

COASTAL OBSERVER

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BEACHES | Swimmer safety

Concern for rips goes beyond island

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

On their way to work, Midway Fire Rescue crews are encouraged to think like a tourist. "You're going to look at your currents, your tides. You're going to come over and look at the beach," said Master Firefighter Paramedic Clint Corpening. "I encourage all my guys: go to the beach in the morning."
Midway crews completed a month of training in water rescue with boat drills this week off the inlet between Pawleys Island and Litchfield Beach that gives the department its name. It's an area where two drownings within a month last summer prompted the town of Pawleys Island to post warnings about rip currents and place res-

cue buoys on the beach.
Rip currents form when water builds up behind sand bars along the beach then flows back to the ocean at low spots or around structures such as groins.
"This area here, on this end, is always a rip current area," Corpening, a lead water instructor for Midway, said as he headed to the north end of Pawleys Island one morning this week. He spotted two north of the Third Street access.
"The dynamic on the north end of Pawleys Island is changing by the day," said Paul Groce, a Town Council member who is also part of an ad hoc committee Georgetown County created for beach management issues. "It's potentially more hazardous than I've seen it."
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Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer
A Midway crew training for water rescues draws attention from beachgoers on the south end of Litchfield.

MURRELLS INLET Dredging impacts unchanged over 30 years

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Dennis Allen toured the 16 miles of creeks and channels in Murrells Inlet that are proposed for a dredging project. It reminded him of the time in the 1990s when he was director of the Baruch Marine Lab and there was a plan to dredge three miles of canals at DeBordieu to improve access to North Inlet.
Conservation groups appealed the state permit for that project and won. The project was scaled back.
"Extensive dredging would unquestionably have serious adverse environmental impacts. That is not to say, however, that a permit allowing any dredging activity in the DeBordieu canals should be denied," Administrative Law Judge Stephen P. Bates said in his ruling.
Allen told a group of about 50 residents at the annual Murrells Inlet Community Creek Talk last week that the science hasn't changed over nearly 30 years.
Georgetown County applied in 2023 for federal and state permits to remove 750,000 cubic yards of sand and silt from
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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

A day for the inlet | Hundreds of volunteers spread out across Murrells Inlet for the 34th annual Spring Tide cleanup on Sunday. Boaters bring their haul ashore at the Morse Park landing. John Lorton and his fiancée Denise Miller, right, took their tractor to the roadside to gather trash. "We started to walk, but said 'why not?'" A community survey about litter will be used for a business initiative to help reduce waste. Find it at ourmarshcounts.com.



NONPROFITS Palmetto Giving Day gifts add up over a decade

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

The first Palmetto Giving Day in 2017 raised \$676,000 for nonprofits serving the residents of Georgetown County.
This year donations surpassed \$1 million less than eight-and-a-half hours into the 36-hour fundraising extravaganza.
The Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation, which started the event, hosted a garden party for representatives of the nonprofits at the Kaminski House on Tuesday evening.
Along with the food, music and networking opportunities, a representative from each nonprofit took a turn at Plinko to win more money. Prizes from Plinko, which got its start on "The Price is Right," were paid for by the Tamsberg Family Foundation.
Jody Tamsberg, the founder of the foundation, said it is "amazing" to see how much Palmetto Giving Day has grown in 10 years.
"I'm curious to see if that continues," he added. "But for a small community the size of Georgetown County to raise
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CAPITAL PROJECT SALES TAX | Wachesaw Park

New plan for aging facility cuts a ballfield to add amenities

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County is working to carry out its master plan for upgrades to Wachesaw Park on Old Kings Highway in Murrells Inlet.
"It's always been our dream to have the money to just gut it and do a beautiful park," said Beth Goodale, the county's director of parks, recreation and aging services. "It has no flow. It's exceeded its usable life-span."
The renovated park will include multi-use courts for pickleball and basketball, a dog park, a walking trail with solar lighting, a large picnic shelter, an inclusive playground and a splash pad.
That was good news to Amy Kimberly, who came to the park with her father and her two



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Dennis Spadafora tosses balls to his grandson, Reid Kimberly, at one of the two ballfields at Wachesaw Park.
children on Sunday.
"We didn't know if we were allowed to be here, but there was no gate," she said.
Her father, Dennis Spadafora, who lives in Murrells Inlet discovered the park. He was helping his grandson Reid, 10,

with batting practice on the ballfield that will be converted into a playground.
A couple was walking their dog nearby. One of the big current issues with the park is people allowing their dogs to run around on the baseball fields, relieving themselves and digging holes.
"We have to lock those baseball fields or they turn into dog parks," Goodale said. "We take a lot of heat for that, but we had to do that with the tournament fields a long time ago because of this very same thing."
Kimberly and her family didn't have any trouble getting on the field to bat balls against the backstop. She liked the idea that the park was going to get an upgrade.
Another issue is safety and security.
"A lot of that stems from the

parking lots at the back," Goodale said. "People can kind of go back there and be hidden and do what they want to do."
As part of the renovations, a gravel parking lot will be installed near Old Kings Highway.
Two years ago Goodale got a \$30,000 grant to cover the cost of the master plan. Last month she presented it at a public meeting at the Murrells Inlet Community Center.
"We had some pushback there, but it turns out a lot of those people were from Horry County," Goodale said.
Baseball teams in Horry County's recreation league use the Wachesaw Park field for practice.
"It's an older field, but it's not a tournament-level field with the layers of surfacing," Goodale said. "It's comparable
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