

From: [Stein, Jonathan](#)
To: [Harrison, Brenda](#)
Cc: [Hoang, Anhthu](#)
Subject: FW: Gullah Geechee civil rights issue
Date: Tuesday, May 9, 2023 2:48:59 PM

Received today.

Best Regards,

Jonathan M. Stein

Attorney Advisor – [Office of External Civil Rights Compliance](#)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights

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From: (b)(6) Privacy, (b)(7)(C) Enf. Privacy

Sent: Tuesday, May 9, 2023 1:50 PM

To: Regan, Michael <Regan.Michael@epa.gov>; Dorka.Lillian@epa.gov; Stein, Jonathan <Stein.Jonathan@epa.gov>; Holtzclaw, Brian (he/him/his) <Holtzclaw.Brian@epa.gov>; Wilson, Daphne <Wilson.Daphne@epa.gov>

Subject: Gullah Geechee civil rights issue

May 9, 2023

Dear esteemed members of the Environmental Protection Agency,

My name is (b)(6) Privacy, (b)(7)(C) Enf. Privacy I have lived in St. Helena South Carolina for almost 5 years. I am a homeowner and resident. I extend my profound appreciation to: Lillian Dorka, Jonathan Stein, Brian Holtzclaw and Daphne Wilson, for their prompt and efficient response to my inquires. I write to discuss a grave situation unfolding on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. It is one of the last bastions of the Gullah Geechee culture.

St. Helena is in Beaufort County, South Carolina. It is one of the last

remaining places that the Gullah Geechee people and culture have to call their own. They have been here since the 1600's. Over the past 40 years, many parcels such as Hilton Head, Dafuskie Island and Bluffton have all but eradicated the Gullah Geechee culture and people from their land. It is also the home of Penn center, which the first school founded for the education (1862), of the African American, also known as the Gullah Geechee, in this part of the country. At this time there are about 11,000 people living on St Helena. Most of who are Gullah Geechee. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote part of his "I've got a Dream" speech on the grounds of the Penn center. The Gullah Geechee cultural corridor reaches from Jacksonville, North Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida.

Somewhere in the past two years, a developer named (b)(6) Privacy, (b)(7)(C) Enf. Privacy has purchased a piece of land called Pine Island/St. Helenaville. His intention is to build a luxury resort with a gated community, 18 hole golf course and 60 plus homes and cottages. The homes will be priced in the upwards of a million dollars per home.

If this developer is allowed to build this resort with its gated community, golf course, houses and cottages the significant increase in the tax base of St Helena Island citizens will FORCE the Gullah Geechee from their homes and land. Once again further oppressing and working towards the extinction of this unique and culturally rich people. It will also encroach upon the historic and archaeology rich national heritage corridor of the Native American and Gullah Geechee culture as well as the delicate and fragile eco system and environment of the low country on Pine Island and St. Helenaville.

In 1999, A Cultural Protective Overlay, (CPO), was developed with Beaufort County and the residents of St. Helena Island. The wording includes the prohibition of Resorts, gated communities and 18 hole golf courses. (b)(6) Privacy, (b)(7)(C) Enf. Privacy plan contradicts the overlay's meaning and purpose. St. Helena is culturally significant as a the seat of the Gullah Geechee.

At this time, it has been noted that (b)(6) Privacy, (b)(7)(C) Enf. Privacy has met with and

discussed this plan with the Beaufort county administrator, (Eric Greenway), county legal counselor, district councilperson and county staff over 50 times, behind closed doors, privately.

A request was made for the CPO committee to strengthen the language and text amendments to the county development code (CDC): Article 3, division 3.1, section 3.1.70 land use definitions, division 3.4, sections 3.4.4.10-overlay zones purpose ad 3.4.50-Cultural Protection Overly, (CPO) zone standards to update land use definitions, recreation facility: golf course; to update definitions, regulations, and standards in the CPO zone.

At this time all three of the public meeting have been held at this time to adopt the changes to the CPO. Three “readings” have to be approved for the county to adopt changes in the language meant to strengthen and clarify the CPO. Last night at a county meeting the third reading was approved.

I have, in fact, spoken at these two meetings. These meeting are available on “YOUTUBE”, www.BEAUFORTCOUNTYSC.GOV, Hargray channels 9 and 113, Comcast channel 2, and spectrum channel 1304. They are listed as “Beaufort County Council Meetings. The dates of these meeting are: January 6, 9, February 13, March 14, April 10, April 24, May 1, 2023.

The fact that this developer can come to a place that he has no known connection with, emotionally, culturally, otherwise, and build this luxury gated golf course resort is an infringement on the way of life, religion, and culture of the Gullah Geechee people.

The developer and his team of attorneys are in constant search of ways to subjugate the situation on Pine Island as they have run into opposition by way of petitions from “Change.org with 11,000 plus signatures”, huge community rally with over 500 residents attending, standing room only county council meetings and dozens of articles in regional newspapers, and ongoing correspondence with Beaufort county citizens and the

Beaufort county council.

The natural environment that will be impacted includes: loggerhead turtles, sea birds, shore birds, porpoise, oysters, crabs, fish, sharks, shrimp, and alligators and much more wildlife due to the destruction of the water ways that are connecting to the Gateway of the Ace Basin. In addition the plan includes docks, 60 wells, 60 septic systems.

If this luxury gated golf course community is allowed, Not only will fishing, and harvesting be impacted negatively, so will the heritage, culture and way of life for the Gullah Geechee on St. Helena Island. These people have prayed, lived, worked and made a way of life here. It is time to stop this development and allow the people of St. Helena, SC to live in the beautiful paradise that they have loved for over 300 years.

It is time to protect and preserve this culture and sensitive ecosystem and its PEOPLE.

PLEASE HELP US NOW!

Sincerely,

(b)(6) Privacy, (b)(7)(C) Ent. Privacy

[Redacted signature]