

In the REGION

Six Houses Rehabilitated During City of Douglas' Recently Completed CHIP Program

The residents of six houses in the City of Douglas have benefitted from the rehabilitation of their homes through the City's recently completed 2017 Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP). The City of Douglas was awarded \$306,000 in CHIP grant funds to provide safe and decent housing through the rehabilitation of six owner-occupied homes. Despite the increase in construction materials due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City was able to successfully complete all six houses because the local government decided to utilize set-aside funding to ensure the final house was finished. Before and after pictures are included with this article. Although the 2017 CHIP has been completed, the City was awarded \$400,000 in 2021 CHIP funding and is continuing its endeavor to address substandard housing.

BEFORE



AFTER



Continued on the next page

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.

Community and Economic Development

Six Houses Rehabilitated During City of Douglas' Recently Completed CHIP Program (continued)

BEFORE



AFTER



Local Government Services

Hazard Mitigation Planning in Southern Georgia Region 11

Due to a rise in the number and severity of hazardous natural events, the State of Georgia is committed, now more than ever, to reducing the devastating impact of natural hazard events to its citizens. Because of the potential in Georgia to experience a wide range of natural disasters, the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) promotes the concept of hazard mitigation planning. Each county in Georgia is required by the GEMA and the Federal government to maintain a current Hazard Mitigation Plan, which has a five-year lifespan. In the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) region, Planning



Wildfire roars through the treetops of pines in Ware County , 2007

Division staff are available to work with local officials on updating plans in the 18-county area.

Hazard Mitigation is used as a planning tool with a long-term goal to reduce potential natural disaster losses to life, property, and the economy through hazard mitigation efforts. One of the greatest benefits to a county in maintaining a plan is that in the wake of a disaster, having a current plan enables them to be eligible to receive grant funding for recovery projects. Generators, wind retrofits, land acquisitions, purchase of equipment, etc. are examples of grant eligible expenditures.

At present, the Planning Division has several plan updates underway in the SCRC Region. The Lowndes County Hazard Mitigation plan is in its final stages of being completed while the Bacon, Charlton, Pierce and Ware County plan updates are fully underway.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

SGRC-AAA Holds Public Hearings to Gather Citizen Input for FY23 Area Plan Update

Scott Courson, Director of Aging Services, is pleased to report that the FY 2023 Area Plan Review will be submitted by March 1, 2022. The Area Plan is updated annually to report on programmatic activities of the SGRC-AAA, based on strategic initiatives of the plan. Updates to staff, service delivery format, and service delivery options are included in the Area Plan Update, along with data and performance reports for FY2021. The Division of Aging Services (DAS) will review the update and provide feedback in the coming months.

A Public Hearing was held on December 7th at the Bacon County Senior Center to explain the Annual Area Plan Review process and to share

state-wide goals on aging services. Scott Courson and Kimberly Rodgers conducted a Community Needs Assessment and allowed participants to give feedback on aging services and needs in their respective areas.

A second Public Hearing was held in a virtual format on December 14th allowing citizens who wanted to avoid social contact and protect against the spread of COVID-19 to participate in the Annual Plan update process.

Access to Information on Aging Services, Safety, Security, and Protection, and Transportation were the top three key issues named.



SGRC-AAA Aging Director Scott Courson welcomes participants



Attendees of the SGRC-AAA Public Hearing at the Bacon County

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

Gift Cards for Christmas Donated to Senior Citizens by SGRC Employees

SGRC employees continued the tradition of spreading Christmas cheer to senior citizens across the region by donating gift cards for Christmas 2021. The initiative holds a very special place in the hearts of the SGRC employees who look forward to it each year. Each person who received a gift card was grateful to be remembered at Christmas. Aging Services Director Scott Courson said, “Thank you to everyone who made this a success in 2021!”

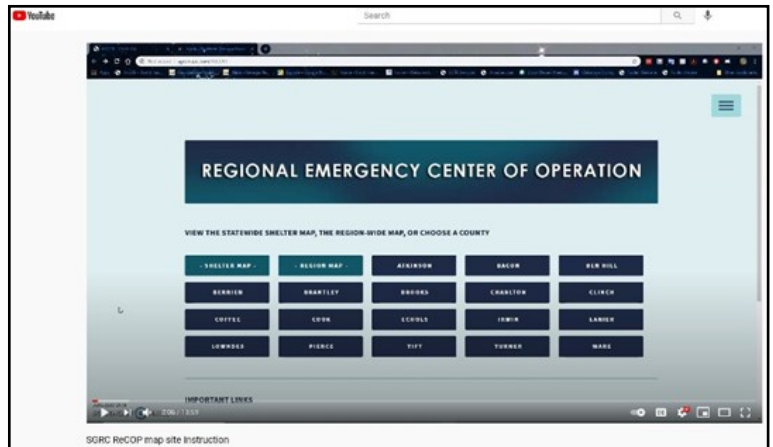


Geographic Information Services (GIS)

GIS Staff Reminds Communities to Prepare for Severe Weather Season

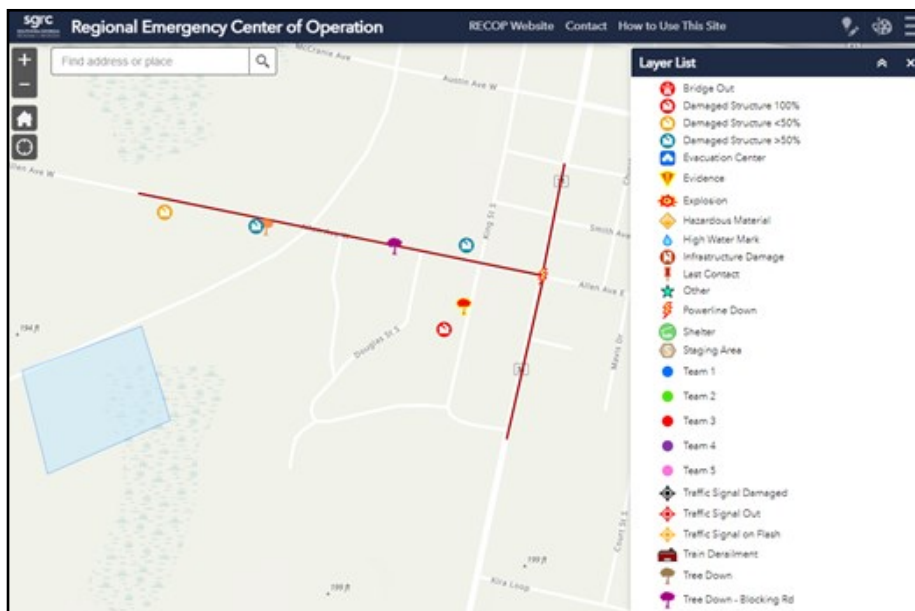
Georgia's tornado season is typically the months of March, April and May. March is the wettest of the spring months and with the rainy season, severe weather goes hand in hand. Coordinating damage assessment after the weather event can be daunting.

The SGRC GIS Division has a free online mapping application that is available to all communities in the SGRC Region 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 by highlighting priority locations and needs.



Regional Emergency Center of Operation Webpage

The app is accessible from a computer or any mobile device that has internet access by visiting <https://www.sgrcmaps.com/recop>. A link to an online tutorial is available at the top of the map, or email Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us for more info.



Regional Emergency Center of Operation Map

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Program Assists Fourth & Cherry Foods in Ocilla with RLF Loan

Fourth & Cherry Foods is owned by Matt Seale, former Mayor of Ocilla. The company operates on the corner of Fourth and Cherry Street in Ocilla, in a 14,500 square foot historic building. The company is a subsidiary of The Fourth & Cherry Company and is located in the same building. Fourth & Cherry Foods produces "small batch finished food products" for wholesale and retail sales. Small batch foods are packaged food products such as jams, jellies, preserves, BBQ sauces, salsas, etc. Fourth & Cherry Foods has some owned brands, but also provide co-packing services for start-up food companies to facilitate small batch production needs. Fourth & Cherry Foods began manufacturing in the summer of 2020. The company has a partnership stake in Lauri Jo's products, Ruthie's Best, The Southern Mercantile, Southern Thunder, and Old Soul Coffee. They also co-package for Paulk Vineyards, Gesus Palamino, and Komodo Sauces. With more clients lined up for the coming year, an expansion was necessary. Besides Seales, there are 4 other employees and he is expecting to hire 3 more once the kitchen has been overhauled and new equipment purchased with SGRC RLF loan funds. Seale also owns The Shoppes at Fourth & Cherry, which was established in 2005 as a "French Market" style retail business, and he and his wife, Roxie, own and manage the largest space and inventory. The Shoppes also houses a café that serves lunch and take out foods. Seale is an entrepreneur with a strong desire to see Ocilla grow and prosper.

Fourth & Cherry Foods produces "small batch finished food products" for wholesale and retail sales. Small batch foods are packaged food products such as jams, jellies, preserves, BBQ sauces, salsas, etc. Fourth & Cherry Foods has some owned brands, but also provide co-packing services for start-up food companies to facilitate small batch production needs. Fourth & Cherry Foods began manufacturing in the summer of 2020. The company has a partnership stake in Lauri Jo's products, Ruthie's Best, The Southern Mercantile, Southern Thunder, and Old Soul Coffee. They also co-package for Paulk Vineyards, Gesus Palamino, and Komodo Sauces. With more clients lined up for the coming year, an expansion was necessary. Besides Seales, there are 4 other employees and he is expecting to hire 3 more once the kitchen has been overhauled and new equipment purchased with SGRC RLF loan funds. Seale also owns The Shoppes at Fourth & Cherry, which was established in 2005 as a "French Market" style retail business, and he and his wife, Roxie, own and manage the largest space and inventory. The Shoppes also houses a café that serves lunch and take out foods. Seale is an entrepreneur with a strong desire to see Ocilla grow and prosper.



Fourth & Cherry Foods in Ocilla

For questions on the SGRC Lending Division, contact Michelle Frey at mfrey@sgrc.us or at 229-333-5277.

Transportation and Environmental

Pierce County Schools Crash Safety Study

Preparing students for a bright future is a top priority in all communities across the country, and Southern Georgia is no exception. Protecting students as they travel to and from school on foot, bicycle, in private vehicles, or on school busses is a top priority for the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) and the State of Georgia's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. To accomplish this goal, the two groups partner with local governments and agencies to determine how to make roads and public rights-of-way safer for all users.

Pierce County is the latest in a series of SGRC counties to receive a school safety study of vehicle crashes within a 1/2 mile radius of the county's public and private schools. The report covers a five-year period from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2021, and covers only the specific times of day during morning drop off (7:00 am - 8:30 am) and afternoon dismissal (2:00 pm - 4:00 pm).



According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Pierce County has a population of 19,716 and covers an area of 343 square miles. Six schools within the county were studied including: Blackshear Elementary, Midway Elementary, Patterson Elementary, Pierce Middle, Pierce County High, and Crossroads Christian Academy with a combined enrollment of 3,731 students. During the five-year period there was a total of 1,487 crashes in the county, but when the study area criteria was applied, the number was reduced to 135 crashes. Of the total, 55 of the crashes occurred within the study area of Pierce Middle School, which also had the highest number of injuries at 8 out of a total of 15. The study concluded that Pierce County Middle on County Farm Road may need a more detailed study based on the number of crashes involving injuries while the other five schools appeared to need no further study at this time. For more information, contact James Horton at 229-333-5277.

SGRC News

SGRC Regional Transit & Area Agency on Aging Launch Quality of Life Campaign

The SGRC Regional Transit Division, along with the SGRC Area Agency on Aging Division have launched a Quality of Life Campaign to advertise Regional Transit services. The following flyer, along with four more that list information on Regional Transit services, have been distributed to all senior centers, meals on wheels centers, and other agency partners in the region. There will also be a series of Facebook and social media posts to advertise the service.



Getting you where you need to go!



What is a Quality-of-Life trip?
A trip that begins and ends anywhere in the Southern Georgia Region. Your trip can be for **any purpose**.

What are the hours?
Quality of Life trips can be booked for **any time 24 hours, 7 days a week**, including on public holidays.

Who is eligible for Quality-of-Life trips?
Any person aged 60 years or more who is a resident of one of the 18 counties in the Southern Georgia Region.

How do I book a Quality-of-Life trip?
You can book a Quality-of-Life trip by calling your senior center or the Agency on Aging at 888-732-4464, Monday-Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Call 888-732-4464 or your senior center to schedule your ride today!



Workforce Development



Leadership Moody Class of 2022 Visits SGRC Valdosta Office on Industry Day

On Friday, February 11th, members of the SGRC Leadership Team met with the Leadership Moody Class of 2022 program from Moody Air Force Base (AFB). The Leadership Moody (LM) program introduces its class members to leadership insights of community leaders both at Moody AFB and in the greater Lowndes County area through a six-month course. Leadership Moody members participate in educational sessions, behind-the-scenes tours, and candid conversations with base and community leaders. Members are Field Grade Officers, Senior Non-Commissioned Officers, and civilian equivalents. The LM Cadre takes the class out into the community to meet leaders with various backgrounds. Site visits focus on leadership in education, industry, healthcare, agriculture, non-profit, etc.

SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb welcomed the group and opened with a background of the SGRC. Workforce Development Division Director Roberta Lovett spoke about Workforce Development, the board, and the programs offered. Workforce Partnerships Coordinator Amy Jones spoke next regarding industry challenges, business services, and building relationships with the business community. Lastly, SGRC Community and Economic Development Division Director Kimberly Hobbs spoke about the Community and Economic Development program. There were numerous questions and lively engagement during the one-hour meeting. LM participants gave positive feedback regarding the information shared with them and expressed interest to know more about the SGRC and its programs.

SGRC Regional News



Pictured above are Representative John Corbett (right) and Manor Resident Barry Deas.

REPRESENTATIVE CORBETT HONORED

Annually, the Manor Community (located in Ware County) hosts a Valentine's Day Dinner for its residents. This year's event was held on Friday, February 11th with nearly 300 people in attendance. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Stancil Boyd Dedication to Manor Award to State Representative John Corbett. In presenting the award to Representative Corbett, Manor resident Barry Deas thanked him for his dedication and diligent service to the community.

SGRC Welcomes New Employee Tyler Hayes

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) is pleased to welcome Tyler Hayes to the Area Agency on Aging Division. Hayes has been hired as an Aging and Disability Resources Connection (ADRC) Counselor and comes to the position



Tyler Hayes

with primary work experience in the behavioral health and substance abuse field. Hayes is also involved with the senior community through volunteer work that he has been taking part in for approximately ten years. Hayes said, "I really like it here and I'm looking forward to working more closely with the elderly population."

ADRC Supervisor Laura Smith said, "We are very happy to have Tyler in this role as an ADRC Counselor, and we believe that his work experience and passion for serving the senior population will be a huge asset to aging services."

Welcome, Tyler!

Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2022 Meeting Schedule Meeting Locations TBD

March 24, 2022 – 11:00 am

April 28, 2022 – 11:00 am

May 26, 2022 – 11:00 am

June 23, 2022 – 11:00 am

No Meeting - July

August 25, 2022 – 11:00 am

September 22, 2022 – 11:00 am

No Meeting - October

Area Officials Appreciation Dinner -
October 27, 2022

(subject to change)

November – No meeting (combined
with December meeting)

December 8, 2022 – 11:00 am
(subject to change)



Valdosta Office

1937 Carlton Adams Drive
Valdosta, GA 31601

You can reach us by phone:
(229) 333-5277

You can reach us by fax:
(229) 333-5312

Waycross Office

1725 South Georgia Parkway West
Waycross, GA 31503

You can reach us by phone:
(912) 285-6097

You can reach us by fax:
(912) 285-6126

Email:
sgrc@sgrc.us

Web Address:
www.sgrc.us

Facebook:
**[https://www.facebook.com/
SouthernGeorgiaRC](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaRC)**