

In the REGION

SGRC Small Business Lending Division Assists Local Small Businesses with COVID-19 Relief Assistance

The Small Business Lending Division has been busy assisting local small businesses and partner lenders with various pieces of the CARES Act in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by Congress to provide relief to small businesses affected by the pandemic.

One of the main components of the Act is the Paycheck Protection Program. The program provides cash-flow assistance through 100 percent federally guaranteed loans, as an SBA 7a, to employers who maintain their payroll during this emergency. If employers maintain their payroll, the loans will be forgiven, which would help workers remain employed, as well as help affected small businesses and the economy. The program was implemented through banks acting as SBA Lenders. As a Lender Service Provider (LSP) for many banks in the

region, the SGRC Small Business Lending Division assisted several banks in the processing of these loans. Through May 6, 2020, the lending division has processed 168 applications for participating banks resulting in nearly \$9.5 million in PPP loans being approved.

For more information about SGRC Lending Programs contact: Rex Dorsey, Director at rdorsey@sgrc.us or Michelle Frey, Sr. Lending Officer at mfrey@sgrc.us or (229) 333-5277.



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.

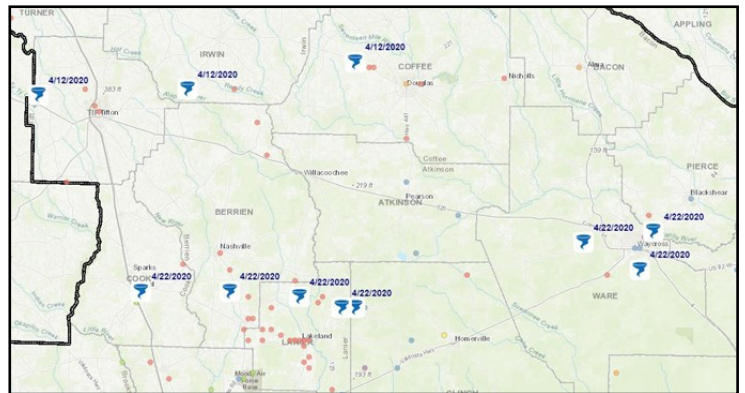
Geographic Information Services (GIS)

Mobile GIS: Access Data Anywhere

Even if you cannot access your office, you can still access your data! SGRC GIS is always working to keep important information up-to-date and available for those who need it. Web maps are now more valuable than ever. The VALOR Live Map for Valdosta and Lowndes County allows city and county employees to access important data while in the office, in the field, or working from home. To try the VALOR Live Map visit the website www.valorgis.com/livemap.



Not only are local communities battling COVID-19, but it is also severe weather season in the South. The Southern Georgia region experienced several severe weather events over the past month that spawned 11 tornadoes in April alone. The Regional Center of Operations (RECOP) web app allows emergency responders the ability to add information on damaged buildings, downed trees and power lines, flooded roadways, etc. from a mobile device in the field, from home, or from an office. In-person meetings are no longer required as teams can view the same data and coordinate a response from anywhere. The RECOP app is available free at www.sgrcmaps.com/RECOP.



Tornadoes in the SGRC Region during April 2020

In addition to standard web apps, SGRC GIS has been maintaining the Southern Georgia COVID-19 Information Hub, which is available on the web at www.sgrcmaps.com/SGRC Covid19 Hub. The hub is a one-stop shop for COVID-19 information - from state ordinances, to senior center locations, to which restaurants are open. There are also links to information from the Department of Public Health, the CDC, the GA Department of Education, GEMA, and the Governor's Office. The hub will continue to be updated as new information becomes available.

Local Government Services

Local Government Implementation Assistance Meetings Offered

As required by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the SGRC Regional Plan Minimum Standards for Local Governments, Local Implementation Assistance Meetings are conducted with each county and city in the region on a regular basis. In 2019, planning staff held 30 Implementation Assistance meetings throughout the region. Meetings are required to be held every



30 months. This schedule enables the regional commission planning staff and local government representatives to discuss important topics including work plan implementation outside of the Comprehensive Plan update process, which occurs every five years. It also provides an opportunity to begin forecasting future needs outside of the update process and creates a window of opportunity to think about long-term goals. Goals discussed include CDBG grant application ideas, recognition opportunities such as PlanFirst and Main Street designation, and studies to undertake such as Urban Redevelopment Plans and Sidewalk Master Plans.

The Department of Community Affairs requires the chief elected official of each jurisdiction to attend the meeting. Additional governmental leaders are encouraged to attend and offer information pertinent to individual departments or agencies. Required topics to be discussed during the meeting include comprehensive plan implementation strategies for the upcoming year and SGRC's planning assistance capabilities. The Regional Plan and Regional Resource Plan are reviewed with a particular focus on areas of applicability for the local government in attendance. Lastly, the Local Government Minimum Performance Standards are reviewed, along with the municipal boundary map. It is important that staff be made aware of any updates to municipal boundaries. The SGRC performs an annual boundary and annexation survey report which is submitted to DCA each June. Having accurate municipal boundary and annexation information is also essential for successful grant applications, Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element maps, and Census data collection and reporting.

Note: Presently, full in-person meetings are not being held; however, within 90 days of the rescindment of the COVID-19 public health emergency, staff looks forward to meeting with communities in person.

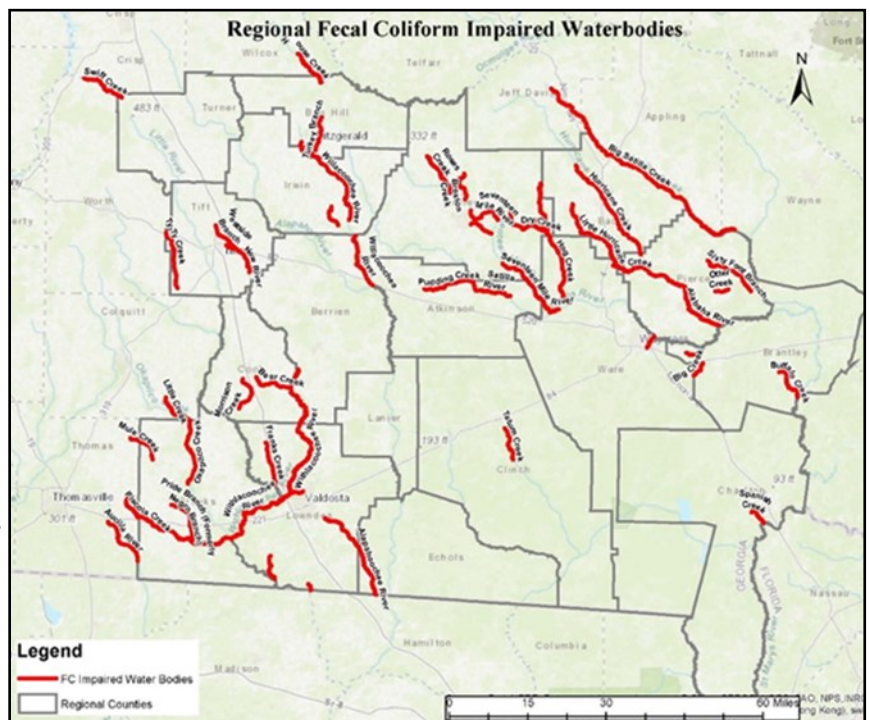
For additional information, the SGRC Planning staff are available to assist at (229)-333-5277.

Transportation & Environmental

SGRC Receives Seed Grant Funding

The SGRC is pleased to announce the receipt of Seed Grant funding for its “Regional Analysis and Prioritization of Fecal Coliform-Impairment Sources” proposal. This project will perform a comprehensive review of the region's fecal coliform impaired waterbodies through data analysis, water quality sampling, and public engagement. These efforts are intended to ultimately improve regional water quality, best management practice efficacy, and funding efficiency.

Of the region’s roughly 1,500 miles of waterways, 1,178 do not support their designated use, like fishing, and recreation. Fecal coliform, the bacteria commonly found in the intestinal tract of warm-blooded animals, is a prevalent impairment for our region. It is believed to be entering our waters through non-point sources, such as failing septic systems and waste from livestock, pets, and wildlife. Many counties in the region are seeking to utilize waterways for outdoor recreation, and as a source of economic growth. This highlights the importance of reducing the fecal coliform load and restoring water quality – for the region’s environment and communities.



Map of Potential Projects

Together with numerous regional partners, the SGRC will scrutinize fecal coliform-impaired waterbodies, identify contributing sources, consult experts, and engage communities to find solutions and a way forward towards water quality improvement. The SGRC will also develop a web-based (GIS) map that will show impaired segments, provide links to watershed management plans, mark public access areas for waters, and fish consumption guidelines from the Environmental Protection Division.

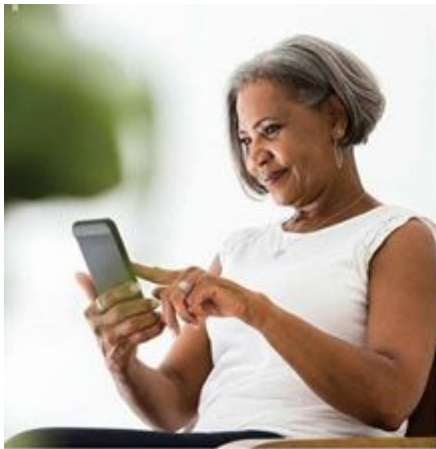
The SGRC is excited to begin this project, and to help improve water quality for the region! For more information, contact Megan Parker at (229) 333-5277, or at mparker@sgrc.us.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

SGRC-AAA Shares Guidance for Older Adults at Higher Risk Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

The SGRC-AAA is sharing valuable information and resources to assist older adults who are at

higher risk for serious health complications through the COVID-19 pandemic. Because COVID-19 is a new disease, there is limited



information regarding risk factors for persons with existing severe diseases. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Based on what is now known, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are: people age 65 years and older, people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility, and people of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled. For more information, please see the following resources from the Centers For Disease Control (CDC):

- [COVID-19: Are You At Risk from Severe Illness](#) video
- [Steps You Can Take to Protect Yourself from COVID-19](#)

- [Coping With Stress](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic

Furthermore, having a plan for what to do in case a person gets sick is important. Things to consider are: staying in touch with others, determining who can provide care if needed, maintaining contact with a healthcare professional, keeping access to medications and medical supplies, having enough household items and groceries, considering how to get the items needed should those items need to be brought into the home, and arranging for pets to be taken care of, if needed.

It is also of great value emotionally for older adults to continue to socialize and be active, despite the shelter-at-home and social distancing requirements that are in place. For more information and ideas on how to stay connected with others, both with and without technology, please see the Southern Georgia AAA Facebook page with a helpful handout titled: [Staying Connected at Home During COVID-19](#).

Finally, another great resource is the SGRC COVID-19 Information Hub, found at [www.sgrcmaps.com/SGRC Covid19 Hub](http://www.sgrcmaps.com/SGRC_Covid19_Hub). The Hub contains not only information, but also some very helpful resources for local communities. More information on the COVID-19 Information Hub can be found on Page 2 of this SGRC Newsletter publication.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)



SGRC-AAA Awarded Grant from the Community Foundation of South Georgia

The SGRC-AAA is pleased to announce that it was a recipient of one of fifty-eight grants awarded by the Community Foundation of South Georgia to help senior citizens during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Community Foundation has established the COVID-19 Relief Fund to accept and strategically disburse funds to nonprofit organizations on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response effort in South Georgia. Through this fund, the Community Foundation is providing flexible resources to organizations that have strong experience working to provide for the needs of South Georgia's most vulnerable residents. According to a foundation spokesperson, "These grant dollars are intended to provide essential food, supplies, and medication for senior citizens, during the COVID-19 pandemic, who are in need and who are enrolled in a congregate or home-delivered meals program administered through SGRC-AAA." Founded in 1996, the Community Foundation of South Georgia is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to

making South Georgia a better place to live through effective philanthropy. For more information, please see their website at www.cfsga.net.

All senior center facilities are closed to clients at this time due to the threat of the COVID-19 virus, but the staff members are present to serve as a safety-net and point of contact for senior center and home-delivered meals clients. Senior center staff members continue to make telephone reassurance calls and serve as a direct line to senior citizens to stay informed about their needs.

Scott Courson, Director of Aging Services for the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (SGRC-AAA), said, "We are thrilled to be a recipient of one of the grants awarded by the Community Foundation of South Georgia. We are grateful to them for thinking of us and for taking action to assist senior citizens at this critical time."

The SGRC-AAA administers Home and Community Based Services- Nutrition and Wellness Programs in an eighteen county area of Southern Georgia via contracts with local governments and community service organizations to provide services, which include congregate meals and home-delivered meals; see the SGRC-AAA webpage: www.sgrc.us/aaa.html; and like our Facebook page found at: www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaAreaAgencyonAging/.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

The SGRC-AAA Recognizes the Nurses of the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) For National Nurses Week 2020

National Nurses Week is celebrated between May 6th and May 12th each year to promote nursing as a profession and a discipline. In honor of National Nurses Week, the SGRC-AAA recognized the nurses who work in the ADRC and extended a warm and heartfelt “thank you” to all of its dedicated, professional, and compassionate nurses.

Scott Courson, Director of Aging Services for the SGRC-AAA said, “Our nurses have a long history of excellence in service, always going above and beyond when serving consumers, family members, and caregivers. We are grateful for each and every one of them and we want them to know that their exceptional knowledge is appreciated and that the thoughtful care with which they treat consumers and family members does not go unnoticed.”



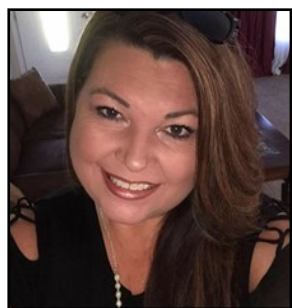
Laura Smith, RN



Sabrina Scott, LPN



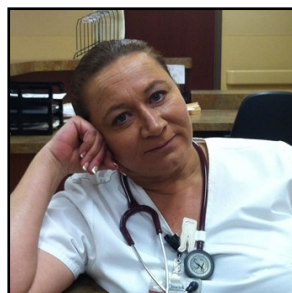
Judi Gary, RN



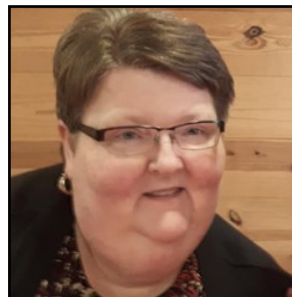
Angie Swinford, LPN



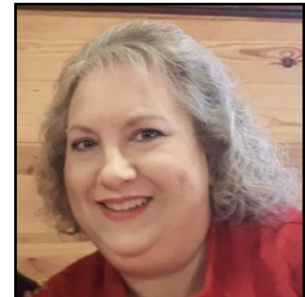
Cecelia Nelson, LPN



Lynn Lee, RN



Susan Bowen, LPN

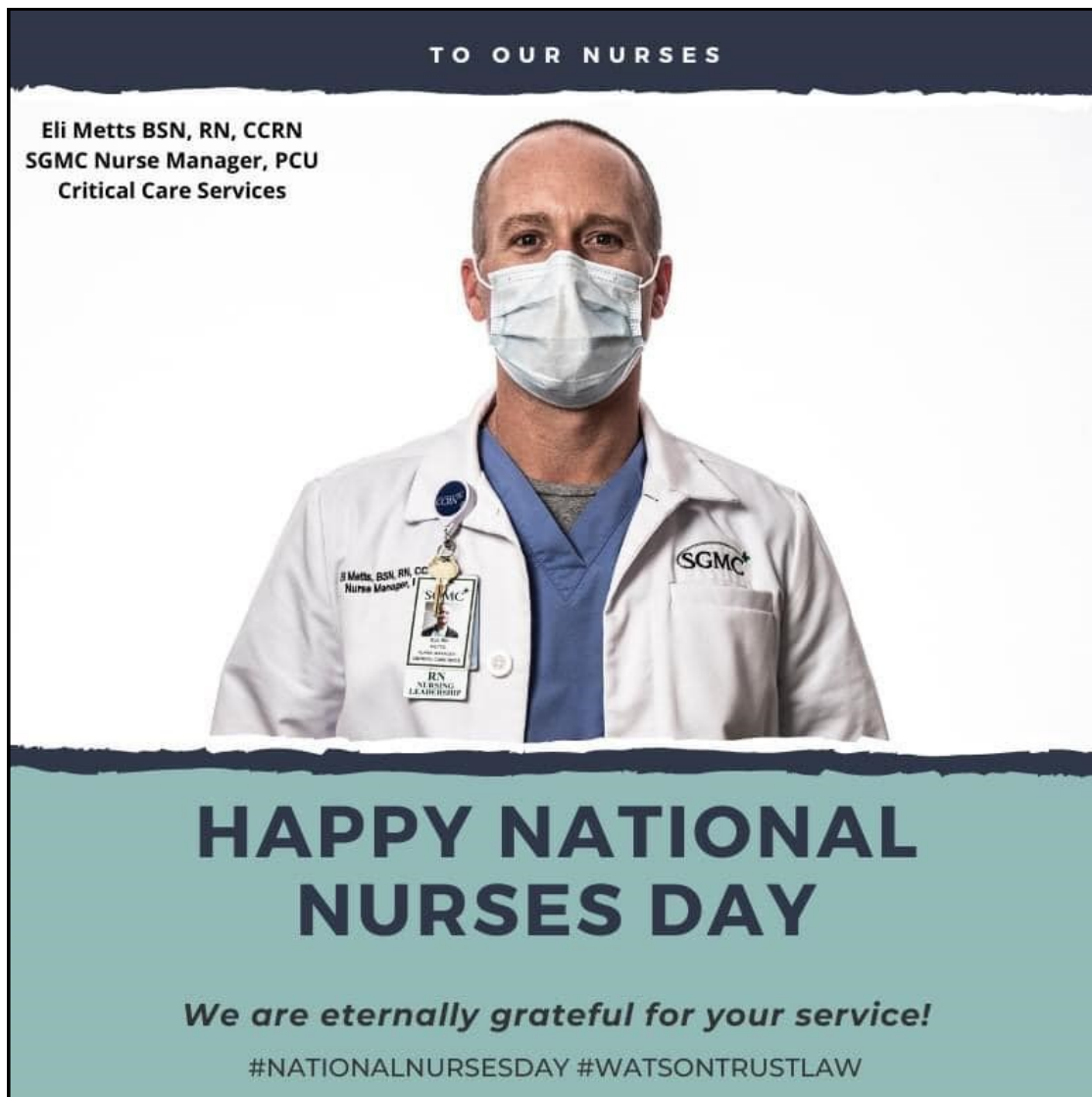


Sabrina Carver, RN

Workforce Development

The SGRC-Workforce Development Division Recognizes Worksource Southern Georgia Participant Eli Metts on Nurse's Day 2020

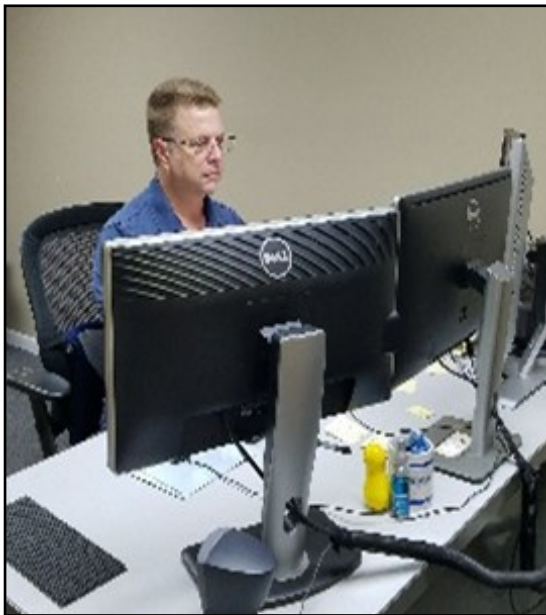
On Wednesday, May 6, 2020, the SGRC-Workforce Development Division paid a sincere tribute to an exceptional person on National Nurse's Day 2020. At this time in the nation when the skills and dedication of medical staff are so crucial, it was a perfect opportunity to extend gratitude to those on the front lines of healthcare. The SGRC-Workforce Development Division spokesperson said, "Thank you to all the nurses who have given of themselves to care for our families. We salute you, especially during nurses week. We also recognize Eli Metts, a graduate of Wiregrass Georgia Technical College and a WorkSource Southern Georgia participant. His dedication to his patients and team makes us all very proud. Congratulations, Eli!"



Information Technology (IT)

The SGRC-IT Division Offers Resources for Local Government

Everyone has those days that, no matter what is tried, nothing seems to work right. It is especially frustrating when the source of stress is a desktop computer. That is why the SGRC-IT program is here. SGRC-IT support staff provide help in those moments of need. Whether it is a printer that is not performing, a network that will not work, a computer that has taken a turn for the worse, or a server that has stopped serving. No matter the problem, if it has buttons, wires, or a screen, SGRC-IT can help.



Computer Technician Greg Nazworth, remotely repairing a computer in Brooks County.

Also, SGRC-IT support resources are here to help local governments prepare for the future. Unfortunately, many cities and counties have budgets for every aspect of their operation except for the future of IT infrastructure. Considering that nearly every department in govern-

ment now depends upon connectivity and reliable hardware to perform basic functions, this is a troubling scenario. Governments are strongly encouraged to develop a plan to be prepared for future IT needs. For help, let the SGRC-IT division be the first stop. Feel free to contact SGRC-IT to learn more about how to prepare IT infrastructure for the future.

For more information on protecting computers from viruses and on antivirus software, please contact Larry Adams at ladams@sgrc.us, (229)-300-0901 or the SGRC-IT Division.

Community and Economic Development

SGRC Assists the City of Pearson with Street Paving and Drainage Improvements Project

The SGRC's Community & Economic Development Division assisted the City of Pearson in obtaining \$750,000 in 2017 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to construct much needed water, street, and drainage improvements on Kira Loop, Beth Lane, and Phillip Lane. The total project cost for the improvements was \$841,283. Statewide Engineering, Inc. of Douglas provided design, engineering, and construction oversight services. The construction contractor was East Coast Asphalt of Douglas. Completion of this project has provided fire protection; safe, paved roads; and adequate drainage for the 144 residents of this neighborhood.



Kira Loop - Before

Continued on Next Page

Community and Economic Development

SGRC Assists the City of Pearson with Street Paving and Drainage Improvements Project (continued)



Kira Loop - After

Contact the SGRC

SGRC 2020 Council Meetings Schedule

June 25, 2020 – 11:00 am – Location TBD

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



Pictured above (L to R) are Director Lynn Platt and Senior Service Center Aid Thomas Ponsell of Pierce County Senior Center-Action Pact, Inc., Pierce County School Resource Officer Breanna French, and Sergeant Chris Hackett of the Blackshear Police Department all working together to deliver meals to seniors in Pierce County during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo and story courtesy of Karen Herndon, local senior citizen advocate and member of the SGRC-AAA Aging Advisory Council from Blackshear.)