

# In the REGION

April 2017

Valdosta

(229) 333-5277

Waycross

(912) 285-6097

A publication of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission

A leader in the development of local and regional programs since 1963.

## April is Fair Housing Month

*Community and Economic Development: Kimberly Hobbs*

Every April, we come together as a community and a nation to celebrate the anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act and recommit to that goal which inspired us in the aftermath of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination in 1968: To eliminate housing discrimination and create equal opportunity in every community. The Fair Housing Act (FHA) became law in April 1968, as Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, a landmark piece of legislation. President Johnson signed the FHA into law on April 11, one week after the assassination of civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr., who fought for equality in housing.

### What Does Fair Housing Mean?

Fair housing means all people have equal access to the housing of their choice that they can afford. Fair housing laws ensure this equal access. The Federal Fair Housing Act (FHA) mandate that people have equal housing opportunities and not be subjected to discrimination in housing based on certain protected categories, including race, color, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability, sex, or for having children in their household.

### When Do Fair Housing Laws Apply?

Fair housing laws apply to the sale, rental, or financing of nearly all forms of residences. Anyone who has control over residential property or real estate financing must obey state and federal fair housing laws, including landlords, rental managers, property owners, real estate agents, bankers, developers, builders, and certain individual homeowners who are selling or renting property.

The Community and Economic Development Division of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission has a strong commitment to fair housing, as it is an integral part of building strong, vibrant communities.

Visit the Fair Housing Resource Center at <https://fairhousingresourcecenter.wordpress.com> for more information on how we can all participate to ensure non-discrimination in housing activities.



# The 2020 Census Begins NOW?

*Information Technology Systems: Chris Strom*



It seems like just yesterday it was 2010 and local governments were eager to see their new census data. Before long, it will be 2020 and the entire nation will get a new look at their painstakingly-gathered totals for households, population, and every combination of data you can imagine. So why are we talking about the Census now? Because the effort to ensure your community receives an accurate count begins in 2017.

A decennial Census is not a small undertaking and there is a lot of preparatory work. Leading up to the actual Census there are a number of steps and programs that must be completed before a count can even begin. One VERY important program leading up to 2020 is the Local Update of Census Addresses or "LUCA" program. LUCA is a decennial census geographic partnership program that allows local governments to review and update the Census Bureau's Address List that is used to deliver questionnaires for the decennial census. This is an important program for our regional governments to participate in as the accuracy and completeness of the address list is critical to an accurate census count. Therefore, **governments that participate in the LUCA Program help ensure an accurate decennial census for their communities.** An accurate count impacts everything from the apportionment of House of Representatives seats to your community's eligibility for grants.

So how do you participate in this very important program leading up to the 2020 Census? **The first step is to make a decision to participate in LUCA.**

As you may imagine, compiling an all-inclusive address list for your community can be a challenge and we can use GIS to aggregate local address lists from many sources, clean-up the results, identify changes since 2010 and produce a map/list for your community to review before this new address list is provided to the Census Bureau. SGRC has assisted communities prepare their address lists in the last two decennial censuses and our familiarity with the process, technology and sources can make your LUCA participation much easier.

Once you have decided to participate in LUCA, your next step is easy. In the coming months, **your community will receive a form from the U.S. Census Bureau** asking you to complete your LUCA Liaison contact information and return it to them. **For SGRC to assist your community in any official capacity, we must be designated as your LUCA Liaison on this form.**

If you have any questions, please contact our GIS Director, Rachel Strom [rstrom@sgrc.us](mailto:rstrom@sgrc.us) or Assistant Executive Director, Chris Strom [cstrom@sgrc.us](mailto:cstrom@sgrc.us).



## **SGRC Provides Assistance to Local Governments for Comprehensive Plans**

*Local Government Services: Sherry Davidson*

Every year staff of the SGRC provides technical assistance to local governments for the preparation of their Comprehensive Plan updates. Staff help to ensure the updates meet the planning standards and requirements of DCA.

Currently SGRC staff is assisting Brooks County and the Cities of Barwick, Morven, Pavo and Quitman; Bacon County and the City of Alma; and Pierce County and the Cities of Blackshear and Patterson with the preparation and submission of their Comprehensive Plans.

### **Brooks County & Cities of Barwick, Morven, Pavo and Quitman**

Staff have completed all workshops and have transmitted the completed draft plan to DCA for review.

### **Bacon County & City of Alma**

The next workshop for Bacon County is scheduled for April 13, 2017. Discussion will revolve around current policies and implementing goals.

### **Pierce County & Cities of Blackshear and Patterson**

All workshops have been completed. A transmittal public hearing is scheduled for May 8, 2017

### **Atkinson County**

Atkinson County's Comprehensive Plan will be kicked off in July. SGRC staff are in the process of preparing the workbook needed to conduct all the workshops.

Staff of the RC are also working on the preliminary information and documents to kick-off the update of the Regional Comprehensive Plan. Staff are also working with DCA to update the Regional Comprehensive Planning rules and guidelines. Those are projected to be approved mid-May and will be going into effect July 1, 2017. Southern Georgia's Regional Comprehensive Plan update will be the first one to be completed under the new rules. It is anticipated that the first public hearing and kick-off will be conducted at the June or July Board meeting. The three workshops to update the Regional Plan Agenda are expected to be held in August (Waycross), September (Douglas), and October (Valdosta). The Commission is serving as the executive steering committee, so stay tuned for future announcements on dates, times and locations of these workshops.

Further technical assistance is also provided by the Local Government Outreach program to Ware County, Pierce County, Brooks County, Irwin County and Turner County with the completion of their Hazard Mitigation Plans.

For further information on any of the above projects, or if you have any questions, please contact Sherry Davidson, Local Government Services Program Manager at 229-333-5277.



# Ocmulgee Water Trail Annual Half Moon Paddle

*Transportation and Environment: Corey Hull*

Over the past 20 years the Georgia River Network has been hard at work to design, implement, and promote water trails on many of the pristine rivers that flow throughout the state. Water trails, which are becoming more popular as people participate in local grassroots paddle trips, have shown to be an economic and public health resource with positive impacts for all citizens within a community. The Georgia River Network has helped to promote the construction of these water trails which usually includes trail maps as well as suitable landings for loading and unloading of man powered vessels. The Georgia River Network serves as the voice of Georgia's rivers and works to empower everyone to enjoy, connect with, and advocate for economically vital and clean flowing rivers. They connect citizens to Georgia's rivers by providing fun, meaningful and educational water adventures. This is often where responsible river stewardship begins.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission is encouraged to form partnerships between water trail organizations and public agencies to develop implementation projects and apply for grants. These grants are implemented to assist with trail upkeep, reduce pollution, and promote stewardship of Georgia streams. The Ocmulgee River Water Trail Partnership (OWTP) is a conservation and stewardship group that is located in the Ocmulgee River watershed which encompasses the area south of Macon Georgia to the confluence of the Altamaha River. The OWTP is a registered water trail group with the Georgia River Network.

The OWTP believes that community water trails can reconnect people with their local waterways and that recreation can lead to conservation on our rivers, keeping our drinking water clean and protecting wildlife. The Ocmulgee River Water Trail Partnership is conducting their annual Half Moon paddle trip down the Ocmulgee River on **May 6<sup>th</sup> 2017**. This trip will be from the Dodge County Landing down to Half Moon Landing in Abbeville Georgia. This is about an eight mile trip that showcases the natural beauty of the Ocmulgee River. People of all ages are encouraged to come and participate in the paddle and receive a t-shirt and lunch with price of admission.

All proceeds go towards future paddle trips and operating cost for the OWTP. For more information on the Half Moon paddle trip or information on other water trails throughout the region please contact Charles Nimmo ext-145 or Corey Hull ext-116 at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Valdosta office.

Registration forms are available online at [www.ocmulgeewatertrail.com/events](http://www.ocmulgeewatertrail.com/events).

<p><i>2nd Annual Ocmulgee Water Trail Paddle</i></p> <p><b>HALF MOON PADDLE</b></p> <p><b>May 6, 2017</b></p>	
	<p><b>Dodge County Landing (Eastman) to Half Moon Landing (Abbeville)</b></p>
<p><b>Early Registration \$35</b> After April 15th \$40 <i>includes t-shirt and lunch</i></p>	
<p><b>On-site Registration: Dodge County Landing near Eastman - 8:30 AM</b> <b>Shuttle Departs Dodge Co. Landing to Take-Out at 9:00 AM</b></p>	

## Lake Park Cemetery Mapping

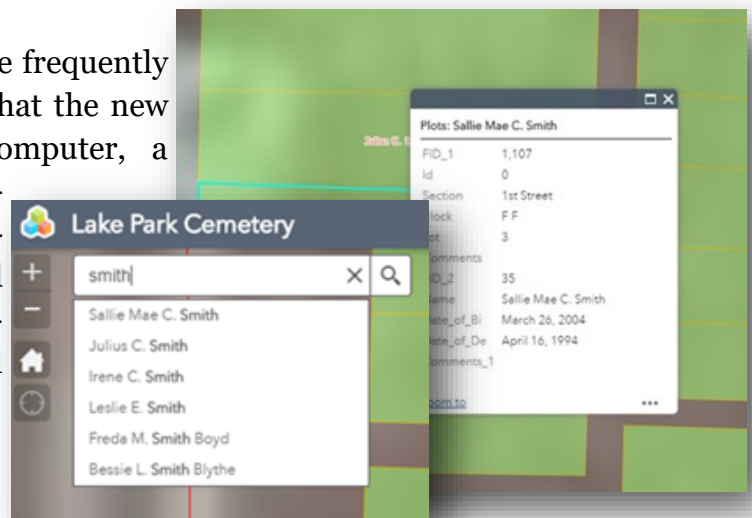
*Geographic Information System: Rachel Strom*

GIS has long been recognized for helping to make better decisions, but it's also a tool for the preservation of location information that will be prized by generations to come.

SGRC GIS has created various solutions for cemeteries of multiple sizes over the years. In March of 2017, SGRC GIS delivered a **web-based cemetery map and database** to the **City of Lake Park** that serves as one of those reminders that the work we do makes a positive difference to so many people. Owner, occupant, and dates are stored in a database linked to the lot location on a GIS map. This information will aide in Cemetery management, provide a resource to cemetery visitors, and assist those researching genealogy!

In today's world, mobile devices are used more frequently than the traditional PC, so it was important that the new site be accessible on a traditional PC computer, a smartphone or tablet. The site works with multiple operating systems (iOs, Android, Windows) and does not require that you download an App. Information can now be easily accessed by cemetery staff, or even the general public via an interactive website at:

<http://www.sgrcmaps.com/LakeParkCem/>



## SGRC Loan Department Spring Update

*Loan Services: Michelle Frey*



The Loan Department staff has had a very busy month! All of our staff members attended a Regional EDA Training and Conference in Atlanta on March 7-8, 2017. RLF lending was discussed and brainstorming sessions were held on making better RLF Loans and how to grow your program's portfolio. Loan Program Director, Michelle Frey, was asked to lead one of the sessions on credit analysis.

Staff member Rex Dorsey attended NADCO's Spring Training and Board Meeting in Savannah on March 27-30, 2017. He completed and graduated from the NADCO "Credit Risk Institute", a week long crash course in credit analysis. The class focused on equipping lenders with the tools they need for a complete analysis of a borrower's application and financials, specifically as it relates to certain qualifications of an SBA loan program.



## **The SGRC Brings DEEP-Diabetes Empowerment Education Program to Southern Georgia**

*Area Agency on Aging: Wanda Taft*

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging has helped bring another evidence based wellness program to seniors throughout the Southern Georgia Region. Developed by the Midwest Latino Health Research Training Center at the University of Illinois Chicago, the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP) was launched by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as a response indicating that some communities are disparately impacted by diabetes but do not receive a corresponding share of the diabetes treatment and education.

Alliant Quality, the Quality Improvement Organization for Georgia, contracted with CMS to provide DEEP to increase the health literacy of and empowerment of people with diabetes by:

- Expanding access to free diabetes programs to people affected by diabetes by collaborating with existing programs and providing programming in areas of need;
- Developing a sustainable network of diabetes educators and peer educators through a Train-the Trainer Program;
- Working with providers to improve quality of care for people with diabetes through free technical assistance to address quality measures;
- Increasing the number of accredited diabetes education programs, such as those recognized by the American Diabetes Association or the American Association of Diabetes Educators.

Sonya Parker, an employee of Diversified Resources, Inc. and Wellness Coordinator for the Southern Georgia Region, was trained by Alliant Quality and has been instrumental in expanding the program to individuals in the area. Workshops have been held in senior centers and senior housing complexes in Atkinson, Charlton, Lowndes, Pierce, and Turner Counties with more scheduled for Bacon, Irwin, and Lanier Counties. Each DEEP workshop is taught over a 6 week period, once a week for 2 hours and utilizes strategies such as brainstorming, modeling, and feedback to teach participants how to change their behavior in order to manage their diabetes. "Unfortunately, diabetes is a serious challenge for Georgia. However, with the implementation of programs like DEEP, we can help to combat this disease through education and prevention. I am excited to facilitate an evidence-based program that engages community residents in self-management practices and control of diabetes in a very interactive and fun way," said Sonya.

The SGRC's Area Agency on Aging contracts with Diversified Resources, Inc. for the provision of senior wellness and health promotion programs. For more information about upcoming DEEP workshops or to find out how your group and/or organization can host a series, contact Sonya Parker at 912-285-3089.



*Wellness Coordinator Sonya Parker (second from left) facilitated a DEEP workshop at the Charlton County Senior Center during the month of April 2017.*

# Coffee County Transit Development Plan

*Transportation and Environment: Corey Hull*

Coffee County's Transit Development Plan is complete and has been sent to Coffee County's local elected officials, GDOT officials, and is also available on the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's website at [www.sgrc.us](http://www.sgrc.us). The Coffee County Transit Development Plan serves as a guidebook to help Coffee County's elected officials and staff with the consideration of implementing a rural public transit system. The TDP is specific to Coffee County and provides information that will help local officials, staff, and the community better understand public transit characteristics and options that are available.

The Coffee County TDP was created using information from the U.S. Census, National Transit Data, and other data sources. Currently, Coffee County does not have a public transit system, due to this, current transit trends are limited to driving, walking, and other modes of transportation. This data is used throughout the TDP and offers a more detailed view of the community. In order to calculate potential ridership for Coffee County, the data is based on neighboring county's that share specific characteristics and are comparable to Coffee County, such as: median income, population, demographics, and poverty percentage. This comparable data is also used to calculate the projected ridership trend, a 5 year analysis of future need and demand for public transit, and a budget analysis. Based on these projections, the SGRC provides recommendations specific to Coffee County regarding implementing a rural public transit system.

For more information about the Coffee County Transit Development Plan or transit services, please contact Southern Georgia Regional Commission, Transit and Mobility Coordinator, JD Dillard; [jdillard@sgrc.us](mailto:jdillard@sgrc.us); phone 229-333-5277



## SGRC Loses Long-Time Council Member Johnnie Lee Roper

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission lost a long time council member and friend on March 20, 2017. Mr. Johnnie Lee Roper, City of Douglas Commissioner passed away at Coffee Regional Medical Center in Douglas, GA.

Mr. Roper served the City of Douglas as a commissioner for 23 years. During those years he became an important part of many boards, councils and commissions in our region. Mr. Roper served on the SGRC Council as well as the SGRC's Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board.

Mr. Roper was always a staunch advocate of his beloved city, community and our region. His presence will certainly be missed by all who knew him.



327 W. Savannah Avenue  
 Valdosta, Georgia 31601

1725 South Georgia Parkway, West  
 Waycross, GA 31503

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 Mary Lott Walker  
 Andy Brannen

**Ware**

Carlos Nelson  
 John Knox  
 Barbara King

**Speakers Office**

Vacant

### REGIONAL CALENDAR

#### April 2017

- ⇒ 27 SGRC Council Meeting, Pearson
- ⇒ 28-May 2 ACCG Annual Conference, Savannah

#### May 2017

- ⇒ 7-9 GARC Economic Development Conference, Lake Lanier
- ⇒ 11 Housing Solutions for Local Governments, Valdosta
- ⇒ 23 GARC Council Member Training, Darien
- ⇒ 25 SGRC Council Meeting, Pearson
- ⇒ 25 Regional Transportation Roundtable, Pearson

#### June 2017

- ⇒ 22 SGRC Council Meeting, Pearson
- ⇒ 23-27 GMA Annual Conference, Savannah