

In the REGION

OneGeorgia Grant Awarded to Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County Development Authority

The SGRC recently assisted the Fitzgerald & Ben Hill County Development Authority (FBHCDA) in securing OneGeorgia Equity Grant funds to construct capacity-building activities within the new Peachtree Business Park. This project will provide street, drainage, water, and sewer improvements to the Park's 58.62 acres. The capacity-building improvements will provide the essential infrastructure needed for successful industrial recruitment and job creation.

The Development Authority was awarded \$500,000 in OneGeorgia funds to assist with construction costs. In addition to grant funds, the FBHCDA has committed \$1,195,721 towards this project. The total project cost for the capacity-building activities is \$1,695,721.

The OneGeorgia Equity Fund provides financial assistance to rural communities to help build the necessary infrastructure for economic development. Equity funds are also available as loans for

several projects, such as constructing speculative buildings to attract additional industries to these regions.

For more information on OneGeorgia Equity, contact Kimberly Hobbs at (229) 333-5277.



Future Home of Peachtree Business Park

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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

OneGeorgia Grant Awarded to Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County Development Authority (continued)



A Second View of the Future Home of Peachtree Business Park

Georgia Bikes and Southern Georgia Regional Commission have TWO training opportunities coming up! Law enforcement officers are welcome to attend the sessions planned in August at the Valdosta Police Department and Waycross Police for two POST-credited bicycle and pedestrian safety workshops. See the registration links below for more info!

Tuesday, August 15th in Valdosta:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/672407517987>

Wednesday, August 16th in Waycross:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/672528560027>



Workforce Development



Pictured left to right; Brittany Ambrose and Lori Yeatman with ETC Schools and Savannah Bennett and Felices King with SGRC WorkSource Southern Georgia

WorkSource Southern Georgia Participates in Rapid Response Job Fair

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), Office of Workforce Development (OWD) awarded WorkSource Southern Georgia a \$600,000 Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, Training (QUEST) Disaster Recovery Grant. The purpose of the grant is to support Area 18/Region 11 workers and employers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, help them recover, and expand the workforce post-pandemic.

“Since the pandemic, Georgia has experienced both unprecedented economic growth and record openings of high-quality skilled jobs,” said TCSG Commissioner Greg Dozier. “This presents a tremendous opportunity for Georgians to not only reenter the workforce but also begin a new career path that they may not have been able to access before.”

Through this grant, WorkSource Southern Georgia was provided funding for skills training in jobs critical to the region’s economy, including advanced manufacturing, transportation, distribution, logistics, information technology, and healthcare.

“For many in Georgia, the pandemic offered the opportunity to begin a new chapter in their lives, and that often means a better job. With this grant, we can ensure that Georgians who were hit hardest by the pandemic, specifically individuals from special populations and marginalized communities, have access to better jobs as well,” said TCSG Deputy Commissioner Karen Kirchler.

To learn more about WorkSource Southern Georgia, including the services for individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, visit www.sgrc.us/workforce.html or contact Amy Jones at ajones@sgrc.us.

Planning & Transportation

SGRC Planning and Transportation Division Reports on Six Years of TIA I and the Potential for TIA II

The Transportation Investment Act Referendum (TIA), regionally known as T-SPLOST, has collected revenue for approximately 6 years in the SGRC Region. TIA was passed by voters in 2018 and allows for collection of a one-percent sales tax for 10 years. TIA Revenue is used solely for transportation purposes. Additionally, 25% of TIA revenue funds are distributed to all local governments in the SGRC Region to help maintain transportation networks: improve local roads, build multi-modal facilities, and purchase capital equipment for maintaining roads.



The revenue collected from October 2018 through July 2023 is greater than projected estimates and currently totals over \$299,826,700; which is 29% above the baseline projected amount for this year. Of this total, \$244,870,029.62 is being applied to projects on the transportation investment list and over \$74,956,676 is being disbursed to local jurisdictions. The investment list has a total of 151 various transportation projects that are located throughout the SGRC Region. Currently, 74 projects have been completed and 31 are in construction.

Due to higher TIA revenue collections than estimated; the current TIA may end 1-2 years earlier than anticipated. With this in mind, County and City officials in the SGRC Region decided to start the TIA II process for the continuation of the one-percent Transportation Sales Tax. The SGRC Region is planning to propose the continuation of this sales tax to fund a new list of transportation infrastructure projects throughout the SGRC Region via referendum in May of 2024.

The TIA II project submission period opened on June 1, 2023. Local jurisdictions submitted various projects for consideration by the Regional Transportation Roundtable Executive Committee. The Executive Committee members are: Mr. Slaughter (Lowndes County), Mr. Dukes (City of Adel), Mr. Gowen (City of Folkston), Mr. Griner (Berrien County) and Mr. Bennett (Pierce County).

The Executive Committee is tasked with creating a financially constrained list of projects based on the projected revenue for TIA II. Once completed, the committee will vote on the list moving it forward for public review and comment prior to the referendum. During the public review and comment period two public open houses will be held with SGRC staff present to answer any questions and/or concerns. Staff will continue to provide updates as the TIA II process moves forward.

For further information about the Transportation Investment Act (TIA), please visit the GDOT TIA website at www.ga-tia.com or contact Amy Martin at amartin@sgrc.us.

Area Agency on Aging

Dementia Care Specialist Christy Joyner Certified as Virtual Dementia Tour Trainer

The SGRC-AAA Division is pleased to announce that Dementia Care Specialist (DCS), Christy Joyner, is now a trained Facilitator and Trainer for the Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT). The VDT is owned by Second Wind Dreams and was created by P.K. Beville, to be an experiential program to raise awareness of the impact of dementia in the lives of those who are living with dementia and their care partners.

According to VDT creator P.K. Beville, “The VDT is the original patented, evidence-based scientific method of building a greater understanding of dementia by building awareness and empathy in individuals caring for people living with dementia. The VDT temporarily alters participants’ physical and sensory abilities using sensory tools and instruction. Trained facilitators guide participants outfitted with patented devices that alter their senses while they try to complete common everyday tasks and exercises. The VDT enables caregivers to experience for themselves the physical and mental challenges

those with dementia face, and use the experience to provide better person-centered care.”

Beville also said that when used regularly, the VDT has been shown to decrease psychoactive medication and acute hospitalization for behavioral incidents. More than 3 million people have experienced the VDT, and it is used in a variety of settings including healthcare, higher education, and the community.

The SGRC-AAA looks forward to bringing this experience to the communities in the SGRC Region and beyond. For more information about the DCS Program or for dementia education options, contact Christy Joyner at cjoyner@sgrc.us or via telephone at 912-285-6097.

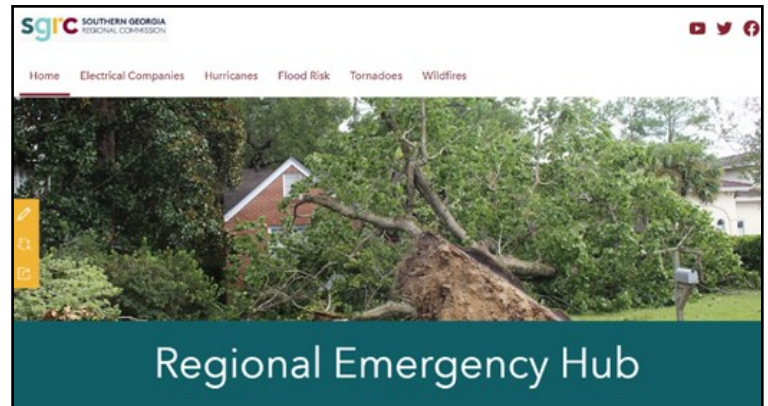


Left to right: Melora Jackson, VDT Clinical Manager and Christy Joyner, DCS for Southern Georgia AAA

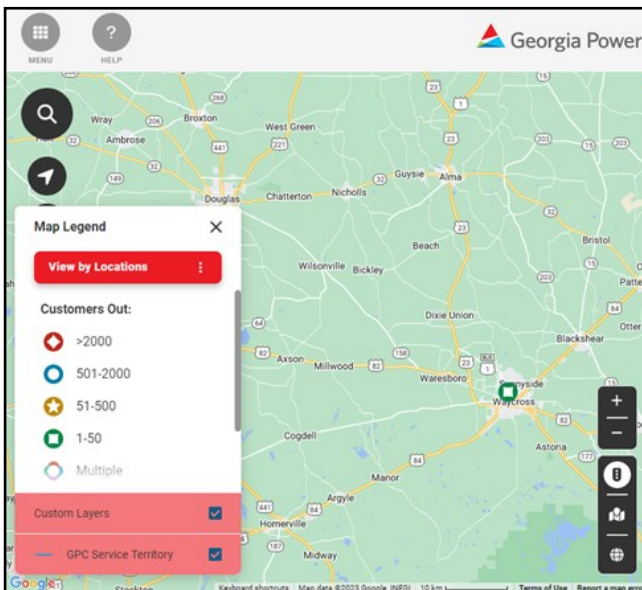
Geographic Information Services (GIS)

GIS Staff Reminds Communities to Prepare for Severe Weather

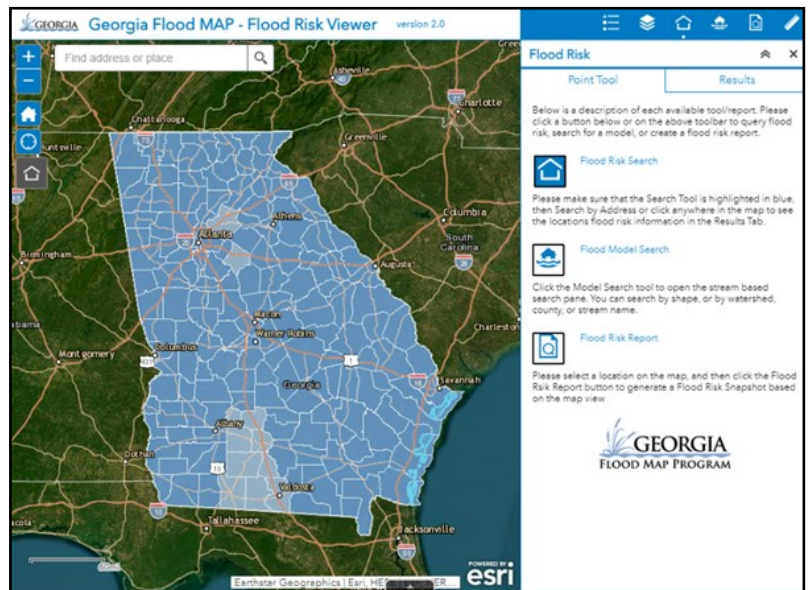
Georgia's tornado season is typically March, April, and May. Hurricane season is from June through November. Flooding and wildfires can happen at any time. The SGRC-GIS Division has created a Regional Emergency Hub, a "one-stop shop" for information on emergency preparedness, weather alerts, videos, maps, and dashboards sharing evacuation routes, power outages, and many other essential tools. The Regional Emergency Hub is accessible from any internet device by visiting <https://www.sgrcmaps.com/reh>.



Regional Emergency Hub home page



Mapping application map legend



Mapping application flood risk map

The GIS Division also has a free online mapping application available to all SGRC Region 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 plan coordinated responses by highlighting priority locations and needs. A link to an online tutorial is available at the top of the map for additional help with the map. Email Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us for more information.

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Program Assists Ganas Pecan Company with an RLF Loan

The Ganas name has been closely tied to pecan production in and around the Southeast for many years. With the help of her husband Garrett, Nydia Ganas opened the Ganas Pecan Company (GPC) in October 2017 to broaden the scope of its operations. Initially, the main line of the business was to buy and sell nuts grown by Garrett and other local farmers in a setting that would allow consumers to support local farmers. Over time, the business has evolved into housing its line of pecan products, including but not limited to raw, candied, and flavored, amongst many other pecan-infused products. Specialty items such as jams, jellies, jarred fruits/pickled goods, sauces, cooking oils, and various other items fill the store shelves to offer a one-stop shop for all things Southern. Growth has also encouraged the expansion into the home goods/ gift arena. GPC carries a wide range of high-end, extremely marketable home décor and novelty items where the newly minted bridal registry section of the business has taken off. Couples from around the southeast now come to GPC to register for wedding gifts, where shoppers can come and choose from preselected items already queued in the couples' individualized GPC wedding registry. The market now offers a wide array of inventory, so much so that anyone can find something to fit their taste.



Ganas Pecan Storefront in Waycross

Ganas sought funding to refinance two existing loans. The Southern Georgia Area Resource Development Agency's assistance was sought in partnership with Waycross Bank & Trust of Waycross, Ga, to finance the loan. SGARDA's Revolving Loan Fund provided 50% of the loan at a below-market fixed interest rate at an extended period than is conventionally offered.

For more information on SGRC Lending and the programs offered, contact Lance Wilcher at (229) 333-5277 or lwilcher@sgrc.us.

Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2023 Meeting Schedule

August 24, 2023 – 11:00 am
SGRC Waycross Office

September 28, 2023 – 11:00 am
The Venue in Pearson

~ October- No Meeting ~

*Area Officials Appreciation Dinner
October 26, 2023 (subject to change)

~ November- No meeting ~
(combined with December meeting)

December 7, 2023 – 11:00 am
SGRC Valdosta Office



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

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The Southern Georgia Regional Commission is accepting applications for:

- ◆ Grants Specialist
- ◆ Planning and Transportation Director

For more information on each job opening, please see complete job descriptions at:

www.sgrc.us/opportunities.html