

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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## Search for answers follows rare swim advisories for beaches

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Officials are trying to determine what triggered spikes in bacteria levels in ocean water that prompted the state to issue swim advisories for portions of Pawleys Island and DeBordieu over the weekend.

The Department of Environmental Services samples more than 120 sites along the state's beaches from May 1 to Oct. 1. The bacteria levels on DeBordieu near the communi-

ty's beach club and on Pawleys Island at the Hazard Street access were above the state and federal standards in tests last week.

"That certainly caught me by surprise," Town Administrator Dan Newquist said.

The department issues a short-term advisory when a sample exceeds 104 MPN per 100 milliliters of water over two days or 500 MPN in a single sample. The abbreviation stands for "most probable number," a scientific standard used

Pawleys Inlet, midway between the DeBordieu and Pawleys Island advisory sites, was considered one source of bacteria from stormwater runoff.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

to estimate microorganisms.

The samples count enterococcus bacteria, which is found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals. It is an  
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### SCHOOLS

## District adds to state raise in teacher pay

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The Georgetown County School District's proposed FY26 budget includes \$2,500 raises for all teachers.

If approved, the starting salary for a teacher would increase to more than \$50,000 a year.

The district was already scheduled to raise teachers' salaries by \$1,500. The board added another \$1,000 at a cost of \$835,273.

District bus drivers would also get raises from \$17.91 an hour to \$18.27 an hour.

Lisa Johnson, the district's assistant superintendent for finance and technology, told the school board this week the total proposed budget is \$124.11 million.

In April, district principals presented "wish lists" to the board.

Waccamaw Elementary School principal Ashley Cameron asked for another special area teacher. Cameron told the board she has three special area teachers and seven classes so she has her guidance counselor and media specialist helping out.

Johnson recommended that the board grant Cameron's request, which would cost \$95,000 in salary and benefits.

Other requests on principals' wish lists were three new teachers and a guidance counselor at Carvers Bay high school, and new teachers or administrators at Kensington  
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Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

### Bridge and tunnel

Repairs to the Waccamaw River bridge continue after the state Department of Transportation discovered last year that replacement beams were not the right size. The work that began in late 2023 is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Under the bridge, the piers form a tunnel as crews start their morning shift. A work boat makes its way between the piers while another barge sets up in the middle of the span.

### GEORGETOWN

## Cleanup expenses drive plans for mill site

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The cost of cleaning up contamination from 90 years of paper making is driving the deal to redevelop the International Paper Co. mill in Georgetown as an industrial site, according to a lawyer working on the proposal.

The plan to expand the mill's power plant to generate electricity from burning biomass has drawn opposition from residents in the city's West End who are concerned about the impacts on their health and the environment.

"To try to stop 1,000 jobs and a \$4 billion investment is short-sighted, silly and dangerous, in fact," said Stephen Goldfinch, an attorney who is handling the environmental side of the project and a state senator.

West End residents met earlier this month to discuss the project, a meeting that emphasized the need for more information. They have another meeting scheduled Friday with representatives of environmental groups, said Everett Carolina, a former Georgetown County Council member who is organizing the session.

Goldfinch said he wasn't invited to the meeting.

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### SPORTS | Waccamaw High track and field

## In a numbers game, the Warriors' add up to a first state title

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Waccamaw High School's boys track and field coach David Milliken had a plan for the postseason: get as many Warriors as possible to qualify for the Class 3A state championship.

"It was critical to us," Milliken said. "In several events we had multiple guys."

The plan worked.

At least one Waccamaw athlete competed in every event at the state tournament last weekend and the Warriors brought home the title.

It was a first for the boys program, Milliken said.

Waccamaw finished with 90.5 points. Powdersville was



Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

second with 76 points and Greer Middle College Charter was third with 63 points.

"For us to score 90-and-a-half points, I just can't be more proud of everybody's effort," Milliken said.

The winner of each event gets 10 points for their team. But the next five athletes to finish also get points.

"We talked about 10 points for first place, but if we can't win the race we'll take second and third because eight plus six is 14," Milliken said. "That was our mindset going in."

A.J. Grate, William Howard, Wade Leventis and William Martin won the 4x400 in a time of 3:24.

"It was just like everything,

Showing off gold medals are, from left, William Howard, William Martin, A.J. Grate and Wade Leventis. The boys won the 4x400 relay and Waccamaw won the team title.

all the pressure, comes off and it's just so nice," said Howard, who ran the first leg. "Everything we've worked for all year, we got it done."

"It was a great feeling," said Martin, who ran the second leg. "I was jumping up and down."

"There was happiness, there was relief and just excitement," said Grate, who ran the third

leg. "We worked all season for it and it was something we expected as a team. We expected it and when it finally did happen, it felt like a weight off our shoulders."

"It was exciting because we knew we had been working all year to accomplish that goal," said Leventis, who was the anchor. "It was fun."

Milliken said when it comes to any relay team, each runner has to have his or her teammates' back.

"You've got to have the mindset of, you've just got to go," he added. "You've got to want it for yourself, but then what's unique about relays is, you want it for your team. You don't want to let the other three  
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