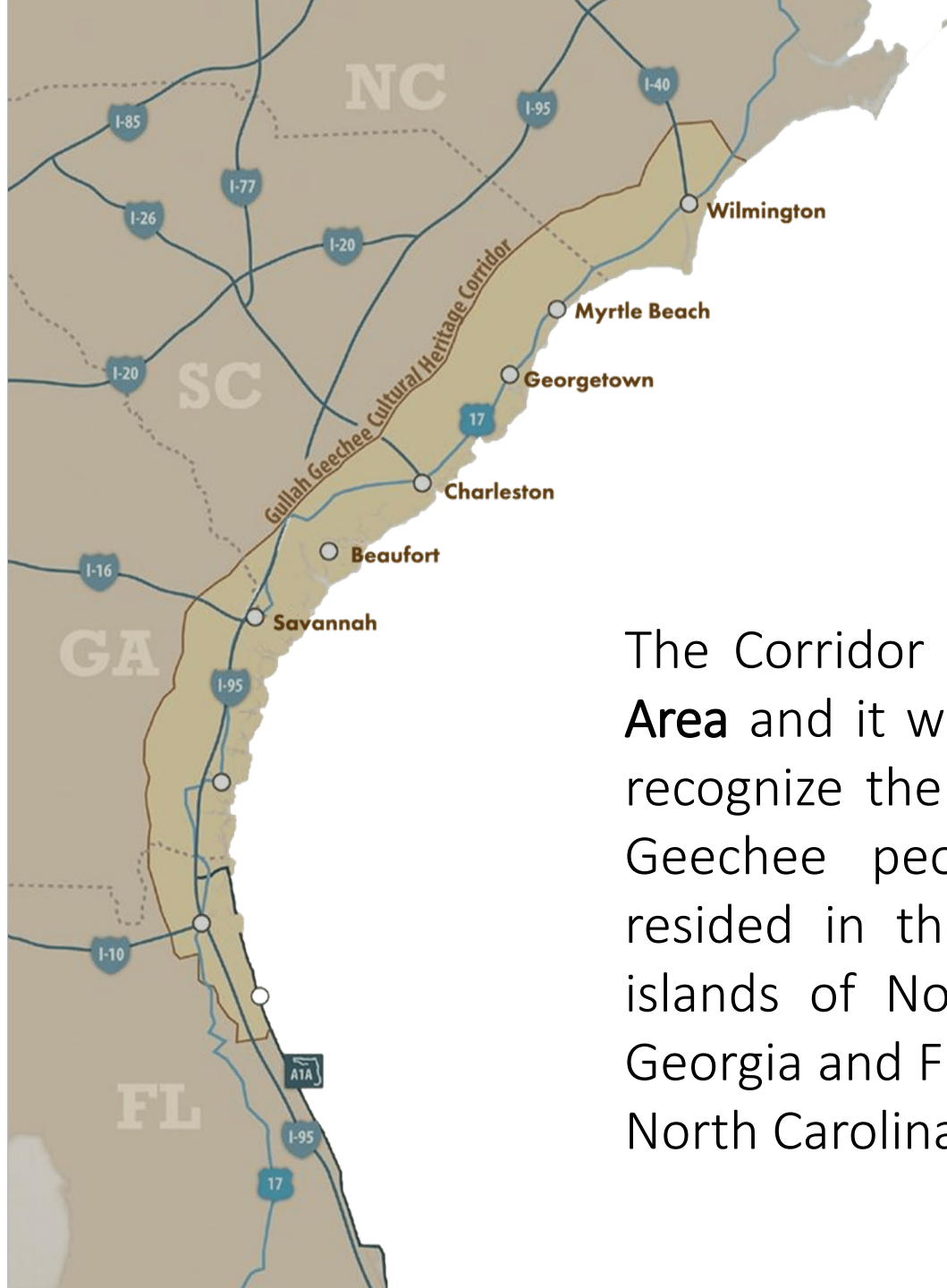


# The Intersection of Nature & Culture in the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor

Dionne Hoskins-Brown, Ph.D.

May 18, 2022



The Corridor is a federal **National Heritage Area** and it was established by Congress to recognize the unique culture of the Gullah Geechee people who have traditionally resided in the coastal areas and the sea islands of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida — from Pender County, North Carolina, to St. Johns County, Florida.

# Legislative Timeline

- Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2000 (first mention)
- **National Heritage Areas Act of 2006 (commissioned Special Resource Study)**
- **Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act 2012**
- A bill to amend the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act to extend the authorization for The Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission 2016
- **To amend the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Act to extend the authorization of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, and for other purposes, 2021 (seeking reauthorization this year to 2037)**



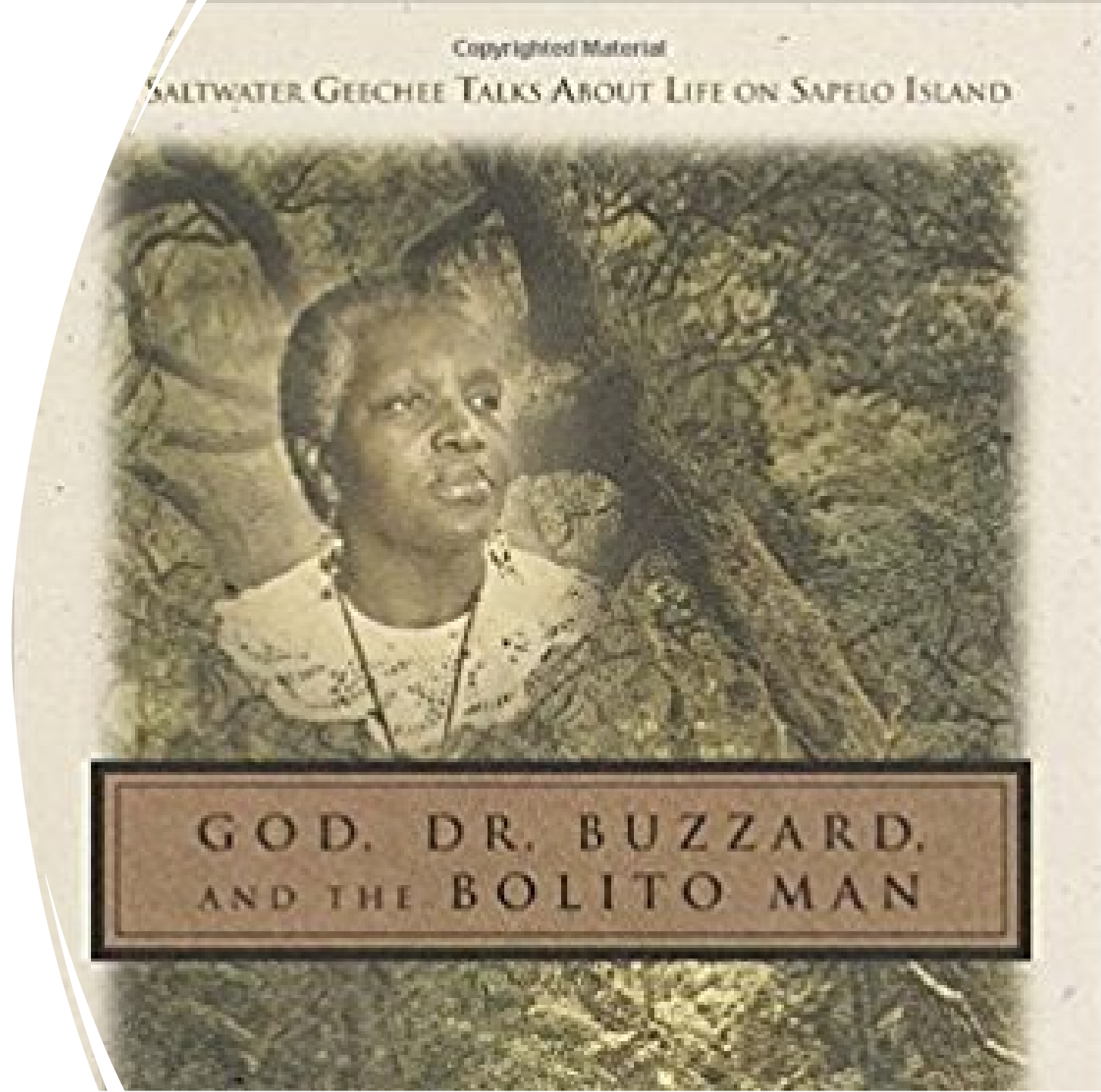
Low Country Gullah Culture  
Special Resource Study and  
Final Environmental Impact Statement

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Southeast Regional Office  
Atlanta, Georgia

Legislation created a Corridor NHA and a federal commission to support it.

# “Gullah” or “Geechee”?

- “Although Gullah and Geechee — terms whose origins have been much debated and may trace to specific African tribes or words — are often used interchangeably these days, Mrs. [Cornelia Walker] Bailey always stressed that she was Geechee. And, specifically, Saltwater Geechee (as opposed to the Freshwater Geechee, who lived 30 miles inland).
- “We thought our speech was a bit more musical than theirs,” she wrote in her book, “because we talked a little faster, with fewer rest stops between our words, so that everything ran together. We’d listen to them and say, ‘Can’t they talk any faster than that? People don’t have all day.’”



# “Gullah” or “Geechee”?

- Scholars are not in agreement as to the origins of the terms “Gullah” and “Geechee.”
- “Gullah people” are historically those located in Florida and South Carolina. “Geechee” is used in North Carolina and Georgia.
- Geechee people in Georgia refer to themselves as “Freshwater Geechee” if they live on the mainland and “Saltwater Geechee” if they live on the Sea Islands.
- In some circumstances, the term “Geechee” has been used as a blanket term to describe people who live in the Low Country, regardless of ethnicity.

Those who were enslaved were all from Africa but did not share common languages, religions, or cultural traditions. As these individuals encountered one another on plantations and began to mix, ***Gullah Geechee culture was created*** and could not be attributed to any one African culture (NPS 2005).

# Gullah as its own language



**Dr. Lorenzo Dow Turner (1890-1972)**

**1929-** Taught summer courses at SCSC

**1932-** Moved to GA for 14mo; visited Harris Neck, Brewer's Neck, Sapelo Island, St. Simon Island and South Carolina (Edisto, Johns, St. Helena, Wadmalaw Islands)

**1933-35, 1949-** returned

**1939, 1942, 1949-** studying the African languages (Kimbundu, KiKongo, Yoruba, Ewe, Twi, Fante, Hausa, Mende, Gã, and Wolof) of the Niger-Kordofanian family at the University of London from 1936-1937

**1949-** "Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect"



## U.S. Language Of Pre-Civil War Days Spoken In Liberian Jungle

By Dewitt Mackenzie.  
AP Foreign Affairs Analyst.

One of the strange stories of our time has been unfolded by Dr. Lorenzo Dow Turner, Negro professor of English at Roosevelt College, Chicago, who has uncovered survivals of African culture among the quarter million Negroes inhabiting the Rice Islands off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia.

These Negroes are descendants of slaves who were brought to America at the time of the earliest settlements. Some of those living on the islands never have been on the mainland or seen a white man at close range. They speak a language which includes many words brought by their ancestors from the jungles of Africa.

Dr. Turner found that some of the words in the Rice Islands language had their origin in Liberia. I was particularly interested in this because in 1942 when I spent some time at Fisherman's Lake, Liberia, I was astonished to run into an American colloquialism dating back to slave days. It happened like this:

Just at the time of the American invasion of North Africa, Nov. 7, I started to fly from London to the Middle East. Because the flight normally would take us near the scene of the fighting, the plane was diverted to Liberia. From there we crossed Africa to Khartum and then down the Nile valley to Cairo. I got hung up in Fisherman's Lake, where there was an American mili-

Continued On Page 8, Column 1.

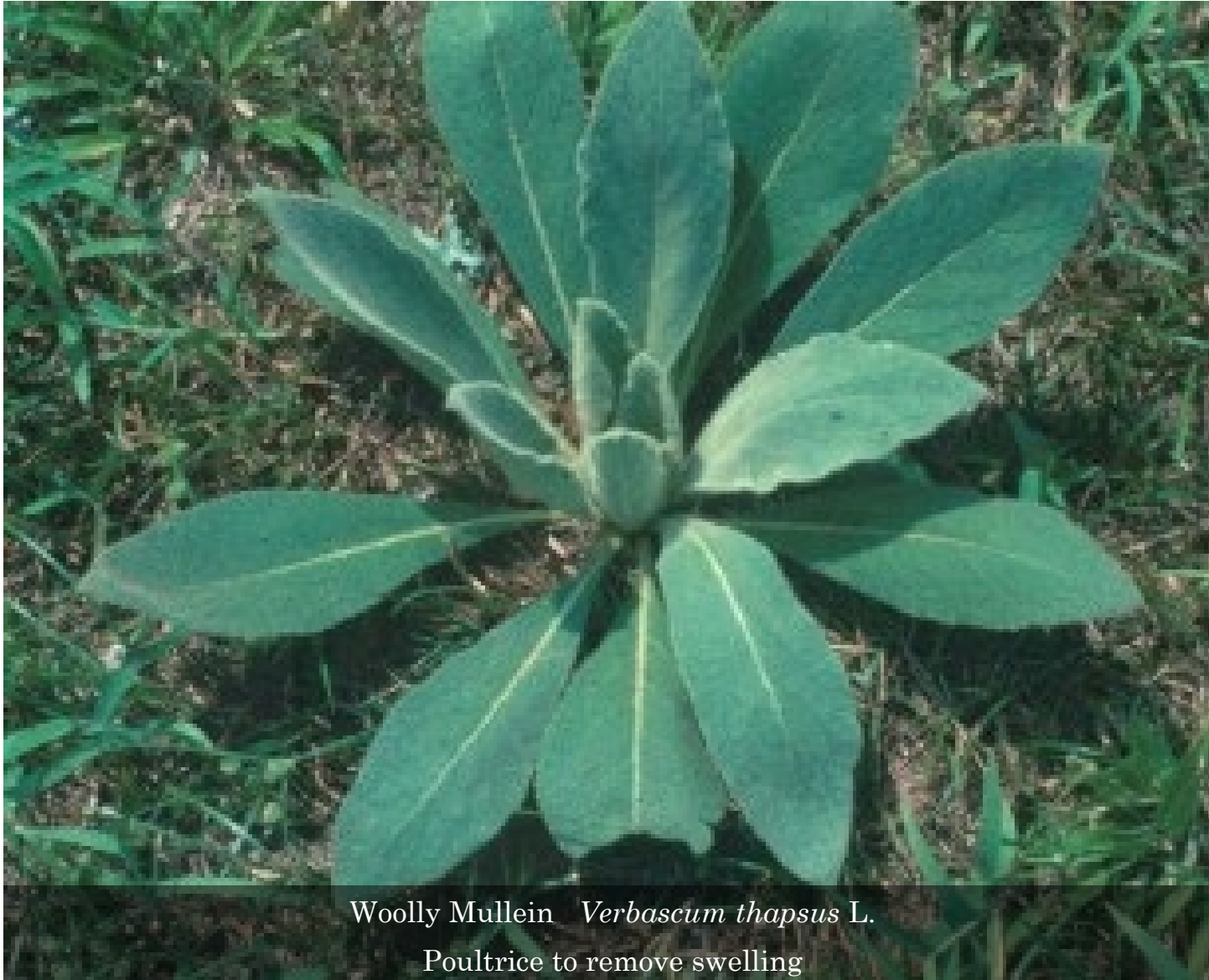
“one cannot account for the origins ... ignoring the languages that the slaves had brought from Africa.”

The Terre Haute  
Tribune  
(Terre Haute, Indiana)  
18 Oct 1949, Tue •  
Page 1



# A Gullah Geechee legacy that embraced nature for self-care

Toward nature-based solutions, acknowledge...



Woolly Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* L.

Poultice to remove swelling

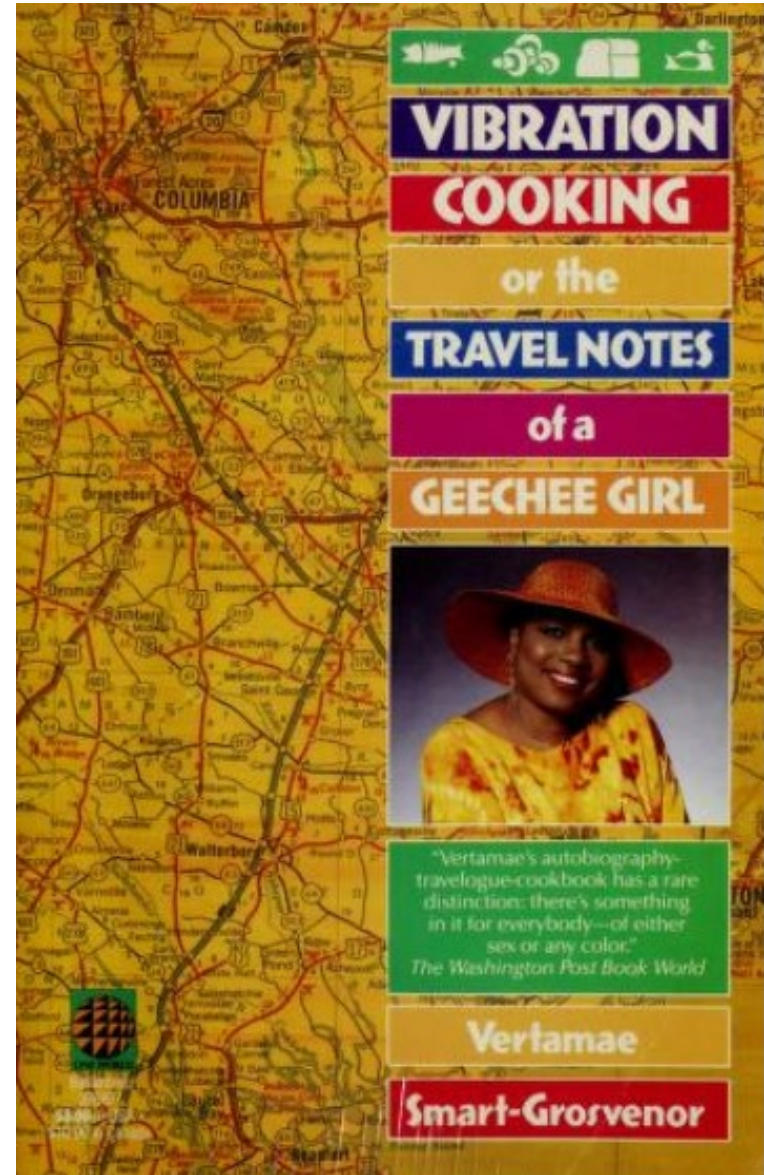
**“The old people knew the secrets of roots and herbs. We had roots and herbs growing all over Sapelo, and we used them for everything.”**

**Cornelia Walker Bailey**

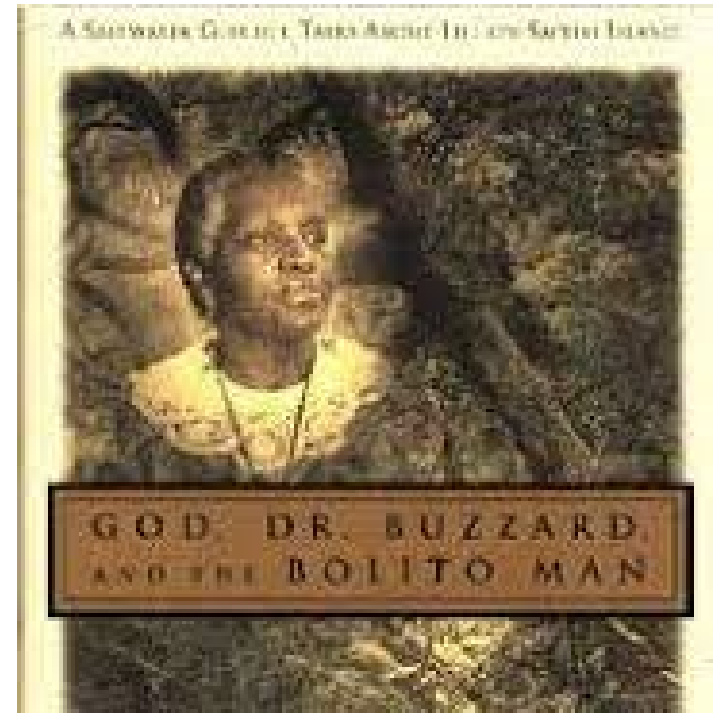
**“God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man, 2000**

# Home Remedies

- Plantain leaves- boils
- Persimmon bark-diarrhea
- fat back-heal sores
- nightshade plant leaves-heal sores
- turpentine, camphor, kerosene and sugar- cold
- spirits of ammonia-upset stomach
- mustard poultice- boils and risings
- Clay and chewing tobacco-stings, insect bites
- ear wax- cold sores



- Blackberry root- diarrhea
- Sassafras tea- measles
- Pennyroyal tea- women's issues
- Moss tea- asthma
- Life everlasting- cold
- Toothache tree- mouth pain
- Believed in the ability of the earth to heal



Environmental literacy  
is a core value in the  
home and among the  
collective

Gullah Geechee communities are nature-based because...



Slaves planted rice by hand in the fields, which were irrigated using tidal flow from the Black River.



**Design Matters.** During a tour of the South in 1938, Frances Benjamin Johnston, an architectural photographer, captured this image of a rice field at Mulberry Plantation near Monck's Corner in Berkeley County, S.C. Photo: Library of Congress.

Ecological knowledge dates pre-emancipation and particularly to rice cultivation.



Nature-based agricultural education

<https://www.penncenter.com/history-timeline>

# Haven Home Industrial Training School

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📅 POSTED ON JUNE 16, 2014

**MARKER TIME PERIOD:** 19TH CENTURY, 20TH CENTURY

**MARKER SUBJECT:** AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY, EDUCATION, WOMEN'S HISTORY

**COUNTY:** CHATHAM

**MARKER PROGRAM:** GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**REGION:** LOWCOUNTRY

---

**Year Erected:** 2010

**Marker Text:** Named for respected Methodist Bishop Gilbert Haven of Massachusetts, Haven Home School was established in 1885 with the support of the Women's Home Missionary Society, to provide local African-American girls with a quality education. In 1917, after relocating several times, a building was constructed at this location to serve as a permanent facility. The new facility served local

female students until its closure in 1932. In 1933 the Chatham County School Board purchased the property and it served as an elementary and junior high for local black students until 1960 when Haven Home School was demolished and replaced by the integrated Bartlett Middle School.

Erected by the Georgia Historical Society and the Haven Home Alumni Association.





“Um, everything in terms of various types of fish, crustaceans such as shrimp and other things. Uh, and...but part of that survival is your ability to preserve it. You have to remember, we did not have refrigeration so you dried stuff. “

Mr. Charles Hall, recalling growing up on Sapelo Island (GA) in 2009



Charles Hall  
1934-2014

If you listen to Gullah Geechee people talk about raising their own food, hunting, or fishing you won't hear any romantic infatuation with the natural environment. There may be a tremendous amount of respect esteem and gratitude because but it's not because of some fairy tale romantic idea of the natural environment it's an extraordinary understanding of how central nature is to providing every nutritional shelter and spiritual need.



Willie Cook oral interview, Darien, GA, 2012, Gullah Gee Chee

# Have a Sustainable, Green, Value System

Gullah Geechee communities are nature-based because they...

# VOICES

## ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

Collecting and sharing oral history interviews related to the changing environment, climate, oceans and coasts since 2003. Search the collection, listen and learn from a diversity of experiences. Create your own collection to archive and share.



African American Fishermen  
Oral History Project

<https://voices.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

### Georgia Black Fishermen

Collection DOI:  
Principal Investigator:  
Dionne Hoskins

African American participation in marine-related careers began as early as 1796, when the federal government issued Seamen's Protection Certificates to merchant mariners defining them as "citizens" of the United States effectively making maritime employment one way for Blacks to shape their identities. This collection this project documents the fishery-related occupations of African Americans in coastal Georgia 1865 to present and gather information for future work that may ascertain the relationship between their decreased participation and changes in regional fish populations and the fishing industry.

Displaying 1 - 1 of 19

Page 1 of 19

Interviewee	Description	Interviewer	Date of Interview	Location of Interview	Affiliation	Collection
Stephanie Anderson	Interview with Stephanie Anderson	Dionne Hoskins	Mon, 11/02/2015 - 12:00	Pin Point, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
Rebecca "Miss Sula" Rowan	Rebecca Bonds Rowan, better known as "Miss Sula," was born in 1948 in Pin Point, Georgia—a small Gullah Geechee community founded in 1825, eleven miles southeast of Savannah, in Chatham County. Growing up, Miss Sula was often the primary caregiver for her younger siblings because her parents would leave early in the morning to either catch or pick crabs. In her early 20s, Miss Sula was employed as a crab picker but was persuaded by her mother to pursue her education for a better life. Miss Sula entered the nursing field and worked in various care facilities throughout Georgia.	Dionne Hoskins	Wed, 08/15/2011 - 12:00	Savannah, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
Cezile Williams	Mrs. Cezile Williams gives us a vivid description of the fishing community in Thunderbolt, Georgia and how relationships between African American families grew with time. She gives the names of numerous processing factories and the families that owned them. Not only does she describe the lifestyle of a fisherman's wife but also the career choice of a lifetime.	Dionne Hoskins	Tue, 08/15/2010 - 12:00	Thunderbolt, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
George Walker	George Walker was born in 1948 on Sapelo Island, Georgia—a small Gullah Geechee community founded on the fourth largest barrier island in the 1700s, 80 miles south of Savannah, in McIntosh County. That was a popular year for births on the island, following World War II and a busy year for the only midwife on the island. Mr. Walker was unable to complete high school, which would have been helpful during his pursuit of his captain's license. Mr.	Cathy Salas	Mon, 05/17/2009 - 12:00	Unknown	NOAA	Georgia Black Fishermen
Robert Thorpe	Reverend Robert Thorpe, one of the original members of the Harris Neck community explains fishing, crabbing, and oyster picking in McIntosh County, Georgia. He recounts the locations and ownership succession of oyster factories in the area. Thorpe's oral history describes how catch was sold in Harris Neck and surrounding communities to support his family; the roles of men and women working in oyster plants; and wintertime trapping as a way to supplement fishing income.	Jelvan Morris	Thu, 05/28/2014 - 12:00	Townsend, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
Anne Lee Thorpe	Mrs. Anne Lee Thorpe describes in great detail the role of the African American woman in the fishing and shrimping arena and how her deceased husband had a major impact as a fisherman in the Thunderbolt, Georgia community.	Dionne Hoskins	Wed, 08/18/2010 - 12:00	Thunderbolt, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
Olive Smith	Olive Smith is one of the original members of the Harris Neck community in McIntosh County Georgia. In her oral history, she explains how her mother provided food for the family by picking oysters at low tide during the winters and catching crabs. Olive's account is a brief glimpse of what life was like for the women of this fishing community.	Jelvan Morris	Tue, 05/12/2014 - 12:00	Townsend, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
Charles Murray	Mr. Charles Murray gives a detail account of growing up in a fishing family. He explains how his father was one of the first African-Americans to own his own vessel. While fishing was second nature to him he tells of the industry and commercial aspects of fishing.	Dionne Hoskins		Thunderbolt, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
Wilson Moran	Mr. Wilson Moran, historian and Harris Neck decedent describes environmental stewardship in the local oyster and crab fishery. He gives an account of changes in the fishery due to anthropogenic impacts including pollution and over harvesting. Mr. Moran concludes his oral history explaining his father's work as a commercial crab fisherman and how a working knowledge of the estuary contributed to success in the fishery.	Jelvan Morris	Tue, 05/19/2014 - 12:00	Townsend, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen
Ernest L. McIntosh Sr.	Ernest McIntosh Sr. and his four brothers were born into a crabbing family, surrounded by 2,700 acres of coastal saltwater wildlife refuge in Harris Neck, Georgia—30 miles south of Savannah, in McIntosh County. Although his brothers immediately pursued crabbing with their father, Ernest worked as a construction laborer until he was laid off in 1975. He returned to the waters of his childhood and began commercially harvesting blue crab on the five boats owned by his family. After seeing no long-term future in the crabbing industry from environmental and environmental changes, Mr.	Jelvan Morris	Tue, 04/10/2015 - 12:00	Townsend, GA	NOAA, Savannah State University	Georgia Black Fishermen

Gullah Geechee communities developed a form of mutual support with an economic and social core of subsistence fishing and farming (Brabec and Soto 2013). The cultural philosophy of community sharing persists today (Hoskins-Brown 2021)

# Culture and Resilience in Harris Neck

## Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- “So they had a season and worked within that environment and they preserved the...they helped preserve the environment. Now **everything had to work in connection with each other** for you to get the maximum benefits from the environment. **I don’t really think that they know that they were environmentalists, but they were good at it.**”



## Political, Social, and Cultural Practices

- Secondary impacts on environmental management
  - Independence
    - “No. I just like, **I just like the job. That’s all I ever done.** Why I don’t like your job because, I’m a tell you the truth, **I don’t like boss man.**”
  - Spirituality
    - “...**money have its place, but there is something much more important than that and that is God’s creation**; the things that God made. You know if we’re going to live here these things are essential...”

# Nature-based expressions and occupations for economic resilience

Gullah Geechee communities have persistently used...

# Jonathan Green

Many, many natural  
scenes and themes







Corey Alston Gullah Sweetgrass Baskets is in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

March 28 · 🌐

...

GULLAH GEECHEE HERITAGE CORRIDOR stands up!!! This is the newest and largest Sweetgrass Basket that will be at the Smithsonian's American Art Museum 🤗🤗!

I called this piece "From Traditional to Contemporary". He was commissioned by Artisan Carolyn Mazloomi. She said, "Corey I want you to make a piece that will honor the Gullah Culture for years to come", and this is what I came up with four months later. Gullah family, friends, and fans I hope this piece being in the Smithsonian on display representing our Culture, and puts a smile on many faces.

They'll be a large event at the American Art Museum and you're invited. Reserve your tickets. In-Person Exhibition Open House: This Present Moment Registration, Fri, May 13, 2022, at 10:30 AM | Eventbrite

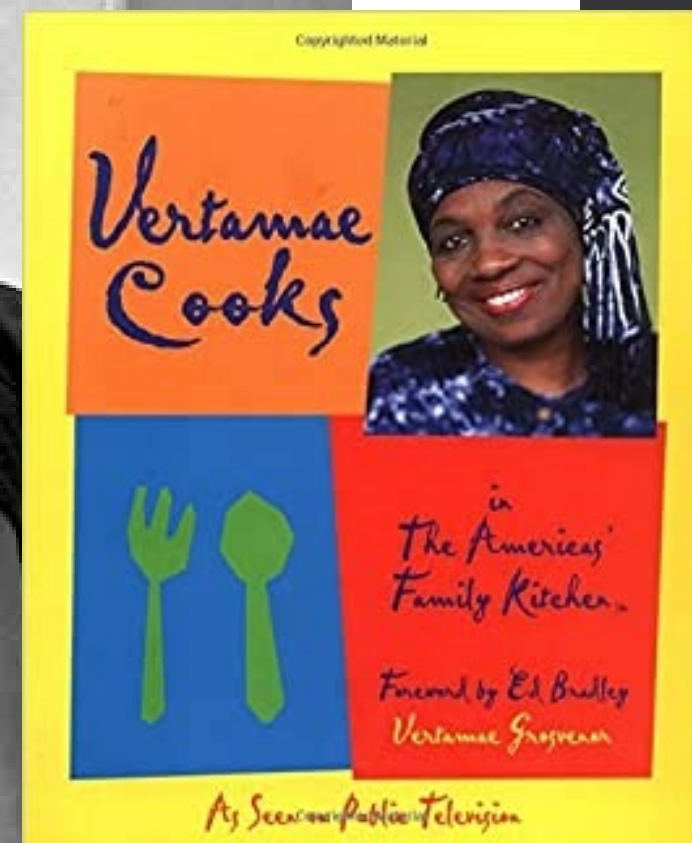
<https://www.eventbrite.com/.../in-person-exhibition-open...>

There are over 100 artists from all over America representing their skillset, culture, and crafts for the Renwick Gallery's 50th Anniversary celebration. The opening party for the exhibition This Present Moment: Crafting A Better World. You'll also get a chance to meet Master Quilter Carolyn Mazloomi in person. She loves the Gullah Culture so much instead of keeping this piece in the privacy of her home. She donated it to one of the largest museums in the world for everyone to see. Thanks again Mrs. Mazloomi for using me to represent our four-state cultural community.

#gullah #heritage #coreyalston #sweetgrassphotography #southern #culture #charleston #buylocal #GULLAHEXPERIENCE #gullahgeechee #exploreacharleston #artwork #charlestonmag #supportlocal #smithsonian #renwickgallery #sweetgrassbaskets #handmade #basket







"If you can't be free, be a mystery" – Rita Dove  
Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor at the Beat Hotel, Paris, circa 1950s

Gullah Home  
Cooking *the*  
Daufuskie way

smokin' Joe

Butter Beans,  
ol'Fuskie Fried

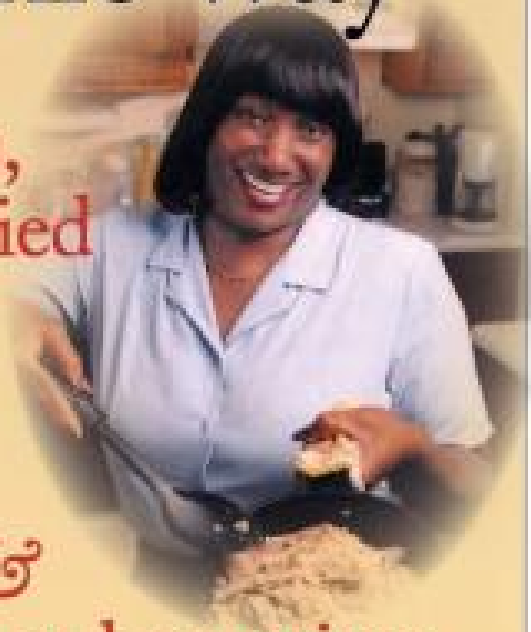
Crab Rice,  
Sticky-Bush

Blackberry  
Dumpling, &

Other Sea Island Favorites

SALLIE ANN ROBINSON

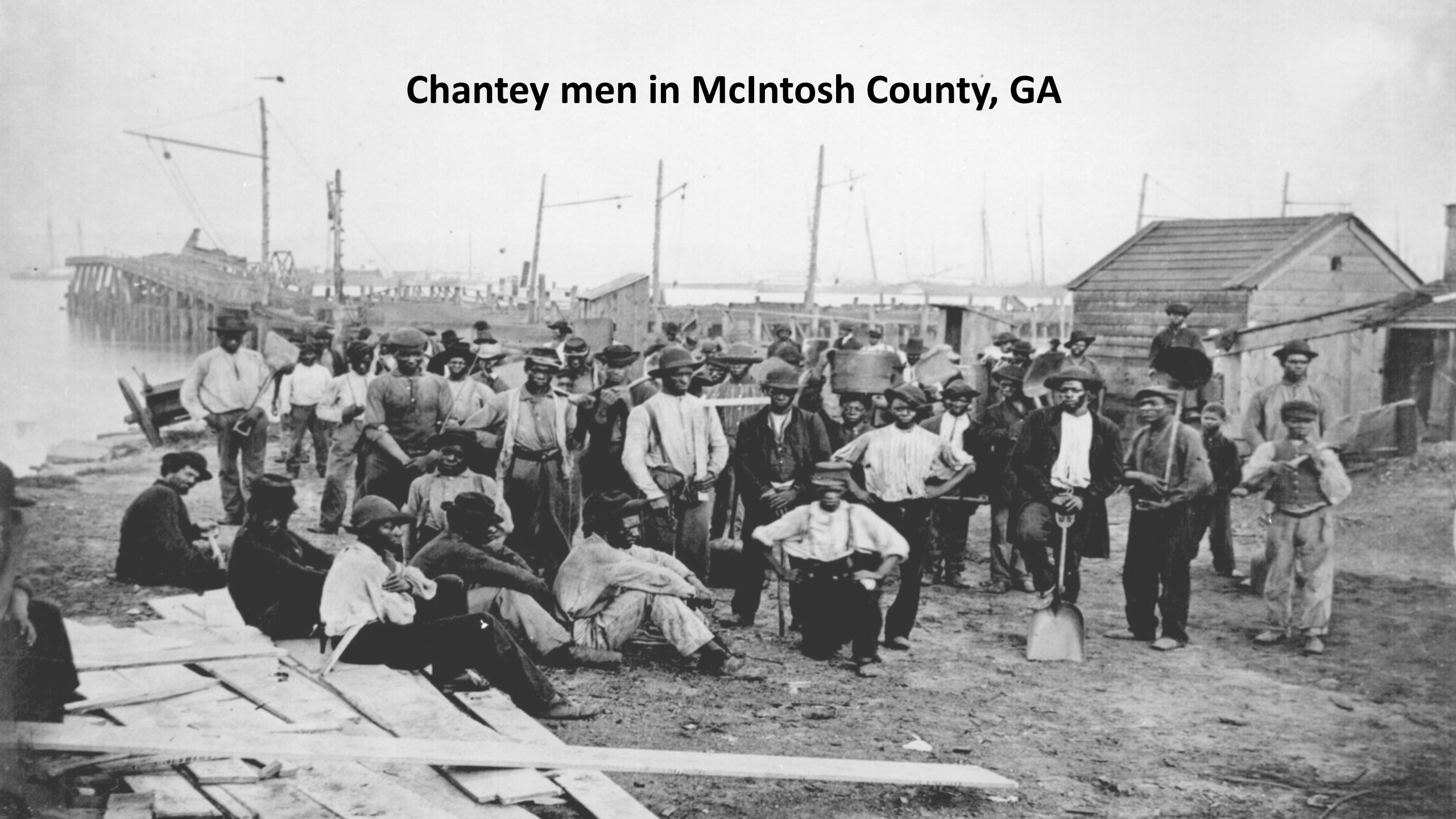
*foreword by Pat Conroy*

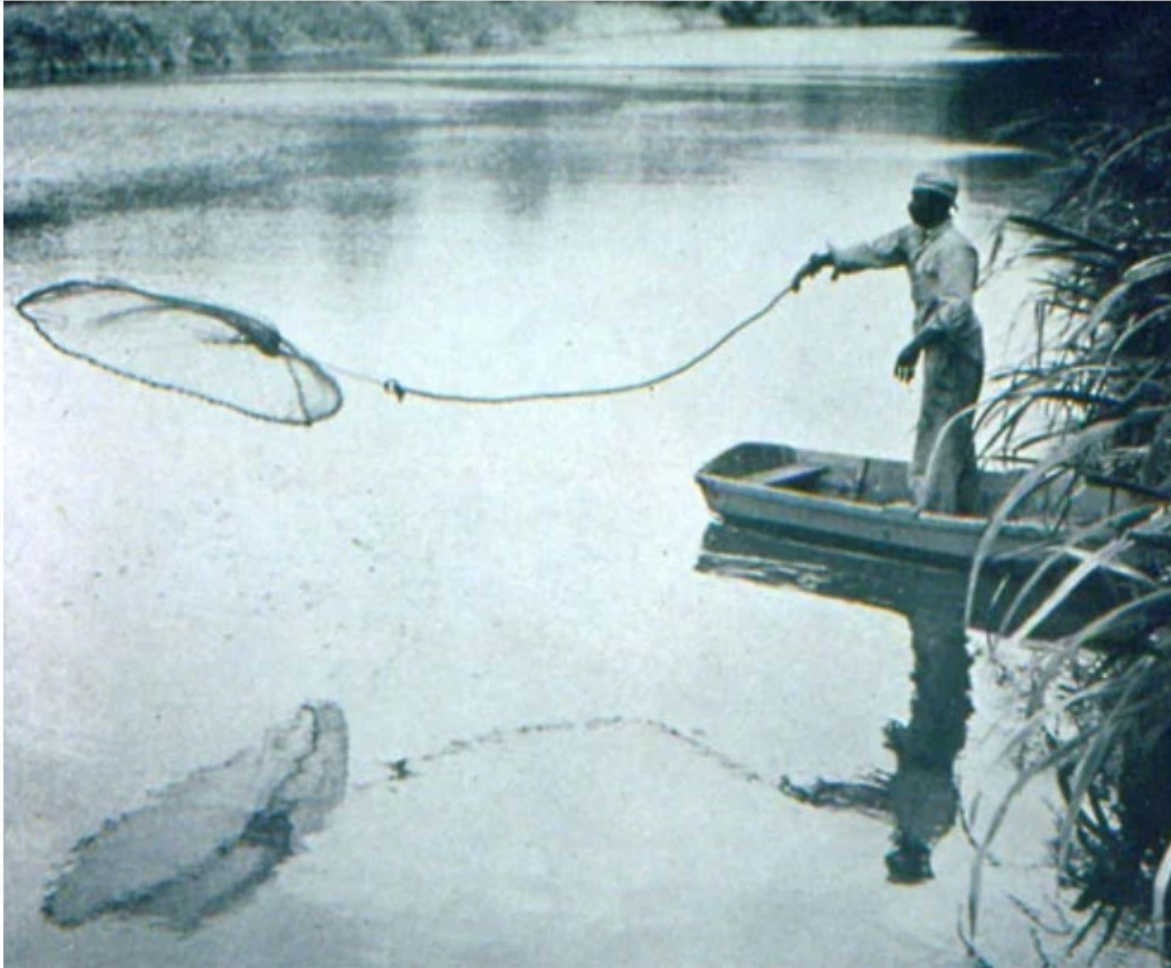


Others in her  
footsteps

Sally Ann Robinson,  
Daufuskie Island, SC

# Chantey men in McIntosh County, GA





*Fishing has been and continues to be an important aspect of Gullah culture, not only as a means to make a living and feed the family, but also as a community touchstone. Many times family reunions, fundraisers and community celebrations are pot luck fish fries or oyster roasts.*

<https://www.hiltonheadisland.org/gullah/culture/>

# GARDEN@GUN



LAND & CONSERVATION

## Hope on the Half Shell

Caretakers of a generations-old seafood business in the historic Georgia community of Harris Neck, a father and son look toward the promise of modern oyster farming to preserve a legacy—and a way of life—inextricably tied to the water

by ANDRÉ GALLANT

December 2018/January 2019



L-R: Earnest McIntosh Jr., Najay White, and Earnest McIntosh Sr. of E.L McIntosh

**Earnest McIntosh of Harris Neck, Georgia, wins the 2021 Ruth Fertel Keeper of the Flame Award from the Southern Foodways Alliance**

# BLACK, WHITE, AND *The* GREY

THE STORY OF AN UNEXPECTED  
FRIENDSHIP AND A BELOVED RESTAURANT



MASHAMA BAILEY AND  
JOHN O. MORISANO





Traveler interest is worth \$34B to our region.



## 2020 Report Market for Gullah Geechee Heritage Tourism

Gullah Geechee Cultural  
Heritage Corridor NHA

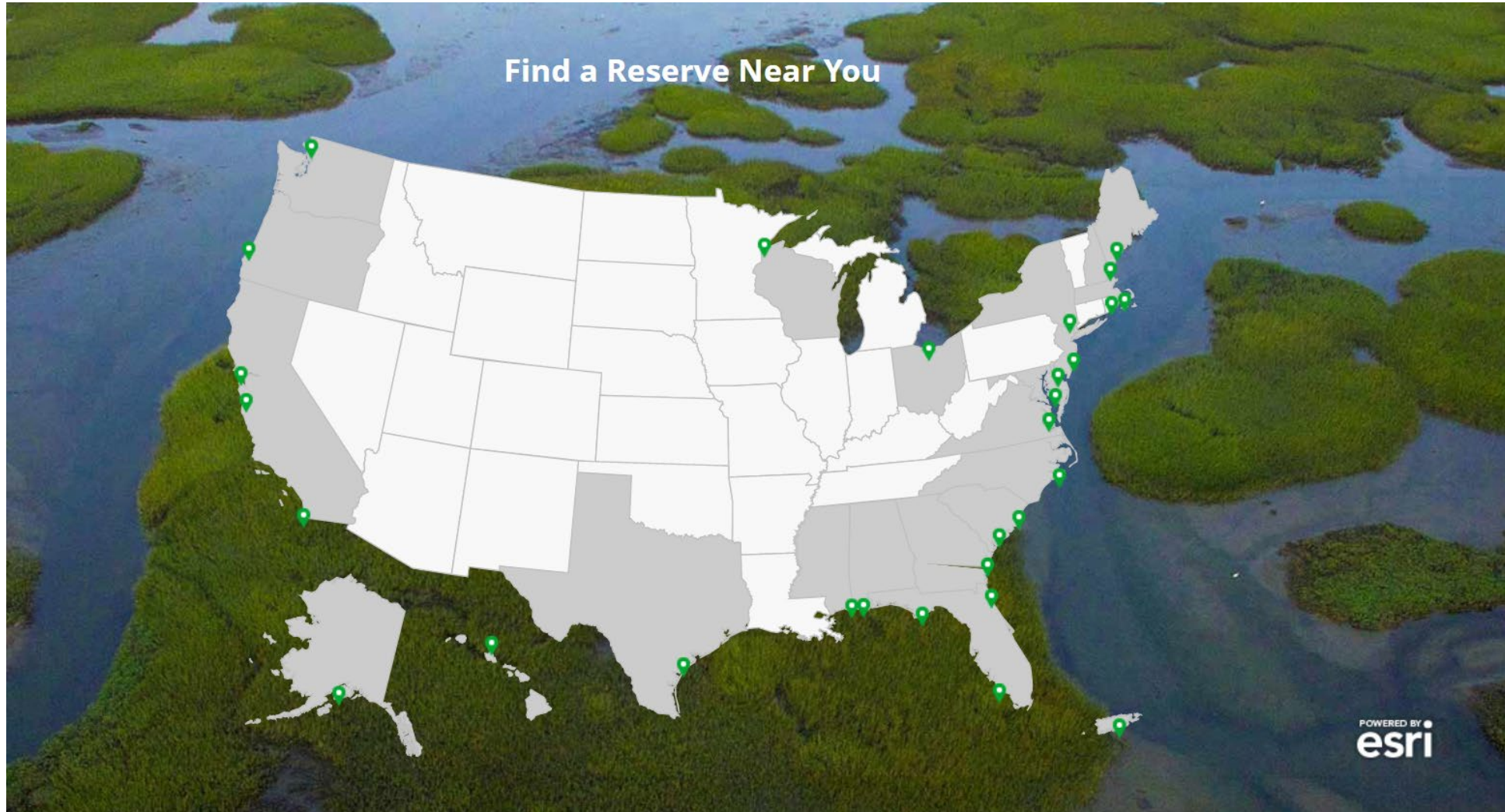
Let's frame the  
geography of the  
nature we want to  
preserve



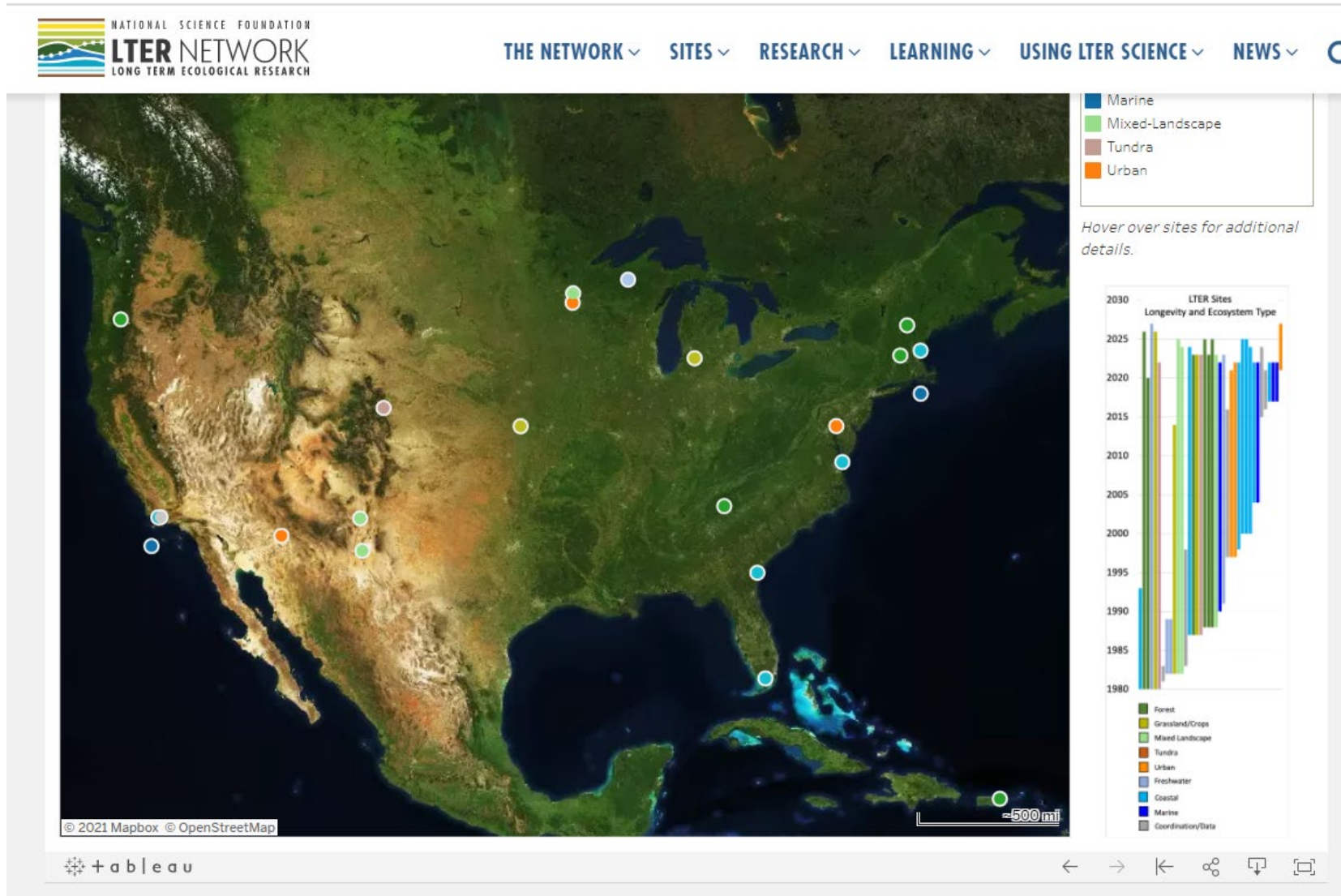
Office for Coastal Management  
**NATIONAL ESTUARINE  
RESEARCH RESERVES**



**NATIONAL  
ESTUARINE  
RESEARCH  
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SYSTEM**



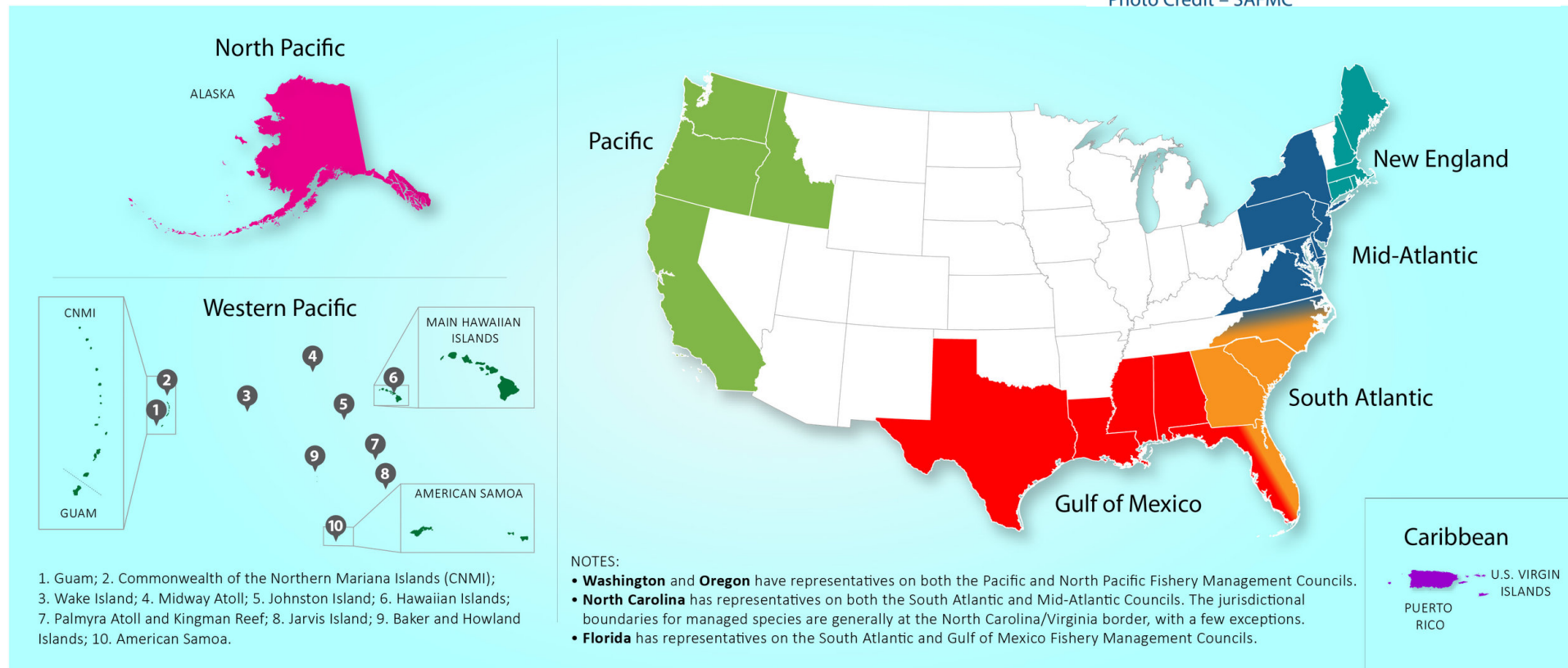
# History of the NSF LTER Network (1977-present)



# Fishery Management Councils



Photo Credit – SAFMC



What if we took everything we know and prioritize and **ADDED** the layer of working in the Gullah Geechee Corridor NHA?

Coastal ecology, resilience and cultural preservation with Gullah Geechee People and allies at the table?



## Gullah Geechee Corridor (A DoI NPS National Heritage Area)

**In 2007 SC Senator Jim Clyburn sponsored the legislation that was passed by Congress to established the Gullah Geechee Corridor**  
(Reauthorized in 2016, reintroduced this year)

- Gullah Geechee; Black Americans descended from West and Central Africans enslaved on southeast U.S. sea islands (place-based)
- Geechee- GA; Gullah-SC
- Pender County, NC to St. Augustine, FL
- 30 miles inland (Sherman's Field Order No. 15)

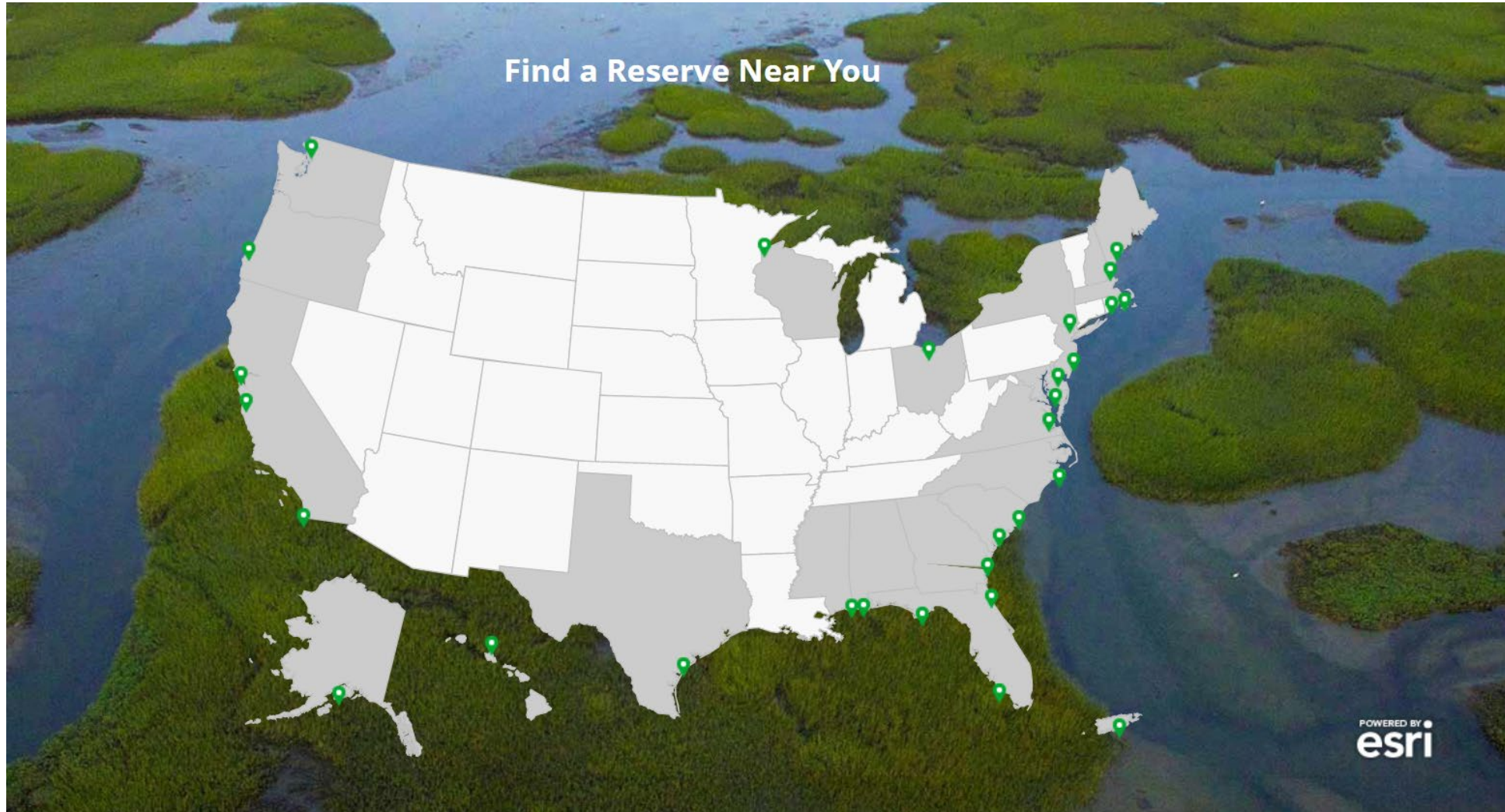




Office for Coastal Management  
**NATIONAL ESTUARINE  
RESEARCH RESERVES**



**NATIONAL  
ESTUARINE  
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RESERVE  
SYSTEM**







## The Harris Neck Fishing Community

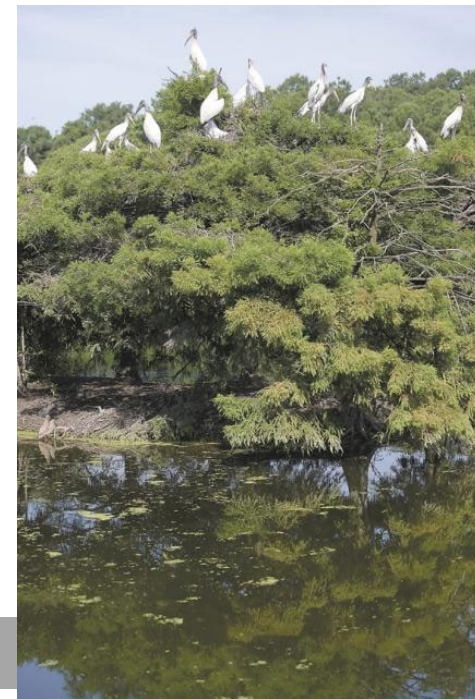


German U-boats sank two U.S. tankers near Brunswick, GA. In July 1942, 2,687 acres of meadows, woodlands and marsh was condemned and taken from 75 African American families by the federal government via eminent domain for the creation of a later abandoned airfield. No land was returned.



**“We were a little taken aback that the stork was lifted up and folks who lived here were ignored,” Williams said. “That’s amazing how we’ve celebrated this stork when human beings were left out of the equation.”**

Georgia state Rep. Al Williams, D-Midway, whose grandfather once preached in the Harris Neck community



## Working toward solutions:

- Work in and with communities at multiple levels (grass roots, business, academic)
- Use existing infrastructure
- Foster inclusion and innovation

“Support living shorelines to protect the Gullah/Geechee Nation’s coasts from local instances of coastal acidification, nutrient pollution, coastal erosion, storm surge impacts, and hurricanes e.g.

Promote and continue seagrass conservation and restoration.

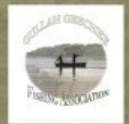
Promote and continue oyster reef conservation and restoration; continue participating in shell recycling programs.”



**COASTAL CULTURES CONFERENCE 2015**  
De Wata and We: Gullah/Geechee Sustainability

The Coastal Cultures Conference at the Hunting Island Nature Center will focus on the sustainability of Sea Island waterways and the Gullah/Geechee waterway traditions. Sessions will include seafood safety and human health, Gullah/Geechee traditional fishing methods and environmental impacts, oysters as a keystone of the environment, and spirituality, creativity, and the sea. The day will include a Gullah/Geechee fish fry and oyster reef restoration activities. Cum fa jayn we and yeddi bout de wata and we!

March 14, 2015



Sponsored by the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition, the Gullah/Geechee Angel Network, the Gullah/Geechee Sustainability Think Tank, The Nature Conservancy, and South Carolina Sea Grant.

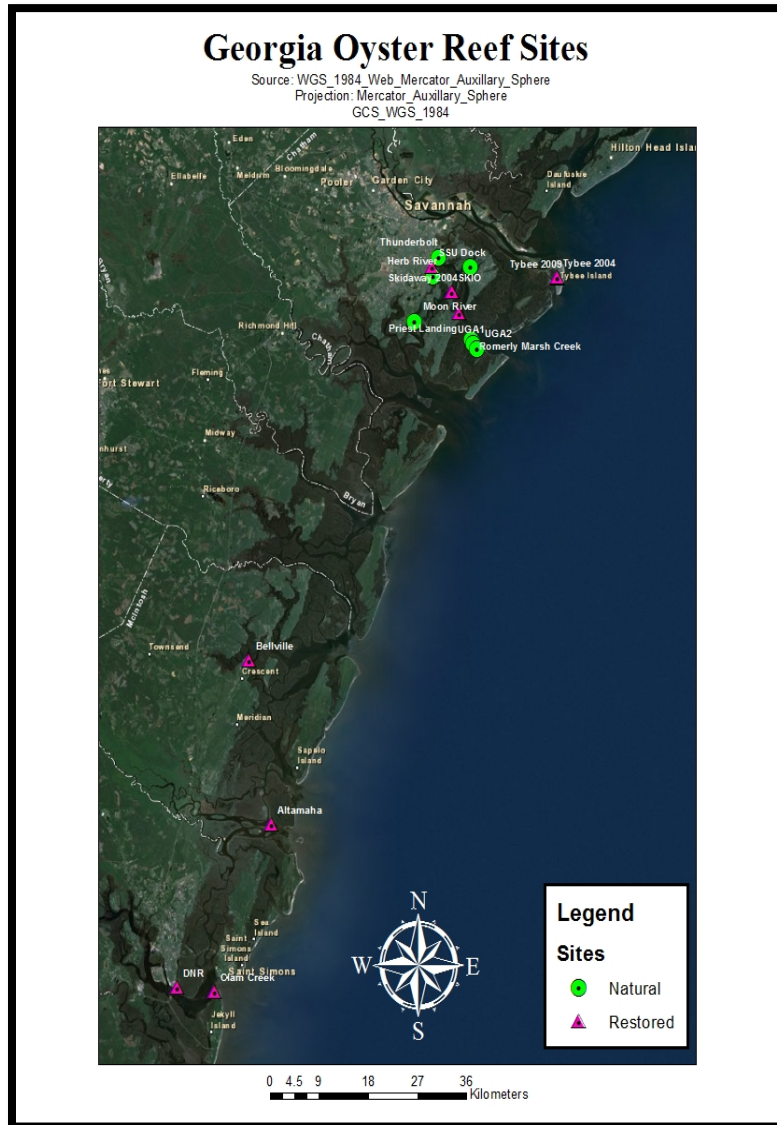
[www.gullahgeeeenation.com](http://www.gullahgeeeenation.com) • (843) 838-1171 • [GullGeeCo@aol.com](mailto:GullGeeCo@aol.com)

# Gullah/Geechee Nation Ocean Action Plan, 2019

# Pursue HBCU Partners: Savannah State University

## Oyster Reef Monitoring and Restoration Goals:

- Evaluate the physical and biological parameters of natural and NOAA OHC-restored intertidal oyster reefs in coastal Georgia using quick and inexpensive methods (TT, MO) and sUAS (SM)
- Compare the use of biodegradable Oystercatcher™ hardscape for oyster reef habitat (CA, MK)



Tiffany Taubenheim



Matthew Ogburn



Shaneese Mackey



Cameron Atkinson



Matthew Kenworthy

# Work with and within Gullah Geechee communities

## Marsh Grass Planting with SCDNR SCORE

### Schedule

Wed Jul 21 2021 at 10:00 am to  
02:00 pm

### Location

Maryville | Charleston, SC



## Leverage Programs

### Land Use and Environmental Education (LUEE) Program

To combat the threat of rapid commercial development and land loss along the Gullah Geechee coastal communities, the Penn Center's leadership led to the institutionalization of one very important component of community sustainability—land ownership and retention.

In 1972, Penn established the Land Use and Environmental Education (LUEE) Program to assist native islanders with issues of land retention and stewardship through education and legal services. As a result, the Center negotiated a unique landmark proviso with Beaufort County to institute an heir's property exemption to preserve tens of thousands of acres of black-owned land. Penn also led the effort in land-use planning by working with County officials and environmentalists to carve out zoning laws to protect and preserve valuable cultural and environmental assets on St. Helena Island and other parts of the county.

More recently, under its environmental stewardship program, the Penn Center has placed more than 250 acres of its 500 acres in a conservation easement with the Lowcountry Open Land Trust. In 1974, the Penn Center became a National Historic Landmark District.

For more information about the LUEE program, please send us an email at [info@penncenter.com](mailto:info@penncenter.com). To expedite processing, please include "LUEE" or "Land Use and Environmental Education Program" in the subject line.

<https://www.penncenter.com/programs-and-resources>



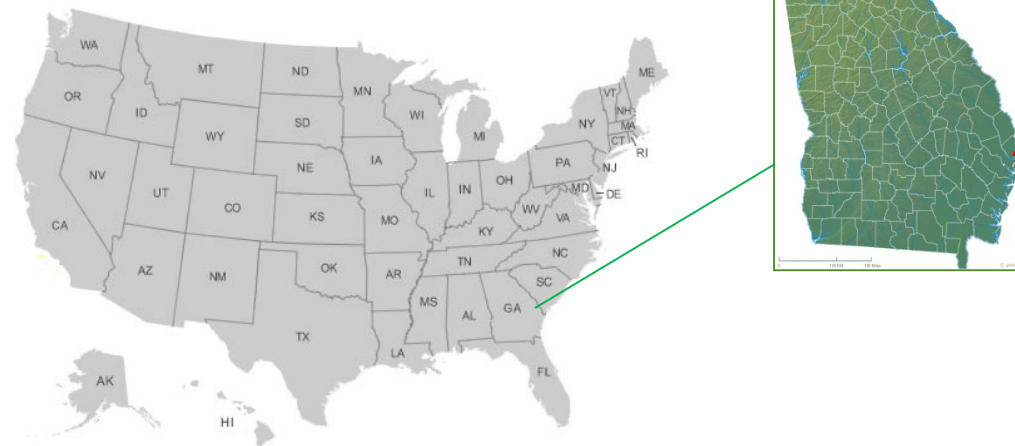
Well-known Saltwater Geechee activist Maurice Bailey, a Board Member of the Sapelo Island Cultural And Revitalization Society (SICARS), left, accepted a check representing \$20,895.54 earmarked for 15 property tax payments for Geechee residents Presenting the check are PAFEN Founder & CEO Theresa White, center, and PAFEN Executive Vice Chair Stephen A. McHayle, right.

# THE CHATHAM COUNTY RESOURCE PROTECTION COMMISSION: A MODEL OF INNOVATION IN LAND CONSERVATION

**Established by the**  
County Commission in April 2008, the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission (CCRPC) was created to preserve the natural, historic, cultural, and aesthetic heritage of Chatham County, Georgia.



Whitemarsh Island Preserve



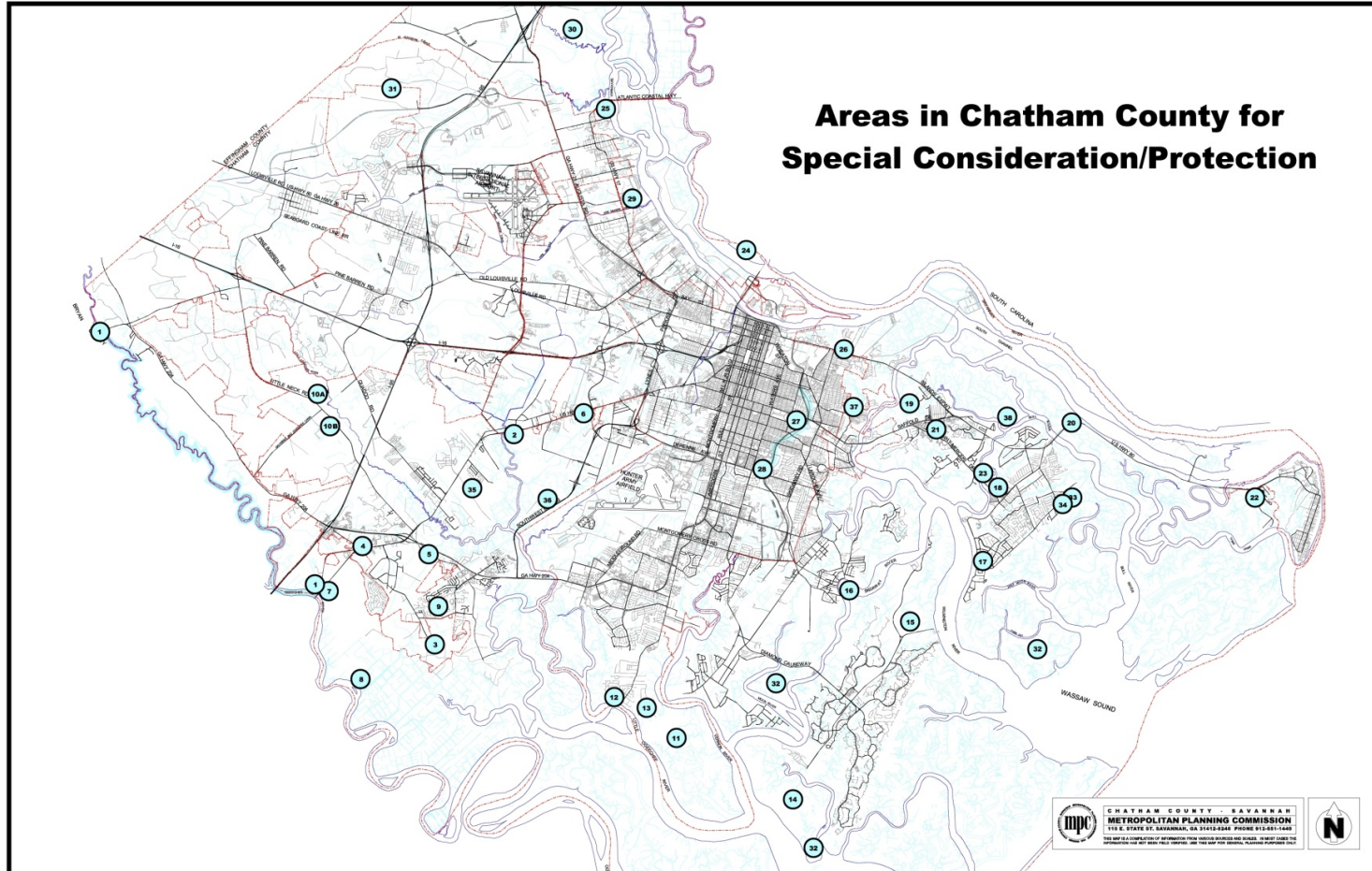
the most populous  
and highly developed  
coastal county

Funding (~\$5million) Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)



# Community-Based Resource Protection Committee

Chatham County Natural Resources Protection Committee used the county open space inventory to create a list of over 100 environmentally sensitive sites recommended for protection in 2006

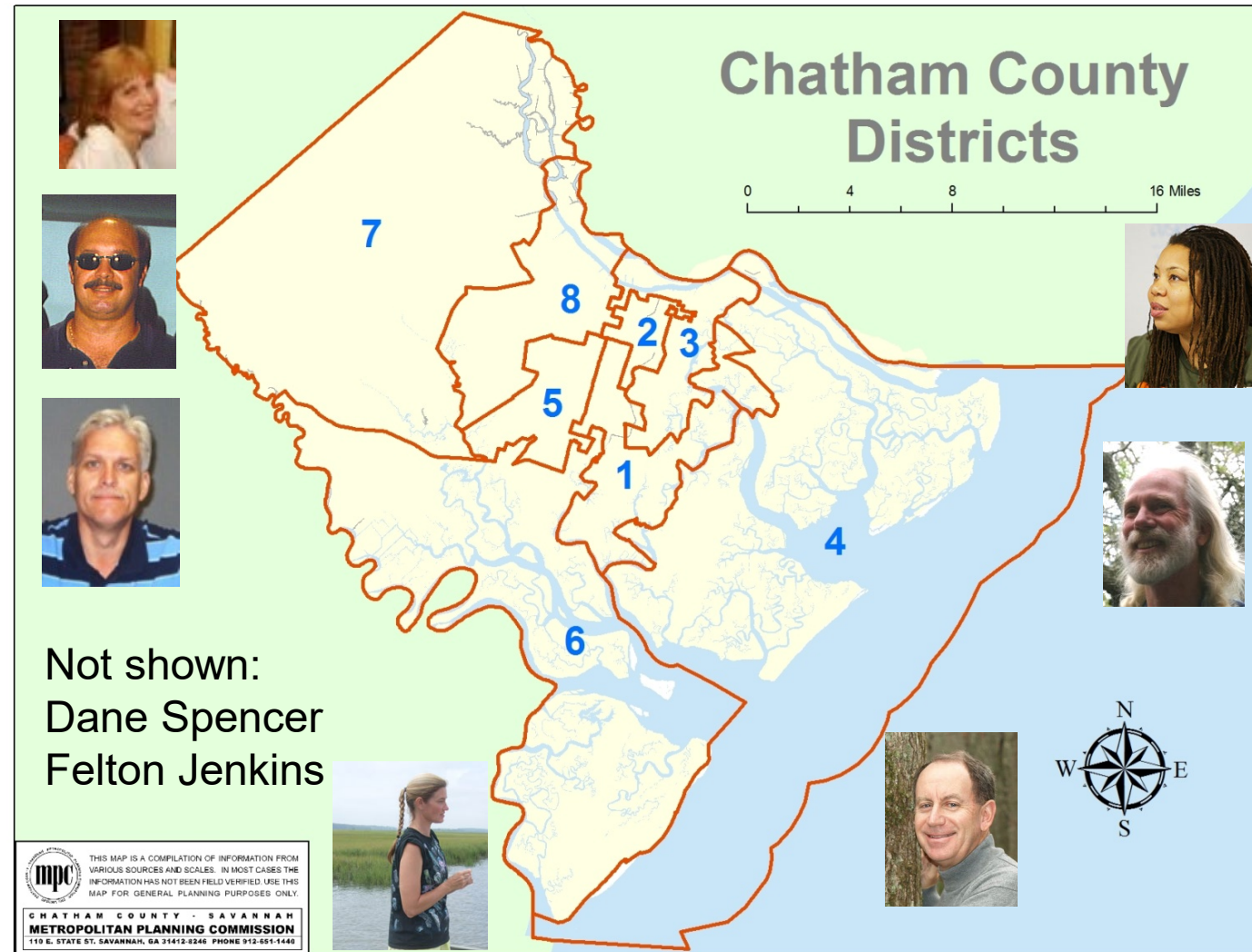


Innovation

public involvement in decisions

Began vetting and acquiring 100 properties from the watch list.

To ensure that all areas are equally represented, each County Commissioner appointed someone from within their district to serve on the CCRPC.



# Essential Components

- Stakeholder involvement (early, diverse, long term)
- Committed source of funds
- Based in MPC, a joint city-county agency that serves as the principal planning agency for Chatham County and the City of Savannah
- Supportive leadership
- Partnerships (landowners, army base, GA Land trust)



Asst. County Manager, Pat Monahan, flanked by County Manager Russ Abolt (left) and Chatham County Commission Chairman Pete Liakakis (right).

# Approach: Stakeholder-Based Technical Advisory Board



Innovation

- Is a 35 member recommending body
- Each representative has equal voting rights
- Develops policies, evaluates identified sites, manages sites, and engage the public
- Provides the expertise to commission
- Includes many previous committee members (historical memory)

## **Membership:**

Local Government Agencies

State Agencies (e.g. Georgia Dept of Natural Resources)

Federal Agencies (e.g. US Fish and Wildlife Service)

Home Builders Association

Environmental and Historic Non-profits

Neighborhood Associations

General public

# Approach: Science-Driven

- 1) Site evaluation team of environmental professionals (ecologist, naturalist and archaeologist)
- 2) Use the best available ecological information and on-the ground assessments to evaluate property (ex., DNR native and rare species lists & rare habitat criteria).

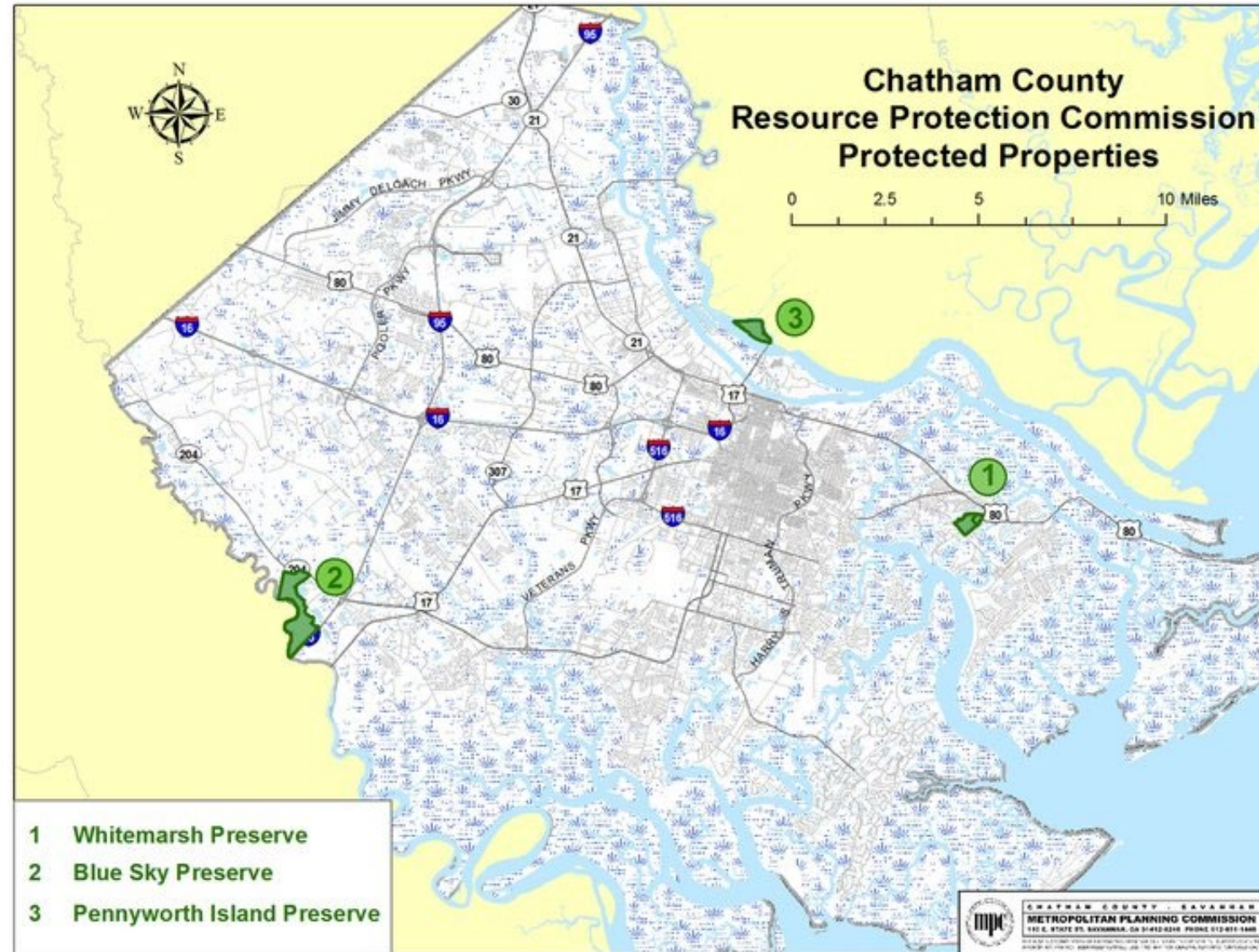
# Establishing Procedure

- Created a Site Ranking Manual with ranking criteria:
  - environmental value
  - historical/cultural value
  - public use
  - opportunity for protection
- Created a science-based site evaluation procedure with 14 sub-criteria for point scoring based on
  - land conservation programs throughout the U.S.
  - GIS assessment of county needs
- Acquisition
  - Purchase
  - Conservation easement
  - Purchase development rights
  - any other option we can think of



Flexibility

In two years, 3.925 km<sup>2</sup> of natural coastal areas were protected.



# CCRPC Partnerships

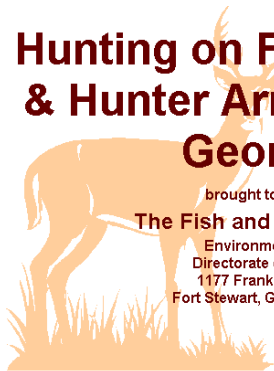
## Local landowners

Chatham County and the City of Savannah's FEMA Community Rating System (CRS)



helped earn Chatham County and Savannah more points and **lower the flood insurance premiums**

## Hunting on Fort Stewart & Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia



brought to you by:  
The Fish and Wildlife Branch  
Environmental Division  
Directorate of Public Works  
1177 Frank Cochran Drive  
Fort Stewart, Georgia 31314-4940



**contributed to Fort Stewart's Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program** because LORCC properties are in the ACUB zone.



Helped us **strategize** conservation options



# Success #1 Whitemarsh Island Preserve

purchased in 2000 \$5,556,560, with \$2.2 million leveraged from the State's Greenspace Program

Contains 3 priority habitats:

- maritime forest
- forested depressional wetlands
- brackish tidal marsh



# Provides

- habitat for rare species like the Painted Bunting
- the ideal breeding ground for amphibians
- the filtering capacity to protect downstream rivers from residential run-off

Innovation

- Public access for passive recreation



# Success #2: Blue Sky Property

purchased in 2008 for \$1.5 million

- Located on the freshwater Ogeechee River
- 650 acres of bottomland hardwood forest



# Success # 3 Pennyworth Island

purchased in 2009 for \$199,000

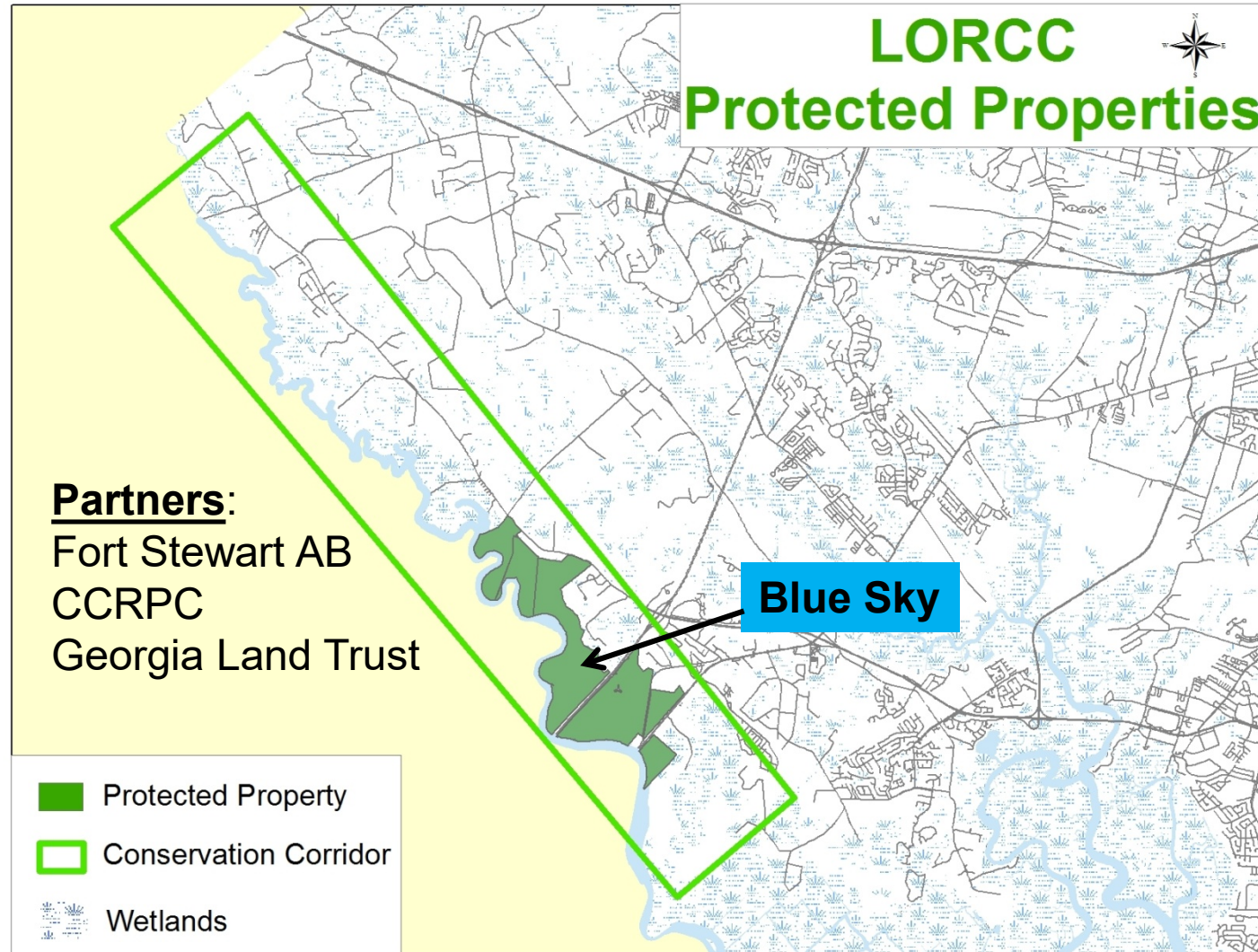
178 acre former rice plantation (1800's)

169 acres of brackish tidal marsh



# Larger Outcomes

Lower Ogeechee River Corridor (LORCC) conservation area.



Over 1,675 acres protected; offer pending on 530 additional acres

# Recognition

**The 2010 Conserve Georgia Award for Land Conservation**, a statewide conservation outreach campaign initiated by Governor Sonny Perdue

received Georgia Planning Association's (GPA) **Outstanding Initiative for a Large Community Award** during the GPA Fall 2009 Conference.





# What We Learned

1. Involve diverse public participation early and as much as possible  
benefits: support, information, stewardship
2. Have a committed source of funds
3. Establish a science-based process to follow to ensure that you are giving each property a fair and unbiased review
4. Be flexible and creative
5. Look for partnerships everywhere

# Leverage Infrastructure

## GGCHC Management Plan (2012)

### *Commissioners*

#### **South Carolina**

Herb Frazier  
Dawn Dawson-House  
Veronica Hemmingway

#### **Georgia**

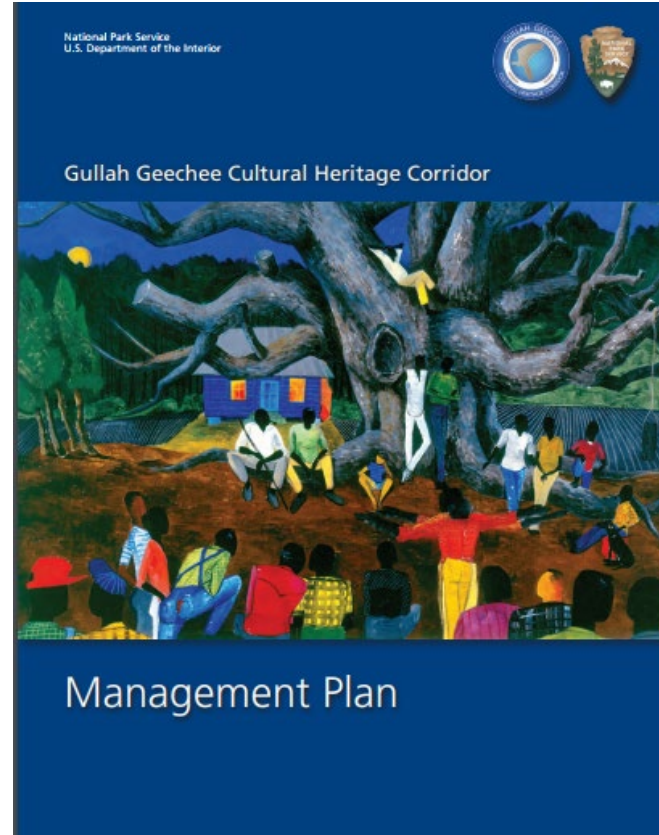
Dionne Hoskins-Brown, Ph.D.  
Griffin Lotson  
Josiah Watts

#### **North Carolina**

Sean Palmer  
Michelle Lanier  
James R. Fullwood

#### **Florida**

Meredith Hardy, Ph.D.  
Floyd Phillips  
Eugene Emory, Ph.D.



**Natural Resources:** water quality, wetlands, vegetation, wildlife, climate change

“Potential impacts from sea-level rise include coastal erosion, storm-surge flooding, coastal inundation, saltwater infiltration, loss of coastal properties and habitats, declines in soil and freshwater quality, loss of transportation routes, and the potential loss of life.”



# GGCHCC Ad Hoc Committee on Natural Resources and Climate Change

A committee of descendants and allies tasked with identifying Corridor priorities



Tia Clark



Ennis Davis



Sue Ebanks, Ph. D.



Hermina Glass-Hill



Albert George



Bria Graham



Commissioner Meredith  
Hardy, Ph. D.



Marilyn Hemmingway



Patrick Holladay, Ph. D.



Phil Odom



Roger Shew



Mayor Eulis Willis

# ON THE WATER



# Heritage Tourism is Big Business

