

## GETTING "A KEY TO THE DOOR": UNLOCKING THE STORIES OF COASTAL GEORGIA

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From shipping lanes to migratory routes for the endangered right whale, and from thriving ports to sustainable fisheries – our oceans and coasts provide so much to our environment and our economy. At a time of immense pressure and competing needs from our oceans and coasts, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is taking a lead in providing a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach toward protecting our marine resources in the South Atlantic region. Starting in Georgia and building on lessons learned from ocean planning across the globe, the Coastal Georgia Human Use Mapping Project is intended as a step to improve coastal and marine management. The information collected through this project will provide a better understanding of human uses, helping inform management decisions to better protect coastal Georgia ecosystems and improve the coastal user experience.

Critical to collecting this information is an inclusive stakeholder engagement process. The amount of coastal and marine uses is numerous, therefore so is the number and variety of stakeholders. Stakeholders range from recreational fisherman and paddlers, to commercial shrimpers and crabbers, to port authorities and local governments, to indigenous peoples of the coast. In order to strategically reach as many stakeholders as possible, several evolving methods and techniques are used to gather human use information from coastal Georgia stakeholders. These methods include participatory mapping events (digital and paper-based), interviews, developing online tools and crowdsourcing, and using already collected human use data.

Not all stakeholders, or even individuals within a stakeholder group, respond the same way to engagement. Adaptability is a key factor making stakeholder engagement in coastal Georgia successful. This presentation will discuss the stakeholder engagement methods and techniques used during this project, ones that got “a key to the door” that led to a space full of valuable information about human use patterns on and offshore coastal Georgia.