

Governors' South Atlantic Alliance Partnership Agreement

Establishment

The South Atlantic Alliance (Alliance) is a voluntary partnership among the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Mission

The mission of the South Atlantic Alliance is to significantly increase regional collaboration among South Atlantic states, with federal agency partners and other stakeholders, to sustain and enhance the environmental (coastal/marine), natural resource, economic, public safety, social, and national defense missions of the respective states and the South Atlantic region.

Goals

The goals of the Alliance shall be to provide:

- An organizational structure and forum for cooperation, collaboration, coordination and a clearinghouse for information supporting cooperative activities, and coastal and ocean decision making that supports effective planning and ensures resource sustainability;
- Regional sustainability of resources that supports individual state requirements;
- Regional alignment of decisions resulting in mutual mission accomplishment;
- Cooperative planning and leveraging of resources to produce multiple state and regional benefits;
- Preservation of the historical, cultural, and social heritage of each state and the region;
- Integrated research, observation, monitoring, and mapping of the South Atlantic region leading to common and coordinated data and information to enhance science-based decision making;
- Increased awareness of challenges facing the South Atlantic region; and
- Integrated solutions that consider all systems requirements (i.e., ecosystems, economic systems, social systems, and national defense systems) at state, federal and local levels.

Organization

The Alliance structure is designed to promote maximum communication, coordination, action and results. The Alliance is designed to be state-led. The actions of the Alliance will complement, and take advantage of, other ongoing regional efforts. Most importantly, the Alliance will respect individual state policy making requirements. The structure is composed of an Executive Group, a Steering Group, Technical Teams, and Supporting Partners.

1. Alliance Executive Group

The Governors of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida constitute the Executive South Atlantic Alliance Group. The Governors provide strategic vision and guidance to the Alliance Steering Group (see below) for developing and implementing plans of action. The Governors will use interstate executive ties to keep Alliance activities connected with other state, regional, and national activities in a complementary manner. The Supporting Partners, as appropriate,

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may be invited to serve as members of the Steering Group. The Governors may send a designee to Executive Group meetings.

2. Alliance Steering Group

Each Governor will appoint a representative to the Alliance Steering Group. The individual Steering Group representatives shall be senior state officials who oversee actions within their respective states that are relevant to the success of the Alliance. Those representatives will serve until such time as a new appointment is made by the Governor of their respective states. The chair of the Steering Group will rotate amongst members.

The Alliance Steering Group is responsible for planning and organizing the activities of the Alliance. The Steering Group will direct the development and tracking of action plans and Alliance priorities. The group shall have the authority to eliminate, establish new, or modify priority issue areas and teams. The Steering Group, as appropriate, may invite Supporting Partners to serve as members of the Steering Group.

3. Issue Area Technical Teams

Issue Area Technical Teams are established to develop and implement issue area goals, objectives, strategies and schedules to address priority issues within that particular area. Each state will assume the leadership for one or more issue areas. The Steering Group member for that state will select a technical lead from within their state. Interested federal agencies and other partners may be invited to designate a liaison for each issue area to work directly with and support each Issue Area Technical Team.

Technical Teams will develop the initiatives and related tasks/products to implement the action plan. Technical Teams integrate policy and science requirements by identifying opportunities (objectives) and actions that influence identified issues, produce solutions (products) of mutual use and multiple benefits, and result in regional outcomes.

4. Supporting Partners

The Alliance Supporting Partners consist of federal, local, academic, non-governmental organization (NGO), and private sector entities. Supporting Partners bring resources (e.g., people, time, money, equipment, and technology) and technical and policy expertise to the Alliance activities (Steering Group and Technical Teams) to complement issues of mutual interest. The partners also integrate Alliance priorities into the complementary actions taken by their respective agencies.

a. Federal Agency Partnership

The success of the Alliance is enhanced by strong support from federal agency partners. Federal partners bring established experience from diverse areas of expertise and the ability to integrate multiple federal resources that contribute to the long-term environmental and economic health of the South Atlantic. The federal partners can advance federal collaboration in direct response to coastal and ocean issues identified by

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the Alliance. These partners also possess the capability to explore innovative mechanisms for ecosystem management, integrating coastal and ocean observations, developing decision-support systems based on policy and science, and emphasizing local, state and federal collaboration. Specifically, the benefits from federal partners' support will include:

- Supporting South Atlantic state leadership;
- Supporting work groups with federal co-leads and/or technical members that can most effectively contribute to a federal response within each of the focus areas;
- Coordinating an innovative and integrated federal response to the state-drafted white papers that address identified needs and issues;
- Identifying high-impact federal program integration opportunities to address issues identified by the Alliance;
- Identifying near-term deliverables and commitments that will increase the likelihood of long-term Alliance success; and
- Assisting in, and providing input for, development of the *Governors' South Atlantic Alliance Action Plan*.

The Alliance invites the federal government to designate a lead or co-leads to provide direct support to the Alliance and coordinate the participation of the various federal agencies.

b. NGO and Private Sector Supporting Partnerships

NGOs and the private sector likewise bring extensive experience and capabilities to further the goals of the Alliance. NGOs, in particular, have a long history in the South Atlantic region cooperatively working with the states and federal and local agencies. Their unique ability to directly support and solicit action will complement Alliance activities of mutual interest. As such, the Alliance invites active engagement from the NGO community throughout its development and implementation.

The private sector is also key in supporting the goals of the Alliance. Their knowledge of best business practices and industrial design can advance cooperative planning, public awareness of issues facing the South Atlantic, and integrated solutions. The private sector partnership can also be a vehicle for introducing new technology, industrial practices, and opportunities for public/private ventures.

c. Local Partnerships

Local partner input and participation in Alliance activities is essential to effective South Atlantic coastal and marine sustainability. Local and municipal participation ensures complementary action to local efforts and ultimate regional success.

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State, local, and federal agency staff and individuals with expertise in Alliance issues from universities and research institutions, business, NGOs, stakeholder groups, and members of the public will be invited to participate in the work of the Issue Area Technical Teams.

Governors' South Atlantic Alliance Action Plan

To ensure transparency and accountability, the Alliance will publish a *Governors' South Atlantic Alliance Action Plan*. This plan will be reviewed annually for progress and updated every five years for content. The action plan will focus on priority issue areas that all four member states identify as being of mutual interest and likely to benefit from regional collaboration. It will be action-based, contain clear goals, measurable objectives, and integrated strategies for achievement. Public involvement will be encouraged and facilitated during the development of the regional plan and any individual state or other supporting plan.

Meetings

1. Annual Meeting

The South Atlantic Alliance shall hold at least one general meeting each year at a time and place determined by consensus of the Steering Group and the availability of the Governors of each state or their designees. The Steering Group will report on accomplishments, challenges and emerging issues. The group will also realign priorities for the coming 12-24 month period as necessary.

2. Action Plan Implementation

Issue Area Technical Teams will hold teleconferences, meetings and conferences as needed to complete activities assigned to them in the *Governors' South Atlantic Alliance Action Plan*.

Decision Process

The Alliance will function in a manner that optimizes the ability to develop and sustain an effective working relationship among the partners and results in mutual mission accomplishment as well as multiple benefits. Specifically, partners will identify and act on opportunities for mutual gain. The Alliance will be respectful of differences and individual state authorities, policies and jurisdictions. Recognizing these differences will influence the issues and approaches undertaken by the Alliance. The Alliance, and its Steering Group, will operate on a consensus basis. Participation by partners in any activity under this partnership is voluntary.

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Duration

This agreement is intended to be a living document. The Alliance Steering Group may review and amend this agreement, with concurrence from the Governors, as needed.



Bev Perdue
Governor of North Carolina



Mark Sanford
Governor of South Carolina



Sonny Perdue
Governor of Georgia



Charlie Crist
Governor of Florida