



## **Environmental Advisory Committee**

4:00pm, Thursday, February 12, 2026

City Hall

Council Chambers

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

### **Public Comment:**

All citizens who wish to speak during the meeting must email their first and last name, address, and topic to Nicole DeNeane at [nicoled@iop.net](mailto:nicoled@iop.net) no later than **3:00 p.m. the business day before the meeting**. Citizens may also provide public comment here:

<https://www.iop.net/public-comment-form>

### **Agenda**

1. **Call to Order** and acknowledgement that the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.
2. **Approval of previous meeting's minutes – January 8, 2026**
3. **Citizen's Comments**
4. **Presentation – none**
5. **Old Business**
  - a. Discussion of tracking ponding at beach accesses for SC Aquarium
  - b. Discussion of contract with Fisher Glass Recycling
  - c. Discussion of Mujeres Latinas Signage for cleanup station
  - d. Review of Water Quality Testing recap article for publication
6. **New Business**

Discussion of EAC participation in Hurricane & Resilience Expo
7. **Miscellaneous**

Next meeting: Thursday, March 12, 2026, 4:00pm
8. **Adjournment**



## **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**4:00pm, Thursday, January 8, 2026**

**1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC**

**and broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. Call to order**

Present: Laura Lovins, Cindy Marrs, Sean Popson, Todd Murphy, Eric Cicora, Britton Foy, Susan Smith, Charlotte Webster

Staff Present: Administrator Kerr, Deputy Admin. Kuester

Absent: Council Member Miars

New members, Susan Smith, Britton Foy, and Charlotte Webster introduced themselves to the rest of the Committee.

#### **2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Mr. Cicora nominated Laura Lovins as Chair of the Environmental Advisory Committee. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor of Ms. Lovins as Chair of the Environmental Advisory Committee.

Ms. Lovins nominated Todd Murphy as Vice Chair of the Environmental Advisory Committee. Mr. Cicora seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor of Mr. Murphy as Vice Chair of the Environmental Advisory Committee.

#### **3. Approval of previous meeting's minutes**

**MOTION: Ms. Popson made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 11 meeting, and Ms. Marrs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **3. Citizen's Comments -- none**

#### **4. Presentation – none**

#### **5. Old Business**

#### **A. Review of Water Quality Testing Results Wrap-Up**

Ms. Lovins referenced some typographical errors to be changed in the document. After some discussion, she will add in specific metrics related to the levels of dog E. Coli found in the water. She will also prepare a write up and call to action for the island's newspapers.

Administrator Kerr said the staff will add a brief post in the City's newsletter directing readers to the test results on the Environmental Advisory Committee's page on the City's website.

**B. Discussion of implementation of SC Aquarium projects**

A lengthy discussion ensued as to whether or not posting flooding lines and or flood markers on the island would be helpful. Administrator Kerr pointed out that the City has spent over \$10 million to protect the back of the island from tidal flooding. He's not sure there is a prominent public place on the island where significant flooding will still occur. Remaining flooding locations around the island are slated for mitigation in the near future.

Mr. Murphy wondered if homeowners may want such markers near their homes, concerned it may affect home values or the resale of a home.

Administrator Kerr suggested asking the SC Aquarium if they would be interested in tracking rain-generated ponding at the beach accesses. He also agreed that having the Hugo line at City Hall and the Recreation Center would be helpful. Ms. Lovins will reach out to the SC Aquarium for feedback and the matter will be discussed at the February meeting.

**6. New Business**

**A. Organization of EAC-related matrix activities**

Committee members discussed how best to work through the EAC-related matrix activities. Mr. Cicora sent a link to a shared Google doc for members to review. Ms. Lovins suggested smaller subcommittees be formed to continue this work outside of the meeting.

Mr. Cicora noted that much of the current list includes activities related to the Hurricane & Resilience Expo in February. He also noted the crossover between those activities and the IOP Path document being compiled by Ms. Marrs and Mr. Murphy.

Ms. Lovins will speak to her husband, who has event planning experience, about preparing a proposal for the Committee to consider in their preparations for the Hurricane & Resilience Expo. She suggested Committee members assign themselves to some of the items in the matrix.

**B. Discussion of trip to the new water & sewer plant**

Ms. Lovins said the Water & Sewer Commission has invited the Committee to tour the new Water & Sewer Plant. She shared available dates and times. Administrator Kerr noted that Committee members must attend in groups of three or less because there cannot be a public meeting at the plant. Committee members will email Ms. Lovins their first and second choices for tour times, and she will set up the tours.

**C. Discussion of EAC 2025 Accomplishments**

Ms. Lovins will send individual emails to Committee members requesting their feedback regarding the list of EAC 2025 Accomplishments.

7.       **Miscellaneous Business**

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 4pm.

8.       **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane  
City Clerk

## **UPDATE: Toy Bin & Cleanup Station 25th Avenue Trial Run**

*Provided by Susan Hill Smith*

- Expected install date: Mid to late March.
- We will use an extra toy bin sign created in summer 2022 (when IOP Cleanup Crew established the No Toys Left Behind Bin that is still in use at Front Beach).
  - The extra toy bin sign includes the City of IOP & IOPCC logos. Attaching a photo for reference.
- We will add a new sign to the cleanup station that matches the design of the toy bin sign and include the Mujeres Latinas logo.
  - Proposed wording for new cleanup station sign from Susan:

Cleanup station & toy bin provided by Mujeres Latinas de Carolina del Sur

Please use to help keep our beach clean

Place left-behind toys in toy bin for reuse

Dump litter in trash containers

Return empty buckets to shelves

Thank you!

- IOP Cleanup Crew Cofounder Katrina Limbach designed the original No Toys Left Behind bin sign. She has agreed to design the new cleanup station sign so the two signs will complement each other. Note, the toy bin & cleanup station will be next to one another.
- IOP part-time resident Tom Prinzing has agreed to manufacture the new sign with recycled products through his company, ZING Green Safety Products, as Zing did for the toy bin signs in 2022.



## What does each station include?

- 1 Wooden eco-friendly box with the message: "Use, enjoy, and reuse."
- 1 double hand waste bin dispenser for voluntary waste collection.





# Historical Overview of Water Quality Testing on Isle of Palms (2002–2025)

## How the Testing Began

Concerns about water quality on **Isle of Palms** first emerged in the late 1990s, when elevated fecal coliform levels were detected in drainage ditches. In 2000, City Council paused a proposed septic tank ordinance after residents and officials questioned whether the contamination came from human waste or from animals. Without clear evidence, Council chose to pursue scientific testing.

With support from the **South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)**, IOP initiated a federally funded water quality study.

## Early Testing Results (2002–2003)

### Phase I (2002)

DHEC sampled 15 locations across the island, including drainage outfalls and open water areas. All samples were analyzed for fecal coliform, and select locations were also tested for nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.

### Phase II (2002–2003)

Follow-up testing focused on areas with higher contamination. Advanced DNA analysis was used to determine whether fecal coliform came from human or animal sources.

### Key findings:

- Human-source contamination was limited and localized, primarily near the Forest Trail outfall
- Human waste accounted for only about 20% of fecal coliform at that site
- Less than 10% of samples from open waters showed human sources
- Approximately 70% of contamination was traced to domestic and wild animals

Based on these results, human sewage issues were ruled out.

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## Renewed Testing- 20+Years Later (2024–2025)

Over time, increased housing development with septic systems, stronger storms, and frequent flooding renewed concerns about water quality. In response, the City's Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) initiated a new baseline study in 2024.

## 2024 Baseline Stormwater Study

During a rain event, eight stormwater outfalls across the island were sampled and tested for:

- Total and fecal coliform
- Nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus)
- Oil and grease
- pH
- Total suspended solids (TSS)
- PFAS (at select locations)

### Results (reported in 2025):

- Four outfalls showed elevated “levels of concern”
- The highest-ranking sites were:
  1. **25th Avenue** – extremely high nitrogen levels, suggesting runoff pollution
  2. **36th Avenue / Forest Trail** – elevated nitrogen, phosphorus, and suspended solids
  3. **Myrtle Avenue** – elevated phosphorus and sediment
- Other locations were within or near acceptable ranges.

This study established a modern baseline for additional testing.

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## DNA Testing of High-Concern Areas (2025)

To determine whether human waste was contributing to contamination, the City conducted targeted DNA testing at the three highest-concern residential outfalls.

Samples were collected under both dry-weather and rain-event conditions and screened for *E. coli*. When bacteria levels were high enough, DNA testing was performed to identify sources.

### Results:

- DNA analysis detected **dog waste only**.
  - No human-source *E. coli* was found in any sample, including during heavy rainfall.
  - The likely sources were domestic pets, wild animals, or a combination of both.
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## What the Studies Show

Two comprehensive testing efforts—conducted more than 20 years apart—reached the same conclusion:

- **There is no evidence of a widespread human sewage problem on Isle of Palms**
- **Animal waste, particularly from dogs, is the primary source of fecal contamination**

When pet waste is not picked up, it washes into outfall drains and marshes. These excess nutrients can damage marsh grasses such as *Spartina* and harm fish and shellfish habitats.

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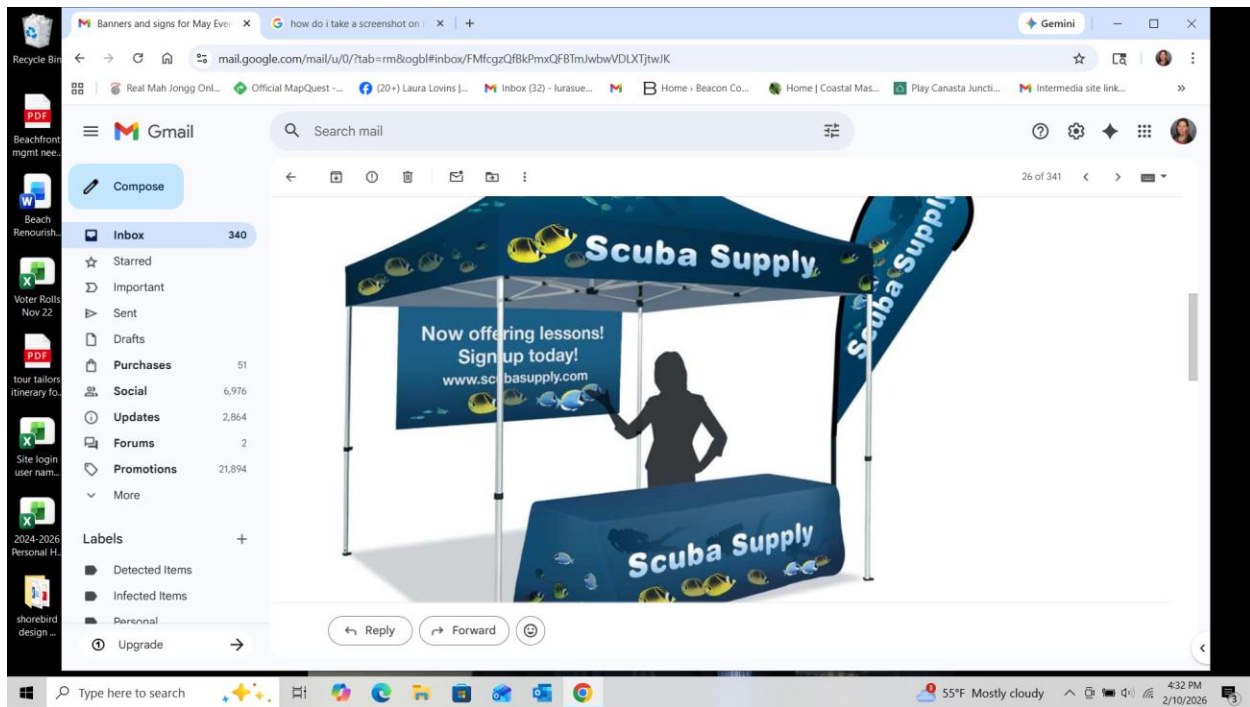
## Next Steps

- The EAC plans to **retest island outfalls in two years** to evaluate changes following a pet-waste education and cleanup initiative planned for 2026.
- Additional attention will be given to **marsh health and resilience**, recognizing the importance of these ecosystems to the island's environmental well-being.

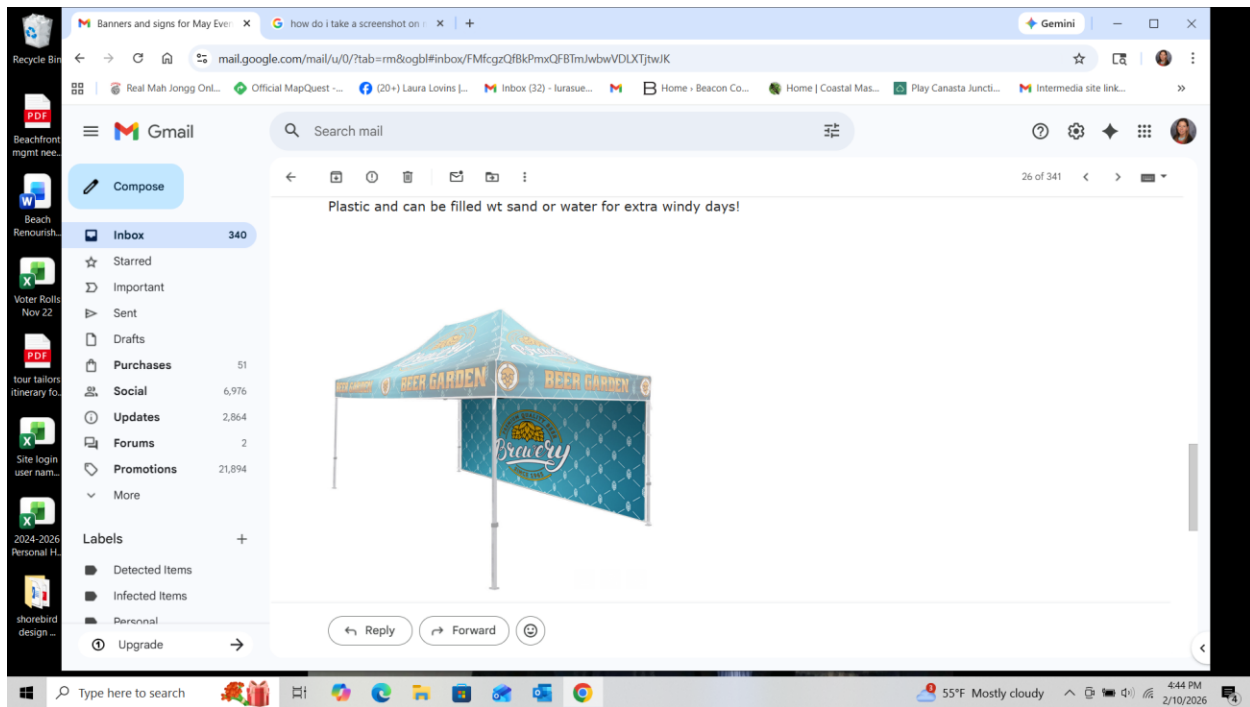
Protecting water quality is a shared responsibility. Small actions—like cleaning up after pets—can make a measurable difference.

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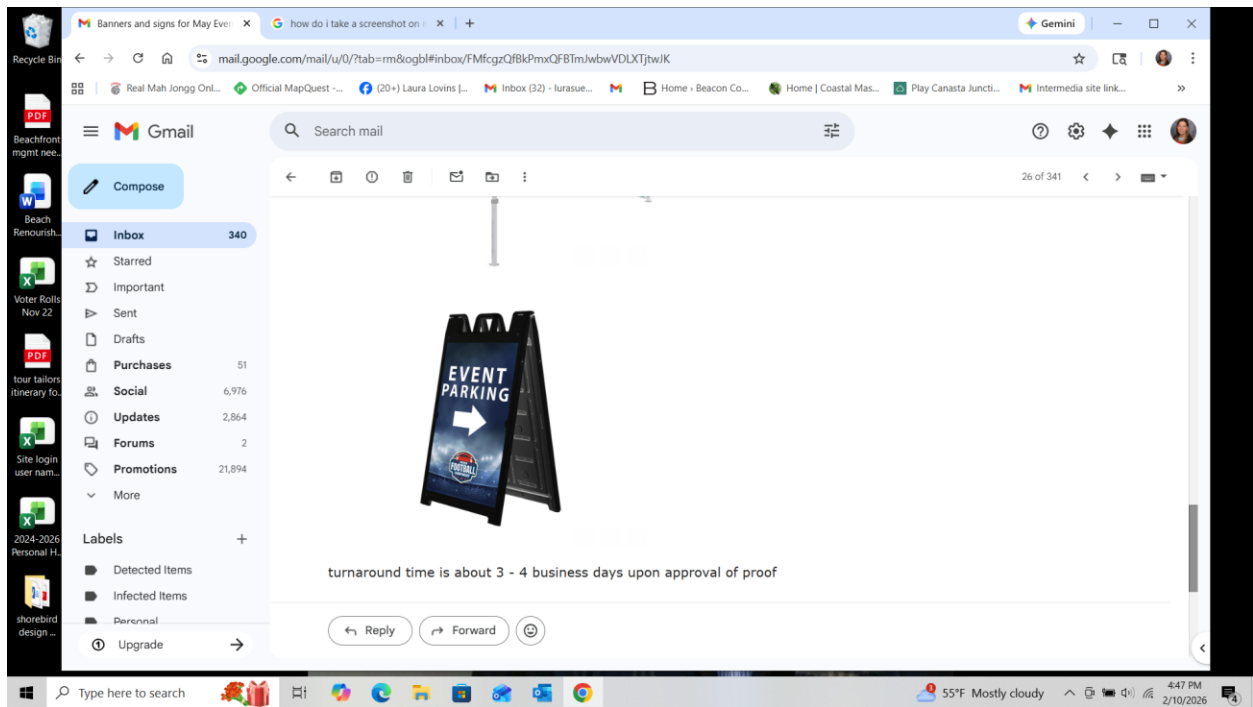
*“Level of concern” refers to contaminant concentrations exceeding recommended environmental guidelines.*



Example of signage for booth at Rec Center expo



Option for signage at Rec Center Expo



An option for a smaller sign that could be next to our table/booth

## Public Dock Eco-education Project Update

- Staff & EAC members can [review draft content](#) for a web page on the city's website that briefly explains the project and provides reference links and resources.
  - Email suggestions and questions directly to Susan at [susanhillsmith@gmail.com](mailto:susanhillsmith@gmail.com).
  - We plan to include PDF downloads of all the sign designs on the page for educational purposes, but will have to work on that with the web team.
  - I'd like to get some legal input on the phrasing about allowed uses of the signs.
  - Public dock visitors can connect to [the web page](#) (which is "in development") via a QR code on the main sign.
- Envirosigns sent the interpretive sign panel designs away for production around Feb. 4. We hope to have the panels ready to install on Isle of Palms in early March. (Public Works has had the posts since November.)
- Based on the sign company's original estimates, we had expected the translation of Kaitlyn's designs into production files to take around a week. Instead, it took around six weeks.
- Factors included the December holidays, a hiccup on our end around small sign sizes and weather issues that prevented the Envirosigns staff from going into the office.
- Kaitlyn also raised quality concerns about the transfer of some illustrations that Envirosigns fixed.
- When we raised concerns about pixelation of photos in the proofs, we were given access to the full-resolution versions via the files in the cloud.

Everything looked fantastic before they sent them to production.

- One last note: before this stage, Kaitlyn shared the PDF's with her past supervisor at SCDNR, who provided an informal review.

## EAC ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2025

- 2-PHASE WATER QUALITY TESTING WITH SPECIFIC DNA RESULTS
- THE EAC JOINED SASMI – SOUTH ATLANTIC SALT MARSH INITIATIVE
- INTERPRETIVE SIGN INSTALLMENT PROJECT FOR THE IOP DOCK/PIER
- GLYPHOSATE ORDINANCE PROHIBITING ITS USE ON CITY OWNED PROPERTY
- “WAVES OF CHANGE” – MUJERES LATINAS TOY BIN & CLEAN-UP-STATION -PILOT PROJECT INSTALLATION APPROVED FOR ONE (1) IOP BEACH PATH IN 2026
- MET WITH REBECCA FANNING (RESILIENCE DIRECTOR FOR SULLIVAN’S ISLAND) AND JENNA STEPHENS (ZONING ADMINISTRATOR & ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER FOR FOLLY BEACH) TO DISCUSS WAYS TO COLLABORATE AND SHARE RESILIENCE PROJECTS AND IDEAS
- CONTINUED THE UPKEEP OF THE NATIVE GARDEN AT PALM BLVD. AND 7<sup>TH</sup> AVE
- STARTED WORK WITH SC AQUARIUM’S SEA RISE AND BLUE LINE PROJECTS FOR POSSIBLE INSTALLATIONS ON IOP IN 2026