

In the REGION

Local Government Services: Planning for Public Health Emergencies

Hazard mitigation plans are well known for providing guidance for communities to follow in the event of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, but many of these plans also address a range of man-made and biological hazards, including disease outbreaks. Goals and action items for mitigating this hazard are often included under the broader category of “Public Health Emergency,” which typically includes communicable disease (spread from person to person), mosquito-borne illness, and food-borne illness. Other public health hazards may be included based on the needs and priorities of the community.

Even before the current spread of the coronavirus (causing the disease known as COVID-19), disease outbreaks have not been unheard of in the United States. In 2019, measles outbreaks occurred in six states. The flu season occurs every year without fail, usually peaking

between December and February. Even the common cold is estimated to cause \$25 billion in lost productivity in the U.S. each year. Due to widespread international and domestic travel, there is high potential for new diseases, such as the coronavirus, to spread quickly, even to smaller rural communities.

Continued on Next Page



GIS is being used to track cases as shown in this map from the Center For Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. SGRC's-GIS department is well prepared to use data to track cases in this region. The size of the circle indicates the number of confirmed cases. Georgia has 1,387 confirmed cases, at the time of the printing of this publication.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission proudly serves Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware Counties.

- ⇒ Regional Senior Hunger Coalition Meeting
- ⇒ SGRC Assists Berrien County with Streets and Drainage
- ⇒ SGRC New Building Update

Local Government Services

Planning for Public Health Emergencies (continued)

Seven of the eighteen counties in Southern Georgia currently have a section addressing public health emergencies or disease outbreaks in their local hazard mitigations plans. The spread of the coronavirus, which was initially not expected to become so widespread, shows how important it is to plan for all possible outcomes. Local hazard mitigation plans in this region that address disease outbreaks were written before the recent outbreak, but include information on other communicable diseases that have been a concern in recent years, such as Zika, Ebola, and pandemic influenza.

Local hazard mitigation plans also contain action items for communities to become better prepared for disease outbreaks. The following are some examples of action items:

- Increase immunization education and host immunization clinics.
- Identify vulnerable populations (homeless, migrants, low-income, etc.) and identify community groups to work with in order to reach and educate these populations about public health issues.
- Identify community locations for distributing supplies such as water, food, and medical countermeasures.

- Encourage large businesses to work with the EMA to develop public health emergency plans.

As the threat of future disease outbreaks continues, it is expected that local communities will want to continue developing their plans for mitigating such events. The SGRC's highly qualified staff is available to assist with such planning.

For more information, see the SGRC-Local Government Services on the web at: <https://www.sgrc.us/local-government-services.html> or contact Planning Director Elizabeth Backe at 229-333-5277.



2020 Regional Calendar

April 23rd

-RC Council Meeting, TBD

April 24th - 27th **Event Cancelled**

-ACCG Annual Conference, Savannah

May 28th

-RC Council Meeting, Pearson

June 25th

-RC Council Meeting, Pearson

June 26th - 30th

-GMA Annual Convention, Savannah

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Welcomes New Board Member & Thanks Long-Time Board Member

The Small Business Lending Department announces a new Loan Board member who will replace departing member, Chris McCard. Mike Rice has replaced long time board member McCard, who served for over 10 years.



Mike Rice

Mike Rice, of South Georgia Banking Company, is the most recent addition to the Loan Board. Rice, Senior Vice President/City President of Ashburn, has 17 years of lending experience in commercial, agriculture, and consumer lending. He is a Turner County native and is actively involved in the community. He is the Chairman of the Board for the Ashburn-Turner County Development Authority where he has been a member since 2016. Rice was nominated by the Loan Board at the December 6, 2019, meeting, and was appointed by the SGRC Council at the December 12, 2019, meeting.

The SGRC-Small Business Lending Department would like to thank Rice for his willingness to serve and welcome him to the Loan Board of Directors. The SGRC Small Business

Lending Department looks forward to the expertise and contributions he will bring to the Board and the mission of promoting small business growth throughout the region.

Chris McCard recently took a new position as Senior Vice President/City President of Cordele and Vienna for South Georgia Banking Company. Because he will no longer be working in the SGRC re-



Chris McCard

gion, he vacated his position on the Board. McCard has served on the Board since 2009. His experience in commercial lending and knowledge of the needs of small businesses in local communities contributed to the many strengths of the Lending Board. He will be greatly missed.



Small Business Administration (SBA) To Provide Economic Injury Disaster Loans For Coronavirus Related Economic Disruptions

Businesses in all 159 Georgia counties that have been adversely affected by the pandemic are eligible to apply for SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loans. For more information and to apply, visit <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>

Transportation & Environmental

Transportation Planning Agency Adopts Budget and Strategic Plan

The Policy, Technical Advisory, and Citizens Advisory committees of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) met in February to approve the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Work Program and Budget and FY2021 Strategic Plan. The MPO is the transportation planning agency of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC).

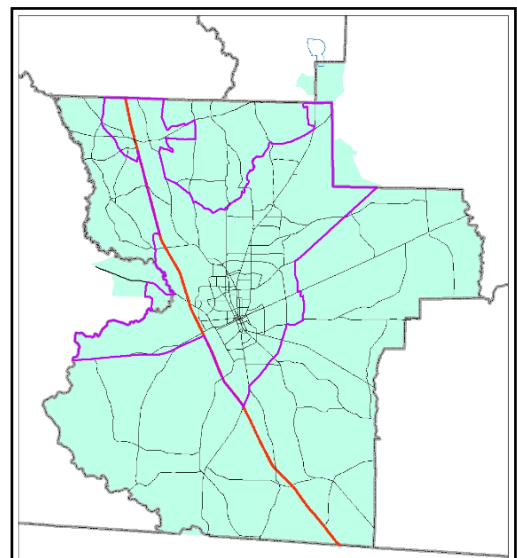
The FY2021 Work Program and Budget includes: activities for the year pertaining to the implementation of the forthcoming 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, evaluation of transportation infrastructure susceptible to extreme weather events, and further development of mapping stormwater and other roadway infrastructure. Other work program tasks include the development of an infrastructure plan for a yet to be determined neighborhood in Valdosta, and continued collaboration with local governments to implement public transit in the urban area.

Adoption of the FY2021 Strategic Plan was a culmination of efforts that began in September 2019 with the MPO committee members completing a SWOT Analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Based on the results of the SWOT Analysis, the SGRC staff developed an action plan for each of the comments received during the workshop.

This action plan was used in the development

of the FY2021 Strategic Plan. Initially, the strategic plan will be used to refine and further develop the goals of the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which is scheduled for adoption this summer. Some activities identified in the Strategic Plan will be carried out by SGRC staff in the FY2021 Work Program, including an assessment of the community to prepare for connected and autonomous vehicles.

In other actions, the MPO Policy Committee appointed Alan Worley to the Technical Advisory Committee to represent the interests of the bicycling and walking community. Worley is an avid cyclist and is interested in developing more infrastructure and improving the safety of bicycling and walking in the community. For more information, contact Corey Hull, Transportation and Environmental Director at chull@sgrc.us, or 229-333-5277.



The Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Area (in green) includes all of Lowndes County and portions of Berrien, Brooks, and Lanier Counties.

Area Agency on Aging

Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Hosts Regional Senior Hunger Coalition Meeting

The SGRC-AAA held the third Senior Hunger Coalition Meeting of the fiscal year on Wednesday, February 26, 2020, at the Nashville Community Center. A number of coalition members and advocates for elderly citizens were present at the meeting.

SGRC-AAA Lead Program Manager Shawn Taylor is the coordinator for this Regional Senior Hunger Coalition and led the meeting. The topic that the coalition has agreed to focus on for this year is “Meeting the Community’s Needs through Food Access.” Taylor shared that the Coalition is currently working to address two issues: 1) identifying barriers that people age sixty and over have when they go grocery shopping, and 2) distributing the Emergency Nutrition Resource Guide to businesses and agencies who may encounter seniors in need. Finally, Taylor noted that SGRC-AAA has established a small food pantry at the SGRC office in Waycross for seniors who are food insecure; clients may call for assistance Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:00 pm. It was also announced that the Senior Farmers’ Markets will be held in four central locations within the SGRC-AAA region in FY2021.

The SGRC-AAA Regional Senior Hunger Coalition plans to send representatives to the 2020 Georgia Senior Hunger Summit in Augusta,



SGRC-AAA Regional Senior Hunger Coalition Meeting participants on February 26, 2020.

Georgia, on June 9, 2020. Sponsored by the Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services, the 2020 Summit will feature opportunities to learn about and share strategies to address senior hunger in Georgia. The Senior Hunger Summit brings together a diverse group of experts, policymakers, and community stakeholders to heighten awareness of senior hunger in Georgia, unearth issues accompanying the problem, highlight best practices, and share opportunities to combat senior hunger. For more information, call the SGRC-AAA at: 1-888-732-4464; see the webpage : www.sgrc.us/aaa.html; and like the SGRC-AAA on Facebook: www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaAreaAgencyonAging/.



SGRC-AAA Regional Senior Hunger Coalition Meeting February 26, 2020.

Community and Economic Development

SGRC Assists Berrien County with Street Paving, Drainage Improvements Project

The SGRC's Community & Economic Development Division assisted Berrien County in obtaining \$228,858 in 2016 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to construct much needed street paving and drainage improvements on King Road and

Benefield Lane. The total project cost for the improvements was \$326,209. Watkins & Associates of Tifton provided design, engineering, and construction oversight services. The construction contractor was The Scruggs Company of Valdosta. Completion of this project has provided safe, paved roads and adequate drainage for the 37 residents of this neighborhood.

Continued on Next Page



King Road - Before



King Road - After

Community and Economic Development

SGRC Assists Berrien County with Street Paving, Drainage Improvements Project (continued)



Benefield Lane - Before



Benefield Lane- After

Pictured here and on the previous page are before and after pictures of both King Road and Benefield Lane. For more information on Community and Economic Development services, please contact Community and Economic Development Director, Kimberly Hobbs at khobbs@sgrc.us, or 229-333-5277.



Workforce Development

WorkSource Southern Georgia Attends ORTA Fair

On Thursday, March 12, 2020, WorkSource Southern Georgia participated in the Okefenokee Regional Transition Alliance (ORTA) College Transition Fair held at Coastal Pines Technical College's Waycross Campus. This fair was held as a collaborative effort supported by eight (8) surrounding school districts. The purpose of the ORTA is to create and improve employment and education opportunities for students with disabilities.



Kearington Moore

Workforce Division Welcomes New Staff Person

The Workforce Division of the SGRC would like to welcome its newest team member, Kearington Moore, as a part-time Marketing Intern. A 2019 honor graduate of Pierce County High School, Moore grew up in Blackshear. While attending high school, she was a member of the Beta Club and the First Southern Junior Board of Directors, and was awarded both the "Service Above Self" scholarship and a yearbook scholarship. Currently, Moore is attending South Georgia State College where she will begin the nursing program to earn a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing, with the ultimate goal of becoming an RN. Moore said, "Helping people has always been important to me, which made choosing a career very easy." Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with friends and family, listening to music, and watching the Atlanta Braves.



Pictured above: (L-R) Amy Jones, Business Services Coordinator and Kearington Moore, Marketing Intern.



Pictured above: Amy informs students about the financial assistance available through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Geographic Information Services (GIS)

Severe Weather Season Already in Full Swing in South Georgia

Georgia's tornado season is typically the months of March, April, and May. March is the wettest of the spring months and with the rainy season, severe weather goes hand in hand. Coordinating damage assessment after the weather event can be daunting.

The SGRC-GIS Department has a free online mapping application called Regional Emergency Center of Operation (RECOP) that is available to all SGRC communities for use during and after disasters. Officials can input data from a command center during an event or while conducting damage assessments in the field after the event has passed. The map can help with planning coordinated responses

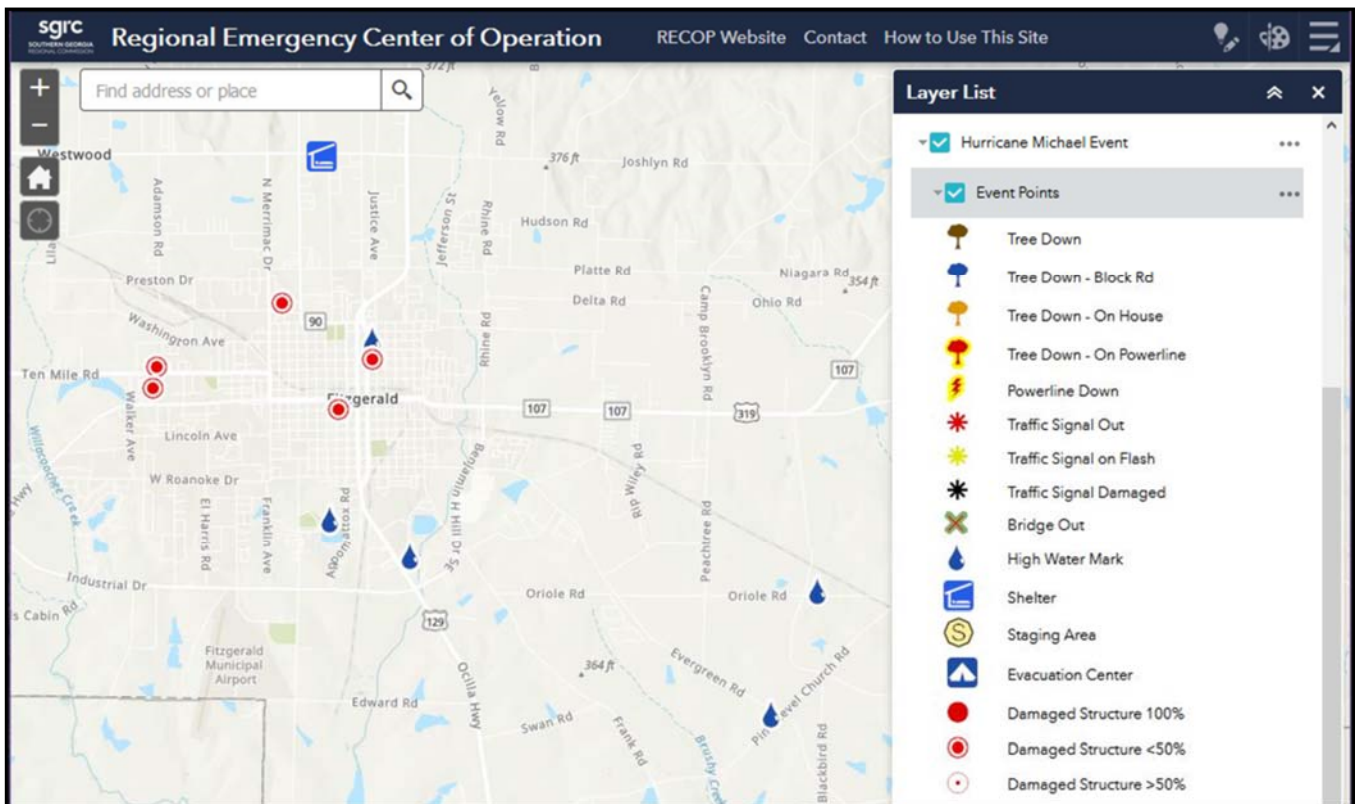


The picture above is an example of how damaged buildings can be mapped after a disaster using RECOP.

by highlighting priority locations and needs.

The app is pictured below and is accessible, from a computer or any mobile device that has internet access, at www.sgrcmaps.com/recop.

A link to an online tutorial is available at the top of the map. For more information, contact Rachel Strom, Director of SGRC-GIS, at rstrom@sgrc.us, or 229-333-5277.



Information Technology (IT)

SGRC-IT Division Offers Advice to Protect Personal Information During Internet Use

Along with an infinite amount of useful information, the world wide web is crawling with every bug and malady imaginable. As one goes about their travels on the internet, traditional locally operating virus scan software is what stands between the internet user and these continuous attacks on the user's data security, computer performance, and privacy.

But as with real bugs, spyware and viruses can be sneaky and often entice internet users to "feed" them. While a single "alert" popup on an internet user's screen may look harmless enough, it can invade a user's computer and bring along with it a thousand pesky friends to ruin the user's good times and the computer's productivity.

If an internet user ever receives a pop-up message that a virus has been detected on their computer, while on a website, the user should approach the pop-up message with caution! It is most likely a virus or spyware disguising itself as a helpful warning. Many times, these "warnings" give the user the option to fix the virus, or cancel and close the warning. However, doing ANY of these actions can often result in the user's computer contracting the latest virus. In other words, even if the internet user clicks the cancel or close button, it is as good as an invitation for the computer to be infected. When messages like this appear, there are

Tips to Effectively Manage Pop-Up Messages:

- Do not click anything on the "virus alert" pop-up message
- Close the internet browser in use
- Shut down the computer and restart if the internet browser in use will not close
- Use personal, locally installed virus software to scan the computer
- Call the SGRC-IT staff when unsure of next steps

some safe things that users can do. See the inset above.

The SGRC-IT department often repairs machines that have been infected. Unfortunately, most of the time, the computer was infected with a virus because the user fed the internet bugs by clicking "ok" or "scan" on a popup that appeared on a website the internet user visited.

Just as one would not respond to strangers who asked for personal information, internet users should never respond to random pop-ups that offer to scan one's computer to protect against identity theft and/or viruses. If the user did not initiate the process using locally installed virus software, then chances are the pop-up is just a bug wanting to be fed!

For more information about avoiding computer viruses and fraud, please contact Larry Adams at ladams@sgrc.us, or 229-333-5277.

New SGRC Building Update

Progress continues on the construction of the SGRC's new Valdosta office on Carlton Adams Drive. The wall and roofing framing is complete, and next week installation of the roof decking will begin. Construction is anticipated to be completed in October 2020.



During the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC) Council meeting in Waycross on February 27th, new SGRC Council member Larry Taylor (Alma Mayor) was sworn in by Vice Chairman Lee Gowen. Pictured here are (L-R): SGRC Vice Chairman Lee Gowen and SGRC Council Member Larry Taylor.



Also during the February meeting of the SGRC Council, SGRC-AAA Director Scott Courson was recognized for 20 years of dedicated service to the Regional Commission. Pictured here are (L-R): SGRC Vice Chairman Lee Gowen, SGRC AAA Director Scott Courson, & SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb.

Contact the Southern Georgia Regional Commission

SGRC 2020 Council Remaining Meetings Schedule

April 23, 2020 – 11:00 am – Location TBD

May 28, 2020 – 11:00 am – Pearson Civic Center

June 25, 2020 – 11:00 am – Pearson Civic Center

August 27, 2020 – 11:00 am – Location TBD

September 24, 2020 – 11:00 am – Location TBD

Area Officials Appreciation Dinner –
October 22, 2020 (date subject to change)

December 10, 2020 – 11:00 am – Location TBD (date subject to change)



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

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TIA PROJECTS IN THE REGION

Numerous Transportation Investment Act (TIA) projects throughout the region have recently been completed or are currently in the construction phase. Some of these projects are: Frank Sessoms Memorial Hwy. in Clinch County; River Road in Lanier County; Cannon Street Resurfacing in Nahunta, and Appomattox Road in Ben Hill County. For further information about TIA, please visit the GDOT TIA website at www.ga-tia.com.