R/V Reid W. Harris for a trawl with Marine Biologist Eddie Leonard and his crew. The representatives were in town as part of a staff retreat and used the visit as a team building and interagency educational opportunity.



Living Shorelines Workshop Builds Coastal Expertise

In partnership with Sapelo Island National Research Reserve and The Nature Conservancy, Coastal Management staff hosted a Living Shorelines Workshop for engineers and contractors at Skidaway Island State Park. The event included presentations, breakout stations, and a field visit, giving participants hands-on experience with design, permitting, and site suitability. With 16 new participants added, the Living Shoreline Practitioner Network now totals 50 members across Georgia.

Students Learn About Marine Life, Coastal Geological Processes

Marine Educator Brooke Vallaster and other CRD staff members recently led two educational programs. Students from the Glynn County Homeschoolers Association visited a St. Simons beach for a seining demonstration and ecological education in the field, getting first-hand experience with marine life

and learning about angling ethics on Thursday. The following day, Vallaster and staff led a program for third graders at Oglethorpe Point Elementary School where they learned about the sand sharing system, coastal erosion, and how factors like longshore currents affect developments.

local governments within the 11 coastal county area, academic institutions doing research in the 11 county area and state/regional entities

Coastal Aquatic Barrier Assessment and Analysis Program (CABANA)

Wetlands Restoration Specialist Jaynie L. Gaskin attended the quarterly

around enhancements to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) included creating more discrete fishing area grids, adding depredation codes, and conducting sampling activities in the winter shoulder months.



CRD Participates in City of Brunswick's First Friday

Coastal Resources Specialist Kelly Hill and Jennifer Kline had an informational tent at the City of Brunswick's First Friday event which showcased Living Shoreline, Green Growth and Flooding displays. Information was handed out on the flooding issues in the City and how CRD is partnering with the City through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) project to mitigate these issues. A follow-up Community Meeting was held at the local library on Sept. 18.

Folkston Council Hears About Grant Opportunities

CRD's Coastal Management staff presented at the City of Folkston Council meeting to inform the Council of their eligibility to apply for grants through the Coastal Incentive Grant (CIG) Program. The request for proposals was released Sept. 24 with a deadline for preapplications of Dec. 5. The CIG Program is eligible to qualified

meeting of the Georgia Aquatic Connectivity Team on Wednesday September 10th. Jaynie presented to the group about CRD's Coastal Aquatic Barrier Assessment and Analysis Program (CABANA) that has assessed over 1,500 road-stream crossings in the coastal region. The mission of the CABANA program is to develop a prioritized inventory of all aquatic barriers in Georgia's tidal wetlands and help communities find support for restoration.

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's Recreational Technical Committee Meeting

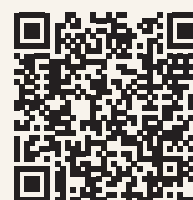
Marine Biologist Dawn Franco represented Georgia at the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's Recreational Technical Committee meeting in Arlington, Va. The committee is comprised of representatives from each Atlantic coast state and federal partners and Franco is chair of the committee. Discussions were primarily centered



Brunswick Fire Department Lends Hand at CRD

The Brunswick Fire Department lent a hand (and a tower fire truck!) to CRD on Sept. 4. Staff was preparing to re-hang a "Go Fish!" license plate banner on the side of the Marine Services Building, and quickly realized the height and location of the banner presented a significant challenge. Unable to safely reach where the banner needed to go, Marine Technician Sean Tarpley mused that a Georgia Power bucket truck would be handy. Public Information Officer Tyler Jones thought about it, and reached out to his neighbor, John Tyre, who is a local shrimp boat captain and assistant chief of the Brunswick Fire Department. After a quick phone call, Tyre arranged for the city's tower truck to do some "in-service training" at Coastal Regional Headquarters, helping to safely hang the 16-by-8 foot banner, which is visible from the nearby Sidney Lanier Bridge. 🐟

Stay up to date with the latest CRD news. Scan this code to sign-up for our email list.



CATCH. RELEASE. REVIVE.

As an offshore angler, you know the thrill of the catch at our vibrant reefs. But did you know that many reef fish experience barotrauma, a condition caused by rapid changes in pressure when they're brought to the surface?

When you release fish, help keep them alive by using descending devices. Federal law requires you to have them onboard and ready to use when fishing for or possessing snapper-grouper species in South Atlantic federal waters. They quickly return fish to the depth where they were caught, allowing fish to recover. Reducing fishing mortality due to barotrauma conserves fish populations and ensures the future of your favorite sport.

Join the Coastal Resources Division and Return 'Em Right in making a positive impact. Equip your boat with descending devices today and be a responsible steward of the sea. Your catch—and the ocean—will thank you. Scan the code to learn more.

