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Town hires May River cleanup consultants

BY FRANK MORRIS

BLUFFTON TODAY

Bluffton has a consulting team on board to draft an "action plan" to clean up, protect and sustain the May River, where fecal coliform contamination has closed upstream oyster beds to harvesting.

The town's Growth Management Department announced Wednesday it has hired a team led by MacTec Engineering and Consulting Inc., a nationwide company headquartered in Alpharetta, Ga., for \$69,400.

"It's going to be a project driver and a policy driver and its going to prioritize May River-centric Town Council goals, and it's going to identify potential funding mechanisms," said Marc Orlando, deputy town manager and growth management director.

Team members include the Center for Watershed Protection, a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation based in Ellicott City, Md.; Ward Edwards, a planning and engineering company with offices in Port Royal and Pooler, Ga.; and Thomas & Hutton, an engineering, planning and surveying company in Savannah.

A draft is to be ready by Feb. 18, 2011, for review by agencies, boards, commissions and committees. The original target was for completion by the end of this year, but the hiring process took longer than expected.

The town advertised on Sept. 21 for proposals due by Oct. 12. Town administrators also received and considered proposals from TetraTec, headquartered in Pasadena, Calif., and Applied Technology Management Inc., headquartered in Gainesville, Fla.

The proposals request noted the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's August decision to close a 4-mile, 900-acre stretch of May River headwaters to shell fishing due to rising fecal coliform levels that exceeded Food and Drug Administration safety guidelines for consumption. The Bluffton Oyster Co. continues to harvest from downstream beds rated unrestricted.

"A watershed action plan is needed to provide the guidance necessary to identify and implement action that can improve and protect the water quality of the May River," the request for action-plan proposals said. "The intent ... is to protect the quality of life for greater Bluffton residents and to enable the vitality of the river and surrounding community to continue.

The town's help-wanted request said the plan is to:

- Summarize background information on the watershed's current and anticipated water quality conditions.
- Identify potential sources of pollution and river impairment.
- Include development of strategies to identify effective projects.
- Identify capital and other projects for implementation
- Give engineer's opinion of cost and a projects implementation schedule.
- Give quantifiable goals to measure success.
- Include ways to pay for projects, such as taxes, fees and grants.

Find more project information online at www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/Governing/requestforproposals.htm or contact Orlando at 706-4511 or morlando@townofbluffton.com; John Carmack, town environmental sustainability engineer, at 706-4512 or jcarmack@townofbluffton.com