

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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## Neighbors raise objections to Litchfield sand dredging

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Property owners at a historically Black beach have joined a conservation group and the town of Pawleys Island in calling for a public hearing on a plan to dredge sand from Midway Inlet to repair erosion damage in front of a gated community on the south end of Litchfield Beach.

The Peninsula Property Owners Association is seeking

federal and state permits to dig up to 75,000 cubic yards from the inlet up to two times within five years if needed to rebuild the beach. The association funded the placement of 450,000 cubic yards of offshore sand in front of the community in 2022.

The work would only be done if the volume of sand in front of the Peninsula drops below 50 percent of that added in 2022, according to the permit application.

The remains of the historic Black resort at McKenzie Beach, which extends to the south end of Litchfield.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Pawleys Island Town Council agreed this month to request a hearing on the project. It plans to use money from a capital project sales tax passed by Georgetown County voters

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### HIGHWAY 17

## DOT will remove overhanging trees at Brookgreen

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The state Department of Transportation started work this week to cut and trim trees along the shoulder of Highway 17 in front of Brookgreen Gardens.

The month-long project along a stretch of about 2.5 miles will remove trees that are leaning or hanging over the highway. But other trees – a mix of oaks, pines and maples – that are within 30 feet of the center line of the two southbound lanes will also be cut, said Miles Arnott, vice president of horticulture at Brookgreen.

He started working with DOT last year to identify the trees that would be removed.

"We contacted them knowing that we had issues," Arnott said. Those were exacerbated by storms last year, including a microburst that caused extensive damage to the sculpture garden.

There have been instances where trees have fallen in the highway, said Lauren Joseph, vice president of marketing at Brookgreen.

"It's absolutely a safety issue," she said.

The work won't affect the trees, primarily live oaks, that are part of the landscaped entrance to Brookgreen. "They are under instructions not to cut those," Arnott said. Any stray limbs will be handled by Brookgreen's arborists.

But some large oaks along the highway, some with branches that nearly span both southbound lanes, will disappear.

"For the most part, they're all in rough shape," Arnott said. "They can't be saved."



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

He made two trips along the project area, from the split with Business 17 – where work began – to just south of Sandy Island Road, with Timmy Britt, DOT's resident engineer, to confirm the scope of the project.

At one large live oak, Arnott pointed to the dead wood on the trunk just below a limb that stretches over the highway. He said it made him nervous to stand underneath the limb.

"People don't see that driving by at 70 miles an hour," he said.

Joseph expects the sight of trees coming down will raise public concerns. When Brookgreen obtained a variance from Georgetown County in 2023 to

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A tree hanging over the highway, above, is among those that will be removed. At right, Arnott explains the scope of the work to Joseph.



### LAND USE

## New zoning proposed to limit growth on golf courses

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

A zoning change to limit redevelopment of two of the oldest golf courses on Waccamaw Neck is moving forward while Georgetown County rewrites its ordinances.

That is likely to require creating a new zoning district, even though officials say the 32 districts contained in the current ordinance are too many.

"We kind of hate to add another one," said Holly Richardson, the county planning director.

But it is the best way to achieve the goal of maintaining the courses as recreational property or open space as the county's comprehensive plan envisions.

The Founders Club at Hagley and the the Litchfield Country Club were both built in 1966. The county didn't adopt zoning until the 1970s. The two courses now have the same zoning as the surrounding neighborhoods, "residential – 10,000 square feet." That would allow up to four units an acre on the golf course property if they could meet other requirements, such as street frontage, setbacks and other infrastructure.

But the land use element of the comprehensive plan that was updated last year shows the courses as "conservation-

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### SCHOOLS | Black River Educational Initiative

## Class at Andrews High hopes to cast a wider net



BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Ten students at Andrews High School are enrolled in an agricultural science class this semester.

But it's not an ordinary class. It is the start of the Black River Educational Initiative, a program that uses outdoor, non-traditional curriculum to introduce students to careers in parks, agriculture, sustainability and eco-tourism.

"We're really excited about

A dock at the state park office on the Black River, a resource for the class.

Riley Lehman/Coastal Observer

it," principal Toshawna Mahone said. "The feedback and the excitement from it has been excellent."

The initiative grew out of focus groups the town of Andrews put together to work on master planning for downtown.

Another focus group was given the question "If money were no object, what would you do?"

The Open Space Institute is a partner in the initiative, along with the Black River Cypress Preserve, the state Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, and the Rebecca C. Parsons Foundation.

Erin Pate, development and outreach manager for the Open Space Institute, said Mahone

was the driving force behind getting the initiative started.

"That's how the idea was born," Pate said. "It was Miss Mahone that had the spark. Maybe she had already thought about it."

"I gave them what I would like to see happen," Mahone said.

Mahone didn't want more than 10 students in this semester's class.

"We kept it small intentionally so we can see how it goes," she said.

Along with classroom time, field trips are planned to the Black River Cypress Preserve and Brookgreen Gardens.

The initiative is expected

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