

- The majority of Cumberland Island is owned or controlled by the National Park Service, and portions of the island are protected by its National Seashore and Wilderness Area designations.
- Cumberland Island has remained largely protected from commercial and new residential development as a result of its designation as a National Seashore.
- In addition to its vibrant history, it is home to pristine maritime forests, undeveloped beaches, and extensive salt marshes, supporting a rich biodiversity of wildlife and plants.

#### **Recreational value:**

- The Cumberland Island National Seashore is a treasured component of our national park system.
- Cumberland Island attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year, making the island economically as well as ecologically important to Camden County and its residents.
- The undeveloped 87-acre tract borders the northern edge of the National Park Service's Sea Camp campground, and is directly adjacent to one of the most popular visitor destinations in the park, which features a ferry landing, visitor center, and campground.
- By the National Park Service's estimate, the Cumberland Island National Seashore received approximately 60,000 visitors in 2015 alone, nearly 45,000 of which were non-local.
- Visitors seeking to enjoy the more wild northern areas of the island must pass through the 87-acre tract either on the single-lane, unpaved Main Road or on a hiking path called the Parallel Trail.
- If the proposed subdivision were allowed, structures could be built within full view of the marsh, the beach, the main road, and the parallel trail.

#### **Local and national opposition:**

- Georgians and people from all over the country have expressed concerns about this decision because they believe that it may encourage future development on the iconic island, a place recognized internationally for its natural beauty and wild character.
- In addition to filing comments opposing the variance, SELC testified at the hearing along with several other groups and concerned individuals.
- More than 700 public comments were submitted to the Camden County Planning Commission from all over the state and country urging the commission to deny the variance, and close to 10,000 other individuals have voiced concerns through online petitions.
- Citizens want to see Cumberland Island's wild, natural state protected, and are concerned that this variance would lead to a substantial detriment to that natural state.

#### **Ecological importance of GA coast:**