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Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Newsroom" (2012). *Newsroom*. 1057.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/newsroom/1057>

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Georgia Southern University Study Adding Protection to the Coast

FEBRUARY 8, 2012

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A Georgia Southern University researcher recently received a \$377,000 grant to better protect the southeastern coast of the United States from the threats of flooding, storms, hurricanes and erosion.

The Governors' South Atlantic Alliance (GSA), an environmental organization headed by the governors of the four involved states – Georgia, South Carolina, Florida and North Carolina – received \$1.06 million from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Regional Ocean Partnership federal funding opportunity to fund several grants.

"We are extremely pleased with the investment that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has made in this program," said Charles Patterson, Vice President for Research and Economic Development at Georgia Southern, "and we look forward to active participation in the multi-state efforts to support the region's coastal and marine spatial planning goals."

Georgia Southern researcher Clark Alexander's project will work to enhance the capabilities of a software tool called AMBUR (Analyzing Moving Boundaries Using R), which will determine the coastal areas that are most vulnerable to natural hazards. The data, combined with economic factors, will determine the pros and cons of coastal development in vulnerable areas.

AMBUR was created by Georgia Southern professor Chester Jackson, and the project to develop the tool on a larger scale will last 18 months. Partners in all four states will gather data throughout the process.

"The core of the project is to develop a new hazard-vulnerability tool that can be applied in the whole region," said Alexander, director of Georgia Southern's Applied Research Laboratory and professor at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography in Savannah, Ga. "Project partners are going to be gathering the data sets that we need, and we are going to use the tool in all four states. At the end of the day, we'll be providing this tool so anybody can use it. Hopefully it will be adopted across the U.S."

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