

# Development of a Research Plan for the South Atlantic Region

Progress Report February 26, 2007

**Overview:** The National Sea Grant Program recently launched a program to create research plans for U.S. coastal and Great Lakes areas. Sea Grant Programs from the South Atlantic region (NC, SC, GA, FL) are working to identify priority regional-level research needs and then develop an action plan to address these needs. The project involves coordination with other NOAA laboratories, state and federal agencies, and academic partners, as well as participation from politicians, representatives from industry, and other stakeholders from throughout the region.

**Approach:** The project is being managed by the Georgia Coastal Research Council (GCRC, [www.gcrc.uga.edu](http://www.gcrc.uga.edu)) in association with the Georgia Sea Grant program. Our approach is to construct a needs assessment that will be used as the basis for identification of priority research needs, and then establish technical strategy teams with appropriate expertise to develop draft action plans that address each priority. We will establish a Regional Advisory Group with high-level representation from each part of the region to help guide the project and ensure that it is well-coordinated with other efforts. Public input will be solicited at every step of the way, and there will also be a focused outreach effort to educate stakeholders about the plan. In addition to the Final Regional Plan, we will establish a South Atlantic Coastal Research Council that will ensure the transfer of technology and information to the appropriate end users, and serving as a platform for coordination, collaboration, and resources sharing among participants.

**Progress to date:** We have evaluated information regarding Research Needs from more than 40 sources (including the Sea Grant programs in the region; regional groups such as the Coastal Conference on Ecosystem Based Approaches to Management in the Southeast; national-level assessments such as the Coastal Services Center survey and the National Estuarine Research Reserve program; and regional alliances such as the Gulf of Mexico program). We are currently working to distill more than 100 categories of research needs into common themes that are at an appropriate level for a regional plan. Once this is complete, the Organizing Committee will convene the Regional Advisory Group to begin the selection process. Our plan is to have priorities identified by summer 2007.

**For more information:** Please contact Merryl Alber ([malber@uga.edu](mailto:malber@uga.edu)) or Christine Laporte ([claporte@uga.edu](mailto:claporte@uga.edu)) at the Georgia Coastal Research Council (706-542-1283), Dept. of Marine Sciences, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602.

Fig. 1 South Atlantic Regional Planning Process



Notes: The Organizing Committee consists of representatives from each of the regional Sea Grant programs, which will work with the Georgia Coastal Research Council (GCRC) to oversee the project; the Regional Advisory Group will have representatives from all of the NOAA laboratories in the region, each state's Coastal Management Program, other regional and state organizations, and academic institutions; the Southeast Coastal Ocean Research (SECOR) conference planned for winter 2007 will involve technical strategy teams organized around priority issues.

