

EAST BEACH FILL PROJECT

Concerned about
the latest project to
alter East Beach?
You're not alone.

BACKGROUND: Glynn County has proposed to fill tidal sloughs on St. Simons Island's East Beach at the Massengale Park beach entrance. These sloughs, a slice of water above the high tide line, reshaped our shore after forming naturally in 2022 and are constantly shifting.

The county installed modular bridges to ease access to the ocean, a project that won the Community Program Award at the 2024 Georgia City-County Management Association Spring Conference. Now, the county is seeking to fill the slough, citing possible water contamination and drowning risk. Their proposed project outlines dredging almost a foot of sand from the intertidal zone to fill the slough.

Because this project affects public beaches and has the potential to disturb fragile ecosystems, the county must go through state and federal permitting processes created to safeguard natural resources from being spoiled by unnecessary development.



East Beach Tidal Slough, September 2025

Filling the tidal slough is a misuse of taxpayer money that will destabilize a valuable natural habitat and recreation area.

As proposed, the East Beach fill project will:

Damage a Delicate System: Our dunes and intertidal area are part of the sand-sharing system, an intricate natural process in which sand constantly shifts an island to ensure its survival. The beach will naturally respond as sand is added or relocated. Human activity can disrupt this system's delicate balance. Dredging sand from the intertidal zone will create a landward movement of wave energy. This makes it more likely that higher wave impacts and tides will wash away the dunes that have formed since the slough appeared. **Healthy dunes provide a crucial buffer zone**, absorbing wave energy and protecting coastal communities and infrastructure from flooding and storm surge.

Deteriorate Endangered Species Habitat: Visit the slough and you might see any number of protected species, from piping plovers to monarch butterflies. The slough is a habitat gain for native plants and wildlife. Filling and flattening the slough could contribute to additional habitat loss.

Waste of Taxpayer Dollars: Due to the dynamic nature of the sand-sharing system and unpredictable weather factors, like storms and rising tides, beaches shape themselves naturally. **There is no guarantee the slough won't form again.**

Impact Water Quality: The slough has created a semi-tidal area which is slowly morphing to an established wetland. Filling the slough and leaving the already formed wetlands in tact will disconnect the brackish water from the tidal flow, causing a build-up of nutrients and pollutants that are currently flushed by the tide.



EAST BEACH FILL PROJECT

**PUBLIC COMMENTS
ACCEPTED
THROUGH
OCTOBER 30th**

Share your concerns and questions with Coastal Resources Division's Shoreline Protection Committee



Submit your written comments by email to crdcomments@dnr.ga.gov or by mail to Beth Byrnes, Dept. of Natural Resources, 1 Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31520

As a Glynn County resident, you have the right to voice your opinions, questions, and concerns regarding projects affecting public lands. Your lived experience is valuable. If you would like to discuss your comments before submitting, please contact:

Kat Montgomery
South Coast Advocate
kat@onehundredmiles.org



OHM Educator Stephanie Chewing spotting shorebirds at the East Beach Slough

Glynn County beaches need careful stewardship to ensure a safe coastal retreat for residents, visitors, and wildlife.

Glynn County has received \$1 million in funding for projects to improve public safety at East Beach on St. Simons Island. Shore-shaping projects are costly and must be constantly managed to ensure success. There are more cost-efficient methods to manage and improve quality of life for all flora, fauna, and folks.

- **Dune Stabilization:** Management tactics that enhance a dune system create stable shorelines to protect against sea-level rise. Planting native flora and installing dune fencing can help dunes grow while also creating a natural barrier to pedestrian interference. Filling the slough encourages pedestrian interaction, which will destabilize any fragile new dunes.
- **Water Quality Monitoring:** Despite citing "possible contamination" as a reason to fill the slough, a water quality study has not been completed. To address their concerns, the County should partner with the Environmental Protection Division to monitor for harmful bacteria.
- **Education Opportunity:** Adding educational signage to the award-winning modular bridges to explain the ecological intricacies of the tidal slough will help visitors better understand the diversity of Georgia's coastal ecosystems. Thoughtful signage can convey what beach visitors need to know to prevent drowning and to practice caution when interacting with natural landscapes feature like a tidal slough.
- **Access Improvements:** Consider constructing a crosswalk to guide visitors safely to the ocean and away from the dunes. Creating a raised crosswalk will also allow the tide to better flush through the slough, reducing the risk of contaminants.