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Participatory GIS: Evaluation and Comparison of Two Coastal Case Studies

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Stakeholder participation has become widely recognized as a critical component of natural resource planning, management, and decision-making. Participatory geographic information systems (PGIS), one of many techniques for involving stakeholders, is a practice in which local communities are invited to share their knowledge and opinions to help generate maps for informing management and decision-making. Participatory GIS can foster collaboration among stakeholders, capture important knowledge from indigenous or underrepresented individuals, and provide a focal point for discussions, among other benefits. This project evaluates and compares two coastal PGIS projects coordinated by the NOAA Coastal Services Center. In one case study, the Center and the Ace Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve supported the non-profit Edisto Island Preservation Association in making recommendations on an update to the local county comprehensive plan. In the other case study, the Center and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve assisted the non-profit Great Works Regional Land Trust in developing a strategic plan for the land trust's conservation work. Although the goals of the two projects were quite different, the Center employed a similar PGIS framework at both sites. This presentation provides an evaluation of that framework and a broad comparison of the two case studies.

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