In This Issue:

- Taming the Wilderness
- Katie Passes Pack Test
- Ches at TIMU Symposium
- Monitoring Updates

Taming the Wilderness through First Aid

Network Staff Completed Certification Course

Members of the Southeast Coast Network staff participated in a two-day Wilderness First Aid Certification Course, held in January at the SECN office in Athens, Georgia. The course, completed every two years to maintain certification, included classroom instruction combined with simulated real-life scenarios created on the grounds of UGA's Whitehall Forest, where the office is located.

Clockwise from top right, Eric Starkey and Myra Kincaid check on accident victim, Mallorie Davis; Mallorie wraps the "injured" arm of Katie Dagastino; Forbes Boyle splints Stephen Cooper's "fractured" leg; and accident victim Forbes, gets checked by Katie, Ches Vervaeke and Michael Parrish. *NPS photos / SECN*

Katie Passes Pack Test for Firefighting

In January, SECN Hydrologic Technician Katie Dagastino completed a Work Capacity or Pack Test, a fitness requirement for wildland firefighters in the National Park Service. It's a 3-mile hike with a 45-pound pack to be completed in 45 minutes or less. It is a minimum requirement each year to be eligible for fire assigments. Go Katie!

Right, Katie Dagastino

SECN Coastal Ecologist WIlliam "Ches" Vervaeke gives his presentation at the Timucuan Science and History Symposium on January 23 at the Ribault Club. *Photo courtesy of Steve Kidd, TIMU*

Ches Presents at TIMU Symposium

Ches Vervaeke, SECN Coastal Ecologist, presented at the Timucuan Science and History Symposium, January 23 in the Ribault Club on Fort George Island. The annual event is hosted by the Timucuan Parks Foundation and National Parks Conservation Association. Ches presented "Tracking Change in Timucuan Ecological And Historical Preserve: Wetland Elevation Change and Shoreline Movement," highlighting the SECN's shoreline change and salt marsh elevation protocols. Both programs now have five years of data to analyze and establish trends. Ches covered the methods for collecting the data and shared some of the preliminary results.

Monitoring Updates: 2026 Field Season is Near

Landbirds and Anurans

Automated recording device (ARD) deployment for 2026 is underway. Parks scheduled for late January and February include Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and Fort Pulaski National Monument. The ARDs for Cape Hatteras National Seashore will be deployed in February as well. The ARDs for Fort Matanzas National Monument and Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve will be deployed in March.

Water Quality

Water quality data collection was conducted in January at fixed-station sites in Congaree National Park, Fort Pulaski National Monument, Cumberland Island National Seashore, Canaveral National Seashore, Fort Matanzas National Monument, and Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. Cape Lookout National Seashore and Cape Hatteras National Seashore will continue via park staff assistance. A sonde run is scheduled for the week of February 23 and will include sonde housing updates at Fort Pulaski National Monument and Canaveral National Seashore. 2026 is an off schedule year for park-wide assessments.

Wadeable Streams

In 2026, wadeable stream surveys will be conducted at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park and Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park. Tentattive schedule is late April to May.

Terrestrial Vegetation

Planning continues for 2026 but expectations are that monitoring surveys will be conducted at Canaveral National Seashore and Horseshoe Bend National Military Park along with at the wetlands at Congaree National Park (rest of the park completed in 2025). Data summary reports are being drafted for parks monitored in 2023 including Fort Matanzas National Monument, Fort Pulaski National Monument and Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Coastal Elevation and Shoreline Change

Reading surface elevation tables (SETs) and shoreline change surveys will start in the spring.

Scenes from the Field. Above, Hydrologic Technician Katie Dagastino grabbed this shot at Fort Pulaski National Monument during her January sonde run.

Please Note:

The SECN FY2025 Annual Report was distributed January 27. Work on the FY2026 Work Plan continues with completion by the end of this month. Stay tuned for information on the FY2026 Steering Committee and Board Meeting.

For More Info, Click Here: Southeast Coast Inventory & Monitoring Network (U.S. National Park Service)