



**Insider's Update: Act Local  
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Over the last week, I've given a lot of thought to the notion of patriotism. The news of Donald Trump's election to the highest office in the United States was followed closely by the celebration of Veteran's Day just a few days later. As we learn more about the changes President-Elect Trump will bring to our nation and how they may affect our coast, it is important to consider the root of our patriotism and the actions we can take that will strengthen our nation – from the inside out.

The foundation of my own patriotism comes from a strong sense of home – a concept made up of both people and place. I imagine this is true for most people. Our nation, then, is defined by those of us living and acting within our communities to ensure a prosperous future for ourselves and our children, not by the man or woman sitting in the Oval Office.

This is an important realization for me because today, the threats facing Georgia's coast are unprecedented. By 2050, the U.S. Census predicts that population of coastal Georgia will nearly double over year 2000 population numbers. Studies also show that the rate of land consumption will outpace population growth by seven times. Over this same time period, scientists tell us it is reasonable to expect anywhere from a 0.5 to 2-foot increase in sea level. No matter who is leading our great nation, these are trends that have already been set in motion and to which we must be prepared to respond.

We will experience the effects of these threats first hand – we already are. Therefore, the response must originate with us, at the local level. To a large extent, our local laws and ordinances and those tasked with enforcing them will determine the future landscape of coastal Georgia. The questions of whether or not our residents will live in flood-prone areas, if our communities will remain unique and historic, and if our economy will thrive all depend on the decisions we make in our communities today.

As Americans, we are fortunate to be able to participate in our government. Sometimes we forget that participation is required more than one day in November every four years. We have the opportunity to demonstrate our patriotism every day in ways that strengthen the heart of our nation – our local communities. Here in coastal Georgia, I encourage you to consider a range of possible actions.

**1. Connect the dots.** We live in a part of the world that requires us to have a close and sometimes complicated relationship with nature. That's why it is so important that we participate in conversations about the resources we love and how our

individual and community decisions affect them. Growth, flooding, this summer's record sea turtle nesting, last night's giant moon over the marsh – these are all experiences, community issues, and current events that are shared by and relevant to everyone who calls these 100-miles home. So talk about them. Celebrate them. Question them. And don't be afraid to connect the resources you care about to the decisions made our communities.

The mission of One Hundred Miles is to preserve, protect, and enhance our 100-mile coast. OHM regularly weighs in on decisions, hosts discussions, and makes recommendations about ways to improve our coastal quality of life – which is made up of both our natural resources and economic opportunities. As these discussions occur, we will keep you informed, and I hope you will continue to help us offer solutions to our local decision-makers.

**2. Buy local.** Vibrant communities can thrive despite decisions made at the state or federal level. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses make up 97.7% of all employers in Georgia and employ 44.8% of our state's private sector labor force. The simple choice – to buy, shop, eat, act locally – can build and bolster our local, state, and US economy, while also benefiting our environment.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to check out OHM's [Holiday Market](#) – an online marketplace that celebrates talented artists and small businesses from across our 100 miles. Our market will come down after the holidays but we hope it will help you establish new habits and relationships with vendors to support all year round!

**3. Lead.** It starts with one simple step. Maybe you bring your own bags to the grocery store, or attend the City Commission meetings to speak about issues affecting your community. Perhaps you are a writer, nature photographer, or painter. Or maybe you are ready to make the leap and run for elected office. However you channel your passion for our coast, find others like you. Introduce yourself. Develop relationships based on these common values. The power of our collective action will demonstrate our priorities, and in a very real sense, start a sea change for our coast.

In that spirit, One Hundred Miles is hosting our first annual [Choosing to Lead Conference](#) on Jekyll Island on January 7, 2017. It's an opportunity for Georgians of all walks of life to unite behind our shared love for our coast. We will have workshops and speakers to inspire us all. I hope to see you there!

There has never been a better time to demonstrate your love for coastal Georgia. So, my directive to you is this: decide what to do and go do it. And do it here. Our coast deserves our pride, our protection, and our patriotism.