

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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Governor Perdue Commends Georgia EPD Coastal Associate For Excellence In Customer Service

Governor Sonny Perdue has recognized Jeannie Lewis Rhodes of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Coastal District Office in Brunswick for Excellence in Customer Service. Ms. Rhodes was nominated for her work related to preventing water pollution and protecting coastal habitats and species.

In explaining why Ms. Rhodes should be considered a role model for customer service in Georgia, the nomination stated in part, “Whether she is meeting a contact for dinner, speaking before a group of citizens, using her Blackberry to be available for in-progress projects or reading the latest rules and regulations, Jeannie is tireless in her efforts to protect Georgia’s coast.” Her work includes bringing innovative stormwater management guidance to address nonpoint source pollution challenges unique to Georgia’s coastal region.

“We know that coastal ecosystem health declines with the amount of land converted for roads, houses, shopping centers and other hard surfaces,” said Ms. Rhodes. “We are adding to our toolbox of conventional strategies to better protect our coast and human health.”

The new strategies include a green infrastructure approach, returning to the basics of protecting the land and resources by providing for more interconnected natural areas, and by identifying and conserving priority water resources and wildlife habitat.

“We must move toward reducing pollution at the source through better site design of our developments, and allowing the natural systems to function to provide basic services such as flood control, water purification, and even recreation,” said Ms. Rhodes.

To address that need, Ms. Rhodes was instrumental in envisioning and managing the development, and locating funding sources for the Coastal Stormwater Supplement (CSS) to Georgia’s Stormwater Management Manual. She had a key role in inspiring, and coordinating with many project partners from both the private and public sectors, including most coastal local governments.

“A project of this magnitude could never be accomplished without the technical assistance and buy-in of many organizations and individuals committed to protection of Georgia’s exceptional coastal resources,” insisted Ms. Rhodes. “This project’s success is also due to the leadership of the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Planning Commission.”

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Recipients of the Governor's Customer Service Award have also proven to have gone "above and beyond" their normal job duties. In so doing, Ms. Rhodes ensured Green Infrastructure concepts and stormwater techniques were introduced, coordinated and integrated with key initiatives such as the Governor's Coastal Comprehensive Plan, the Statewide Wildlife Action Strategy, the Coastal Georgia Land Conservation Initiative, the Statewide Water Management Plan, and the Governor's Environmental Advisory Council reviewing nonpoint source pollution issues.

To be eligible for the prestigious Excellence in Customer Service Award, a nominee's performance should reflect all five of the state's commitments: courteous, helpful, accessible, responsive and knowledgeable.

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