

In the REGION

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Celebrates Opening of New SGRC Valdosta Facility

On December 11th, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the opening of the SGRC's new 15,000 square foot office in Valdosta. Executive Director Lisa Cribb thanked the many people who made this state-of-the-art facility a reality including SGRC Chairman Joyce Evans, the SGRC Council, City and County officials, the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority, Commercial Banking Company, Ellis Ricket Architects, Lovell Engineering, and Kellerman

Construction. Cribb noted that the new facility will enable the SGRC to continue its mission to develop, promote, and provide services that make the Southern Georgia region a better place to live and work.



Lisa Cribb, SGRC Executive Director



SGRC Chairman Joyce Evans cuts the ribbon marking the opening of the new Valdosta office



The new SGRC facility has 36 staff offices and a 1,200 square foot conference room

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission proudly serves Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware Counties.

Geographic Information Services

2021 Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS)

Rachel Strom, Director of Geographic Information Services (GIS), has announced an opportunity to participate in the 2021 Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS). Strom said, “Responses are necessary to ensure that the Census Bureau has current and accurate boundary information for each community.” GIS strongly encourages participation in the 2021 BAS for the following reasons:

- Boundary updates are vital to the success of the 2030 Census population count
- The federal government allocates more than \$675 billion in federal funds across the nation, state, and region, based on population.

A response from each local government is required. Local governments are asked to contact the GIS Division of the SGRC to report that either the government has “No Changes” or “Yes, there are changes.” If the local government is unsure about the changes, it can contact the GIS Division for assistance. Also, if a community has had boundary changes in the past year, the SGRC can help with submitting those changes to the Census Bureau.

Each local government should respond using the following website, which has step-by-step instructions on how to start the boundary updating process and respond to the 2021 BAS. Please find the BAS website at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bas.html> and local governments may contact the GIS Division for assistance in completing the process.

Please also see the following key dates:

- January 1, 2021 - Boundary updates must be legally in effect on or before this date to be reported in the 2021 BAS.
- March 1, 2021 - Boundary updates submitted by this date will be reflected in the ACS and PEP data estimates and in next year’s BAS materials.
- May 31, 2021 - Boundary updates submitted by this date will be reflected in next year’s BAS materials.

Note: The SGRC Valdosta office has relocated to 1937 Carlton Adams Dr, Valdosta. Materials addressed to the former Savannah Avenue location, including BAS notices, may be delayed. Please reach out to the GIS Division of the SGRC as soon as materials are received.

Please contact Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us for more information.

Information Technology (IT)

The SGRC-IT Division Shares Information on Antivirus Programs

Larry Adams, Director of Information and Technology Services (ITS) for the SGRC, reminds everyone that Antivirus Programs are necessary for every computer. Adams said, "One of the most common reasons for failures or problems in computers is the lack of antivirus software, or expired antivirus software. It is an issue that is often overlooked and it can have dire consequences for unfortunate computer owners."

Antivirus software refers to one program or a collection of programs meant to protect a computer system from computer viruses. Viruses are software programs that are designed to spread from one computer to another and interfere with the computer's operation. Antivirus software is used to find, remove, or repair files that are infected with computer viruses.



The main element of the antivirus software is the scanning engine. Viruses created by hackers and cyber criminals can spread via infected email attachments, shared files, or malicious websites. The antivirus software scans the files or a computer's memory for certain patterns that may indicate infection. The patterns looked for by the antivirus software are based on the signatures or definitions of known viruses.

If antivirus software programs detect a virus, the application informs the user and cleans, deletes, or quarantines any files, directories, or disks affected by the malicious code. The FBI Cybercrime Center reported that billions of dollars are lost every year to repair systems affected by such attacks. Some viruses disable vital systems, disrupting and sometimes disabling the work of hospitals, banks, police departments, and 911 services around the country. For anyone interested in protecting their computers from viruses and for more information on antivirus software, please contact Larry Adams or the SGRC ITS department at (229) 300-0901 or contact Larry Adams via email at ladams@sgrc.us.

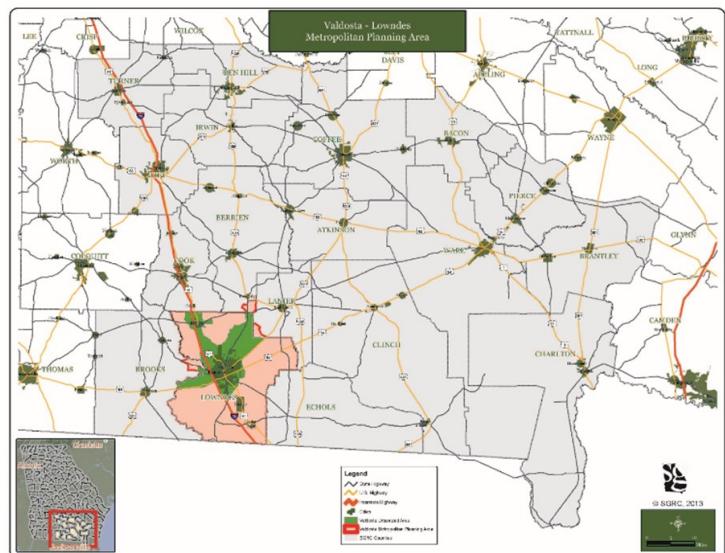
Transportation and Environmental

Metro Planning FY 2022 Work Program

The SGRC, as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Valdosta Urbanized Area, is updating the MPO Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for Fiscal Year 2022. The UPWP is an annual document that lists the planning activities for the coming fiscal year and provides fiscal information in regard to how MPO funds will be spent to help achieve goals and objectives of transportation initiatives and planning processes within the metropolitan planning area. Although this document is geared toward the planning activities and initiatives in the Valdosta-Lowndes County area, it is important to note that consideration for these transportation planning activities also rely profoundly on many of the heavily traveled roads that lead in and out of Lowndes County. Planning activities of the MPO include, but are not limited to, various transportation network studies, urbanized public transportation technical assistance, rural transportation coordination, and road/bridge improvements.

The SGRC Transportation Department staff regularly apply lessons learned from planning within the metropolitan area to transportation projects in the other 17 counties within the SGRC jurisdiction.

Regional Commission staff conduct many in-house studies and plans for the MPO area. A



VLMPO Area within the 18 County Southern Georgia Region

few studies and plans that were completed in-house are the Vision2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Freight Movement Study, and the annual Crash Report. To see various studies that have been conducted and other regional transportation planning information please visit the website at: <https://www.sgrc.us/transportation-plans-studies.html>.

For more information, please contact Corey Hull, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services at chull@sgrc.us.

Community and Economic Development

Lowndes County CDBG-EIP Project to Assist Arglass Yamamura Draws to a Close

Project activities have concluded for the Lowndes County Community Development Block Grant-Employment Incentive Program (CDBG-EIP) grant that literally paved the way for the location of Arglass Yamamura. In February 2020, the SGRC's Community & Economic Development Division assisted Lowndes County in obtaining \$750,000 in CDBG-EIP funds to construct much needed street and drainage improvements to provide adequate transportation infrastructure for the new glass manufacturing facility.

A 500,000 square foot facility has been constructed by Arglass Yamamura. The manufacturing facility has been outfitted with state-of-the-art machinery and equipment, resulting in a private investment of more than \$120 million. The Company has begun production and is well underway in creating the committed 151 new jobs.

Arglass Yamamura is a joint venture partnership between Nihon Yamamura Glass Co., Ltd., led by Koji Yamamura, and Cambium Arglass, a privately-held investment company led by Mr. Jose de Diego-Arozamena. Arglass Yamamura was created to serve customers' needs for flexibility, efficiency, and customization and to help reduce the need to import glass bottles from foreign glass plants. The Company utilizes the latest

glass forming technology and cutting-edge environmental controls for a reduced environmental footprint.

For more information on Community and Economic Development, please contact Kimberly Hobbs at kkhobbs@sgrc.us.



Pictured here is the newly constructed Arglass Road.



Arglass Yamamura glass manufacturing facility.

Local Government Services

Economics of Agriculture and the Interactive Agritourism Guide to South Georgia

Planning and GIS staff are in the process of creating an interactive Agritourism guide for the region. The interactive, web-based guide, focused on the SGRC's 18 county region, is intended to promote the preservation of farmland and to support the agriculturally based economy in southern Georgia. The new guide, based on Agritourism, follows the creation of an ecotourism guide which can be found here: www.sgrcmaps.com/Ecotourism.

Agriculture plays a large role in the economy of Georgia. The 2018 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report identifies a value of over \$13.76 billion to the Georgia economy for all food and fiber production in the state. Including additional industries related to the agricultural supply chain increases the output for agriculture to a \$76 billion total economic contribution to Georgia's \$1.07 trillion economy (based on 2018 figures from UGA's 2020 Ag Snapshots). Additionally, this represents in excess of 399,200 jobs for Georgia's economy. Agritourism is a small portion of the agricultural economic output (0.9% or \$989.36 million) however, with growth in this sector of the economy and an increase in marketing; agritourism's share in the total economic output of agriculture could increase.

Within SGRC's 18-county region, Echols and Coffee Counties lead the region in the level of

agricultural economic output – both counties exceeded \$200 million in 2018. The counties in the region which exceeded \$12 million in Agritourism and Other* economic outputs include Coffee, Berrien, Irwin, Tift, and Turner counties (*Other includes hunting leases, crop insurance, and government payments).



Ashburn, GA

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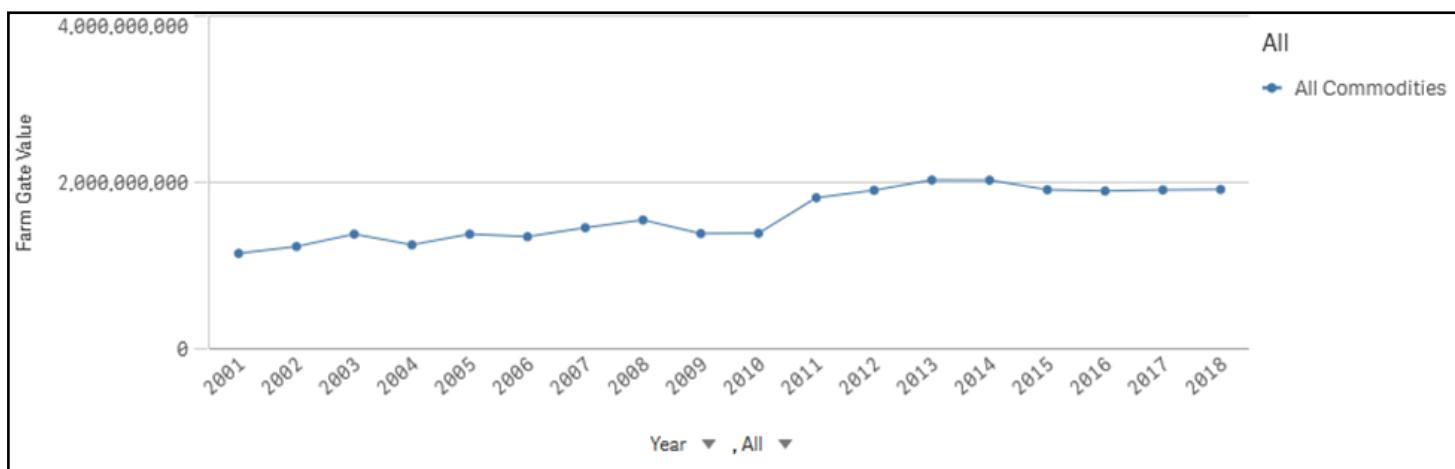
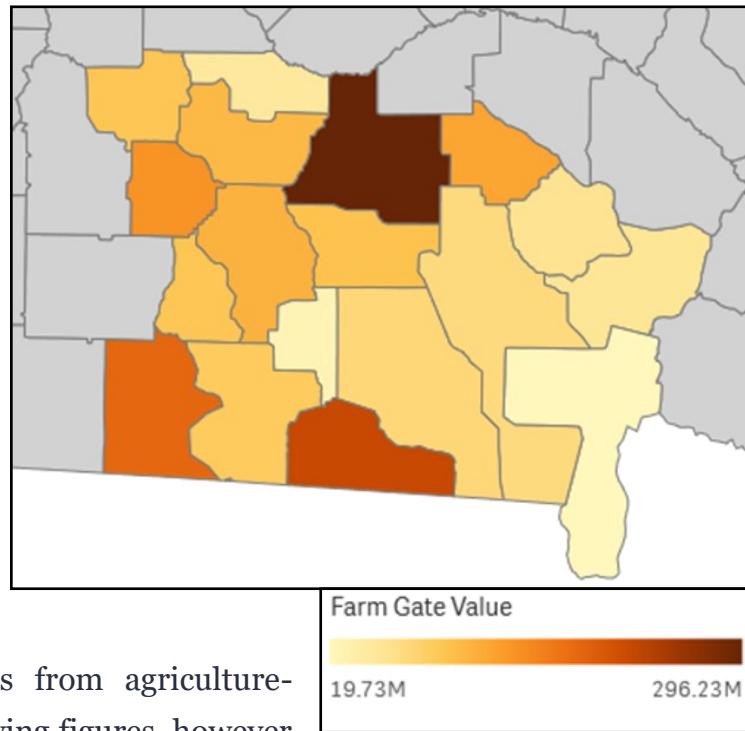
Local Government Services

Economics of Agriculture and the Interactive Agritourism Guide to South Georgia (continued)

The map on the right shows the range of the economic output of agriculture within the SGRC Region (based on Georgia Farm Gate Value Reports – 2018 data). The range spans from \$19.73 million to \$296.23 million per county (it should be noted that this is not valued on a per acre calculation).

The graphic below shows the farm gate values in SGRC Region 11 between 2001 and 2018.

These economic outputs do not include the economic benefit gained by the state from agricultural programs within higher education and research universities. The economic advantages from agriculture-specific programs are not broken out in the following figures, however the total statewide economic impact of the University of Georgia's institutions in fiscal year 2019 includes \$18.5 billion in output (sales), \$12.6 billion in gross regional product, \$8.6 billion in income, and 157,770 full- and part-time jobs (The Economic Impact of University System of Georgia Institutions on their Regional Economies in FY 2019). For additional details and localized assistance, SGRC Planning staff are available at (229) 333-5277.

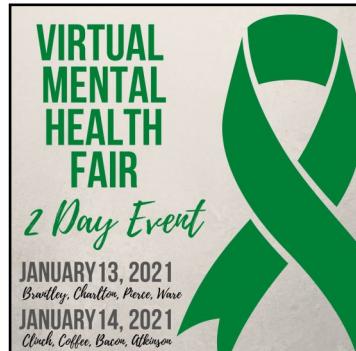


Farm Gate Values in the SGRC Region between 2001 and 2018

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

SGRC-AAA Participates in Virtual Mental Health Fair

On January 13th and 14th, SGRC - AAA staff participated in a Virtual Mental Health Fair with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability's (DBHDD) core services provider Unison Behavioral Health. Unison serves Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Pierce, and Ware Counties. The event featured behavioral health programs and services offered by Unison, along with other resources such as The Magnolia House and The Haven emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence; Clinch Memorial Hospital; The Okefenokee Alliance for the Homeless; and the array of services offered through the SGRC-AAA. With social isolation and environmental stressors at an all time high due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DBHDD and their providers are working diligently to link people with the services that are available to improve mental wellness.



Senior citizens are among the hardest hit in the COVID-19 pandemic for social isolation issues because they must shelter in place in an attempt to avoid contracting the virus. Therefore, the SGRC-AAA will continue its outreach efforts to share resources across providers and services.



SGRC-AAA Shares Information on COVID Vaccine Sites

Effective January 11th, Georgia entered phase 1A+ of the COVID-19 vaccine administration. This phase includes: healthcare workers (physicians, nurses, EMS personnel, laboratory technicians, environmental services, etc.); residents and staff of long-term care facilities; adults aged 65+ and their caregivers, as applicable; and law enforcement, firefighters, 9-1-1 dispatchers and first responders.

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) launched a COVID vaccine locator on the DPH website at <https://dph.georgia.gov/locations/covid-vaccination-site>. The tool allows users to search by county for a vaccine provider in their community, and provides location and contact information for the provider. The DPH cautions that this is not a centralized scheduling tool.

County health departments and private providers are included in the locator. Additional locations statewide will be added when providers are ready to safely administer the vaccine.

Area Agency on Aging

Senior Center Directors Retire

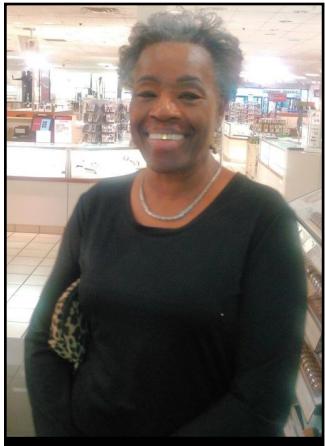
The SCRC-AAA extends its sincere congratulations to two outstanding retirees. On December 11th, Connie Lott retired from the Coffee County Senior Center after 38 years of dedicated service. Lott was well known for her enthusiasm and sense of style. She will be well remembered for arranging travel opportunities and adorning the senior center for countless seasonal and other celebrations for participants.



Connie Lott

On December 31st, Diane Florence retired after 41 years of dedicated service at the City of Ocilla/Irwin County Senior Center. Florence leaves behind her a great legacy of dedication and commitment to the senior citizens in Ocilla and Irwin County.

Scott Courson, Aging Director for the SGRC-AAA said, "We are so grateful for these two professionals and the many years of service they have devoted to senior citizens in our area. We celebrate with them as they retire and we thank them for all of their dedication and hard work!"



Diane Florence

Bacon County Senior Center Staying Safe During COVID-19



Bacon County Senior Center decorating the Christmas Tree



Bacon County Senior Center receiving COVID-19 Vaccinations from Nightingale Nursing Services personnel

Workforce Development

SGRC-Workforce Development Division On-The-Job Training Program Success Story



Southern Georgia

Meet Ricky Rewis!

With the help of WorkSource Southern Georgia's On-The-Job Training program, he was able to learn the skills needed to do his job, all while being paid! He completed training at Beach Timber Company, Inc. in Alma, Georgia, and is now employed as a Machine Operator.



For more Information on On-The-Job Training, contact the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at (912) 285-6097. To learn more about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), contact one of the following service providers: Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, Southern Regional Technical College, Eckerd Connects, or E.T.C. Schools .

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Reports COVID Relief Funds Still Available

As part of the CARES Act Recovery Assistance, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded the SGRC funding in the amount of \$750,000 to capitalize a new EDA-funded Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). According to the EDA, the new EDA RLF funds were intended to help respond to the “unusual and compelling urgency of the Coronavirus pandemic.”

The new RLF has far more flexible terms and has helped the lending area to respond to the negative economic impact as a result of the Coronavirus in a very concrete and measureable way. EDA allows loans made from these new funds the following flexibilities:

- ◊ Waiving the minimum interest rate requirement for one year.
- ◊ Waiving the leveraged capital requirement for one year (leveraged capital refers to the normal requirement for two private dollars lent for every one dollar of RLF funds).
- ◊ Waiving the requirement to demonstrate that credit is not otherwise available.

Rex Dorsey, Director of the SGRC Small Business Lending Division, reports that there is still about \$400,000 in COVID Relief funds available, to qualified applicants, from new EDA RLF funding that was awarded earlier in FY 2021.

The SGRC has operated a highly successful EDA RLF since 1980. Including the first RLF grant that was awarded, over \$21,789,768 million EDA RLF dollars have been lent leveraged by \$44,729,799 million in bank loans. There have been over 4,446 jobs created.

For more information on the CARES Act or more information about SGRC Lending Programs contact Rex Dorsey, Director, at rdorsey@sgrc.us or Michelle Frey, Senior Lending Officer, at mfrey@sgrc.us or (229) 333-5277



Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2021 Meeting Schedule

Meeting Locations TBD

February 25, 2021 – 11:00 am

March 25, 2021 – 11:00 am

April 22, 2021 – 11:00 am

May 27, 2021 – 11:00 am

June 24, 2021 – 11:00 am

July - No Meeting

August 26, 2021 – 11:00 am

September 23, 2021 – 11:00 am

October - No Meeting

October 28, 2021 -

**Area Officials Appreciation Dinner
(subject to change)**

November – No meeting

(combined with December meeting)

December 9, 2021 – 11:00 am

(subject to change)



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

Valdosta Office

1937 Carlton Adams Drive
Valdosta, GA 31601

You can reach us by phone:
(229) 333-5277

You can reach us by fax:
(229) 333-5312



Waycross Office

1725 South Georgia Parkway West
Waycross, GA 31503

You can reach us by phone:
(912) 285-6097

You can reach us by fax:
(912) 285-6126

Email:
sgrc@sgrc.us

Web Address:
www.sgrc.us

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaRC>