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## **CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND**

**PRESS RELEASE:**  
For immediate release

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### **Tybee Island Conserves**

Tybee Island, GA – (February 4, 2009) Sitting as it is on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, Tybee Island, Georgia's outermost barrier island, is likely to be strongly affected by changes in the environment, whether from the somewhat controversial global warming or the inexorable consumption of natural resources affecting us all. The highest point on Tybee, which only averages about 10 feet above mean sea level, is near 23 feet; many projections of a one meter rise in sea level over the next 100 years would still put much of Tybee under water as tides fluctuate as much as nine feet between high and low. The influx of the tourist season, which quadruples the population of the island in the summers, puts a tremendous load on the infrastructure, including waste hauling and recycling, water and sewer, and roads. The island's dependence on the Upper Floridan Aquifer will be quickly compromised if salt water intrusion damages this fresh water supply. The marshlands behind Tybee are a critical resource both as a nursery for birds and other wildlife and as a natural protective barrier for inland residents in the event of a severe hurricane. It is only natural then that the City of Tybee Island should be especially mindful of efforts to reduce our impact on the environment.

#### Waste Pro and the City Partner for Recycling Efforts

The City has been working with its new waste hauling contractor, Waste Pro, to encourage more recycling than in the past. Significantly, Waste Pro recycles cardboard boxes, a service that was unavailable under the City's previous contract. Waste Pro's overall mission, says Operations Manager Michael Brucker, "is to create the distinguishable difference in our industry by injecting pride and a sense of community involvement while attending to the business of garbage and recycling collection." Their recycling and hauling vehicles attest to this community commitment with City of Tybee Island logos and decals of the Tybee Turtle Tour's first submission, "Turtle Visions", by Tybee's now-deceased artist, Sally Bostwick.

By cooperating with the island's postmaster, in addition to the cartload of undeliverable mail which is sent to the USPS shredding operation twice each week, a recycle bin has been placed in the Post Office lobby. While mail containing personal information, like credit card offers, for example, should be taken home and shredded to protect individual privacy, junk mail, catalogs, and other paper material can be put in the on-site recycle bin to be picked up with the rest of the island's recycling.

Recent economic woes have decimated the market for scrap and recycled materials, although Waste Pro continues to recycle glass and mixed recycling materials. They note that recycled glass should be rinsed, and paper and cardboard should be clean of food waste and flattened. Their recycling partner requires them to sort glass separately from all other materials, so they appreciate support from their

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customers when glass is kept apart from the other waste in smaller boxes or bins. The City supplies lids for recycling containers to help keep paper and cardboard dry, important for ease of handling and because hauling fees are based on weight!

Unfortunately, only plastics marked with the numbers 1 or 2 (both types of polyethylene) are readily recycled today. Plastic bags, which are also polyethylene, cannot be processed by many recycling systems, but most grocery stores have recycling containers to which you can return plastic bags. Of course, the most environmentally-conscious response is to buy your own cloth bags and use the same bag on every trip to the store!

#### Economic Development Department Promotes Recycling

Tybee Island's Planning, Zoning and Economic Development Department, is beginning a new program to promote recycling efforts by local merchants and businesses, called "Tybee Business Recycles". Participants will be given a window decal and will be included in promotional materials to highlight their efforts. To reduce the number of times that waste is picked up downtown, merchants also take their trash to a nearby compactor.

#### Public Works Fights on Several Fronts

Joe Wilson, director of Tybee's Department of Public Works is constantly on watch to find ways to lessen the City's environmental impact.

New runoff catchments allow trash and particulate matter to be filtered out or settle before rain runoff hits the water systems. Working with the University of Georgia's program, Generating Enhanced Oyster Reefs in Georgia's Inshore Areas (G.E.O.R.G.I.A.), to put recycled oyster shells in the tidal banks at Horse Pen Creek in the back river area. The used oyster shells provide a matrix for new oysters to attach, and the oysters then will be able to filter out remaining particulates and pollution that the catchments miss. Oyster shells or other shells can be brought to DPW's Polk Street location for recycling. The recycling center there will take shells, as well as cardboard and cans when people have more recycling than they can fit in their weekly pickup service. This study is projected to run for the next five years. While the main focus here is on improving water quality, the initiative also hopes to increase the coastal area's oyster population.

Tybee's restaurants should soon be able to put their used vegetable oil to good use as DPW moves to process cooking oil into fuel for City vehicles. Wilson has been investigating using local processors or installing equipment on the island which would convert vegetable oil into usable fuel for diesel powered trucks or generators. Mileage for converted fuel is comparable to that for diesel, so any such conversion can help with City expenses. In addition, waste hauling charges can be reduced since converted fuels would not have to be removed from the island.

DPW has also purchased a pair of electric vehicles for use on the island to save on fuel costs whether gasoline fluctuates upwards or downwards!

Another direct recycling effort would see glass crushed on the island and converted to immediate use for road repair efforts. Again, recycling tonnage carried off-island would be reduced by whatever amount could go into crushed glass, and materials cost for repair would also be lowered as this durable material is re-used. However, the economic downturn may delay implementation of this project until the capital investment for the crusher can be handled in the City's budget.

DPW also cooperates with Chatham County efforts on e-recycling days. Heavy metals used in the manufacture of modern electronics and batteries leaches into the water table when disposed of in land fills, which leads to severe health issues for animals and humans. By saving your electronics and

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batteries for e-recycling events, you help preserve the heavy metals themselves as well as protecting future generations from these negative health effects.

#### Cigarette Butts Major Contributor to Contamination

The Tybee Beautification Association (TBA) works with the City on several clean-up efforts during the course of the year, including picking up trash left on the beach. Trash is unsightly and reduces the pleasure of visiting the beach. However, not all trash is created equal. People may leave trash on the beach, from tiny cigarette butts to tents and beach chairs, along with everything in-between. Although an expense to pick up from the sand, the larger items are at least easily found and removed.

However, TBA estimates that a typical one-and-a-half-pack-a-day smoker may generate over 10,000 cigarette butts a year, and the American Cancer Society notes that about 25% of adults currently smoke. With several thousand visitors a day on Tybee's beaches during the summer seasons, even if only a quarter of the cigarettes smoked were thrown on the beach, that computes to some 10,000 cigarette butts each day potentially discarded in the sand! No matter how you look at it, cigarette filters, which do not break down, are unsightly at best and a health hazard for animals and ultimately people as the material is ingested into the food chain.

TBA makes cigarette receptacles available at every dune crossover, and the City has placed 21 butt disposal receptacles on Tybrisa and the Strand to keep some of the cigarette waste from being discarded on the beach.

Council member Paul Wolff has been very active in promoting environmental programs on Tybee, including incorporating recycling into waste removal programs. Wolff notes, "I'm very grateful to all the Tybee folks who have helped make our recycling programs successful. We've set the pace for the Georgia coast and the region: now that Savannah has followed our example, and the US Post Office is enabling people to recycle their junk mail on site, I hope more cities and counties will follow suit. Recycling saves resources, water, and energy, and reduces the pollution caused by production from raw materials, rather than using recycled content. Major Georgia companies (paper mills, carpet mills, and can manufacturers) depend on recycled content to be more efficient and compete in the world marketplace. Our children and grandchildren will enjoy a better quality of life because we're recycling for their future."

In the words of Mayor Jason Buelterman, "The City of Tybee is committed to reducing its carbon footprint through signing onto the US Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. We are one of eight cities in Georgia to commit to this Agreement and will continue to look for ways to lead by example through environmentally-friendly initiatives such as curbside recycling and energy-efficient city vehicles."

For more information:

City of Tybee Island: <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>

Waste Pro: <http://www.wasteprousa.com/>

UGA, Marine Extension Service, oyster recycling program: <http://www.marex.uga.edu/shellfish/>

Battery recycling: <http://www.rbrc.org/>

Tybee Beautification: <http://www.tybeebeautification.org/>

USPS Recycling: <http://www.usps.com/green/recycle.htm>

*About Tybee Island, GA.:*

*The City of Tybee Island, Georgia is on the outermost barrier island off the Savannah area coast. With a wild bird sanctuary, over three miles of ocean beaches and salt marshes on the back river, outdoor recreation activities abound for visitors to the island. As a key defense point to the important Savannah port, Tybee's Fort Screven, Tybee Fort Theater, Fort Pulaski, and the Tybee Island and Cockspur Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island's raised cottages to form a*

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rich backdrop for history buffs. Attracting a strong artistic community, there are several local supporting art galleries. Keeping the island interesting year round are several arts festivals, the Annual Pirate Fest, the Beach Bum Parade, St Patrick's Day celebrations, the Hot Rod Run, the Beach Bash, and the Christmas Parade, as well as fireworks displays on Independence and New Year's Days off the Parker Pier and Pavilion. The Marine Science Center cooperates with Georgia's DNR to protect threatened sea turtle species by searching for nests, protecting their eggs, and making sure hatchlings make it to sea. For visitor information, stop by <http://www.tybeevisit.com/>, and to find more about the City of Tybee Island, visit our web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>.

*Pictures:*

*WasteProWTybeeLogo.jpg, WasteProWTurtleVision.jpg:*

*WastePro likes to support its customers with details like on these trucks: the City of Tybee Island logo appears on the general waste hauling truck, while the recycling truck sports a custom-made decal depicting one of the island's fiberglass loggerhead turtles, "Turtle Vision" by Sally Bostwick, from the Tybee Turtle Tour. Such touches create a sense of community and distinguish WastePro from the competition.*

*USPSRecycle.jpg:*

*A recycling container sits in the lobby of the Tybee Island Branch of the US Postal Service.*

*TybeeRecycles.jpg:*

*Dolphins replace the usual recycling arrows in this localized recycling symbol to be posted in store fronts of participating retailers.*

*AshReceptacle.jpg:*

*Twenty-one cigarette butt disposal receptacles have been placed on the Strand and Tybrisa Streets to encourage smokers to put their cigarettes out before heading to the beach.*

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