



# Hands on Habitat

## State of Georgia

### What Are the Problems?

- **Coastal wetlands** Almost 25% of original wetland acreage has been lost to development. In the next 25 years, the population of coastal Georgia is expected to double, placing these vulnerable areas at risk to degradation.
- **Native oyster populations** Once the largest producer of oysters in the U.S., water quality, disease, and overfishing have reduced Georgia's oyster fishery to fragmentary status. Currently, 50% of potentially productive shellfish areas are closed.
- **Migratory fish** Important migratory fish runs, including the endangered shortnose sturgeon, have declined due to several factors, including barriers that block access to spawning and rearing habitat.

### Background

Georgia's coastline contains one-third of the remaining salt marsh along the U.S. Atlantic coast. These marshes have been identified as one of the most extensive and productive marshland systems in the United States, providing more food energy than any estuarine zone on the eastern seaboard. Although relatively undisturbed, the health of these valuable marshes is threatened by an expected surge in development.

### What We Do

- Rebuild native oyster reefs
- Create living shorelines as an alternative to hard structures
- Educate citizens about the value of coastal habitat and restoration
- Restore tidal and forested wetlands
- Remove dams or construct fishways to restore fish passage

### How We Do It

NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) achieves science-based habitat restoration through community



involvement and stewardship. We build powerful partnerships among Georgia's public, private, and non-profit organizations. Our projects continually demonstrate the effectiveness and benefits of locally based habitat conservation throughout Georgia.

### Our Accomplishments

Since 2003, we have:

- Awarded more than \$160,000 and leveraged more than \$205,000
- Completed construction on 10 oyster reefs
- Engaged roughly 325 volunteers for 1,000 service hours through partner-led activities

### Our Partners

NOAA only recently began working with local communities in Georgia. We are currently working closely with the University of Georgia Marine Extension Service, The Nature Conservancy, Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve, and The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership.

## Our Focus

**Manage and counter-balance coastal zone impacts that threaten Georgia's productive fish habitats**

## Contact

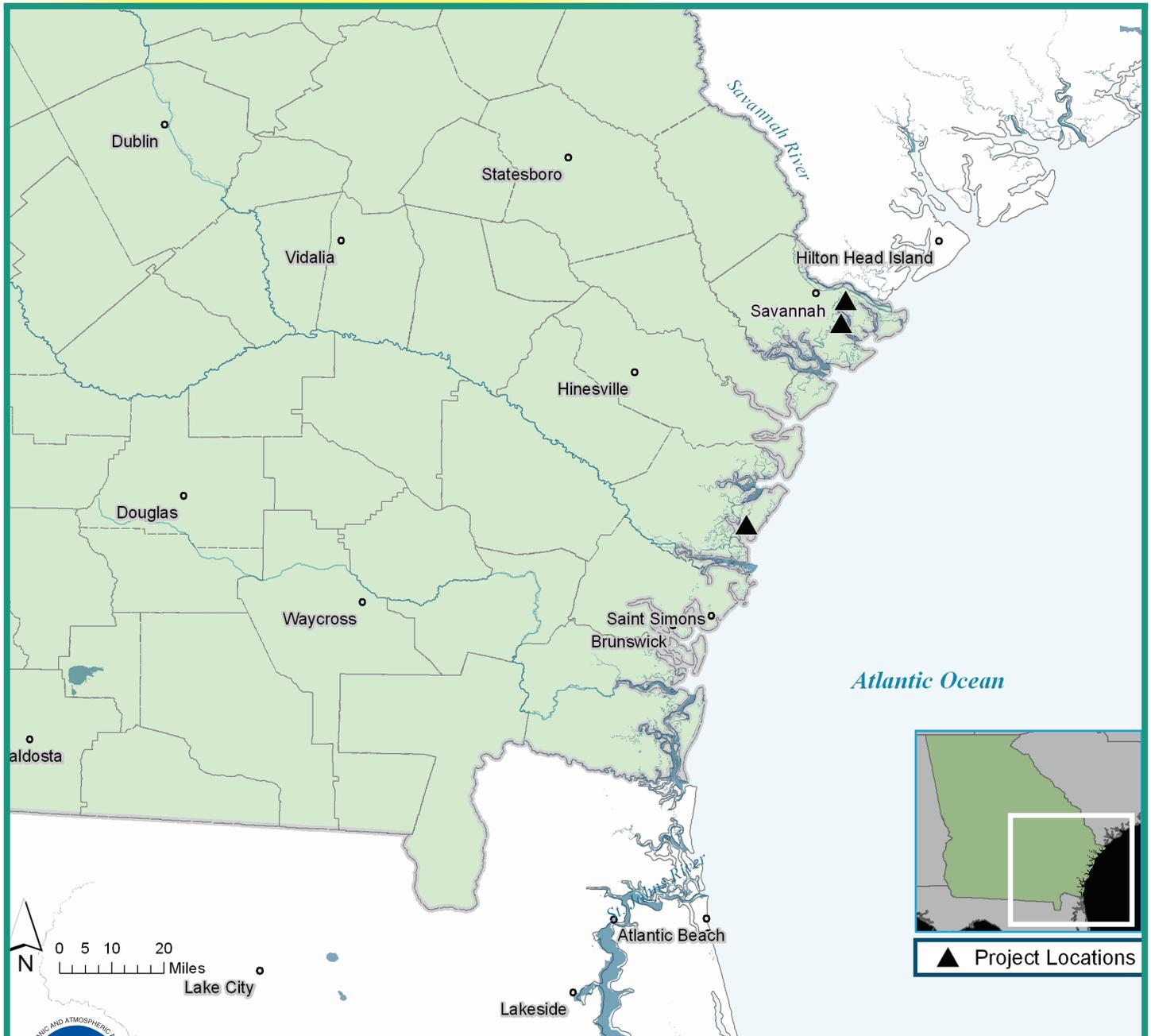
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# NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP)

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### SELECT COMMUNITY-BASED RESTORATION PROJECTS:

#### **Generating Enhanced Oyster Reefs in Georgia's Inshore Areas (GEORGIA)**

With the successes realized from the GEORGIA pilot project, the University of Georgia (UGA) Marine Extension Service and NOAA are continuing this partnership by implementing

"Oyster Restoration in the Backyard - Taking G.E.O.R.G.I.A. Home." This phase signifies expanding efforts beyond the Savannah area to the entirety of Georgia's coast. In addition to establishing five new reefs in publicly visible areas, waterfront property owners will be

encouraged to seek assistance from UGA Marine Extension to help them build reefs and restore oysters in their own back yard.