

**Mayor Jason Buelterman**

**CITY COUNCIL**

Wanda Doyle, Mayor Pro Tem

Charlie Brewer

Barry Brown

Eddie Crone

Dick Smith

Paul Wolff



**City Manager**  
Diane Schleicher

**Clerk of Council**  
Vivian Woods

**City Attorney**  
Edward M. Hughes

## **CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND**

PRESS RELEASE:  
For immediate release

Contact: Michael Bodine  
(912) 786-4573, x126

### **New Study to Investigate Effects of Shore Birds on Beach Water Quality**

Tybee Island, Ga. – (November 19, 2009) The City of Tybee Island has just begun a new research project, "Runoff, Shore Birds and Beach Water Quality" to study possible sources of bacteria that are regularly monitored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources along Tybee's beaches. The project is funded in part from a \$18,544 grant awarded to the City by the Coastal Management Program of the GA DNR and NOAA. Partners in the project that will provide an additional \$18,544 worth of funds and services include: the City of Tybee Island, the local Surfrider Foundation Coastal Georgia Low Country Chapter, and Coastal Environmental Analysis. Marine scientist, Dr. Joe Richardson, of Coastal Environmental Analysis, will be coordinating the research activities of this one year study that runs through September 2010. A final report of the study's findings will be submitted to the Coastal Resources Division of the GA DNR in early October 2010.

Tybee Island rarely experiences high enough beach water bacteria concentrations during GA DNR's samplings to cause swimming advisories to be posted. In fact, partially because of Tybee's good water quality ratings, earlier this year, Tybee Island was designated the 2009 Number One "Healthiest Beach in the US" by Health Magazine (July-August, 2009 issue). The City has long recognized the economic importance of clean beach water and has been pro-active and progressive in protecting its beach and beach water. The City's desire parallels the mission of the Surfrider Foundation as an "organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education."

Mayor Jason Buelterman notes, "Tybee Island continues to work with stakeholders and partner agencies to be on the forefront of beach water quality initiatives. As a result of Tybee's vigilance and thanks to support and guidance from the DNR, we consistently receive high marks for our beaches. It is great to also see the surfing community step up to the plate to help ensure that the waters we all enjoy swimming and surfing in remain as clean as possible. Many thanks are due to Dr. Richardson for his ongoing efforts on behalf of our beach community."

This partnership with the Coastal Georgia Low Country Surfrider Foundation Chapter actually helped the City obtain the GA DNR Coastal Incentive Grant Program grant and financial support for the project. According to Dr. Richardson, "proposals that include volunteers in the activities of the proposed projects receive additional consideration when they are evaluated by the proposal reviewers." Members of the Surfrider group will be trained and involved in gathering field data during the shore birds portion of the study that will compare beach

**P.O. Box 2749 – 403 Butler Avenue, Tybee Island, Georgia 31328-2749**  
**(866) 786-4573 – FAX (866) 786-5737**  
**[www.cityoftybee.org](http://www.cityoftybee.org)**

water quality in areas of high shore bird density to control areas. Within this shore bird density study, additional factors that will be considered are wave energy and tidal range. "Hopefully, we will be able to determine if occasional spikes in beach water bacteria levels can be caused by congregations of shore birds resting on the intertidal sand," said Dr. Richardson.

Another source of bacteria that is often suggested as a cause of occasional beach water bacteria spikes is surface and storm water runoff. To study this possible cause, water sampling and analysis is being conducted in Tybee's interior Horsepen Creek. This tidal creek receives much of the surface and storm water drainage from the eastern portion of the island, and then it drains into Tybee Creek or Back River at the south end of the island. From the south end inlet, water flows out and northward along the South Beach section of Tybee. Water samples are being collected from Horsepen Creek and near the inlet during spring tides, neap tides, and immediately following rain events. "As with the shore birds study, we are including additional possible factors that might affect the bacteria levels in the creek to determine their relative importance," according to Dr. Richardson.

Ideally, this project will be able to help answer the question of what causes occasional higher than normal bacteria concentrations in Tybee's beach water. Sampling in the tidal creek and inlet began in October for this one-year project, and the Surfriders and other interested folks are already adding their names to the list of volunteers to help with the shore birds study that will begin this winter. If you are interested in helping with this study, please contact Dr. Richardson at: [joe@ceasurf.com](mailto:joe@ceasurf.com).

*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 Cockspar Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island's raised cottages to form a 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/>.*

*About the Surfrider Foundation: The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit grassroots organization, composed of over 50,000 members and 80 chapters worldwide, dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education. The Coastal Georgia Low Country Chapter formed during the summer of 2007 to promote the mission of the Surfrider Foundation throughout the coastal Georgia and Low Country region. Active members in this chapter include not only surfers, but also people of all ages involved in skim boarding, body boarding, sea kayaking, kite boarding, wind surfing, and other beach sports. The chapter is currently involved in a variety of projects including beach clean ups, the Adopt-A-Highway program on a section of US Highway 80 across an extensive salt marsh leading to Tybee Island, providing service during Eastern Surfing Association Georgia District Surfing Contests, hosting guest speakers for presentations regarding coastal environmental issues, and promoting the Surfrider Foundation at large coastal public events. Through this new project, the local chapter is now involved in research dealing with coastal water quality. For more information regarding the local Surfrider Foundation chapter, visit: <http://www.surfrider.org/coastalgeorgia>.*

*About Coastal Environmental Analysis: Coastal Environmental Analysis, headquartered in the Savannah area, is an environmental consulting, monitoring and research firm that specializes in water quality issues and studies in Georgia, South Carolina and Florida. CEA conducts field and lab studies, assists in designing environmental studies, works with municipalities and agencies to propose and acquire funding for environmental studies, and conducts contract studies for clients that include individuals, businesses, municipalities, and organizations. Dr. Joe Richardson, Ph.D. in Marine Sciences, has over 30 years of experience conducting marine biological and water quality research along the southeastern US coast and the Bahamas. For additional information about CEA and some of its recent and current projects, visit its website: <http://ceasurf.com>.*

**P.O. Box 2749 – 403 Butler Avenue, Tybee Island, Georgia 31328-2749**  
**(866) 786-4573 – FAX (866) 786-5737**  
**[www.cityoftybee.org](http://www.cityoftybee.org)**

###

**P.O. Box 2749 – 403 Butler Avenue, Tybee Island, Georgia 31328-2749**  
**(866) 786-4573 – FAX (866) 786-5737**  
**[www.cityoftybee.org](http://www.cityoftybee.org)**