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## GEC to launch TECH Talks series to teach residents about Superfund sites

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A new series offered by Glynn Environmental Coalition aims to provide a resource for residents seeking a better understanding of the four hazardous waste sites in Glynn County.

Glynn Environmental Coalition will kick off its virtual TECH Talks series at 6:30 p.m. Monday in hopes of giving the community accessible information about the county's federally-designated Superfund sites.

Each episode of the series, hosted via Zoom and Facebook Live, will help raise awareness about the status of the area's hazardous waste sites and what residents can do to help. The first episode will be a live discussion about what a Superfund site is and where the sites are located in Glynn County.



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GEC has provided technical assistance to the community about the Superfund sites since its founding, said Rachael Thompson, executive director.

GEC also works to keep the community informed about public meetings and comment periods while educating residents about the history and ongoing developments at the sites.

“Historically one of the pillars of our technical assurance program was our technical assistance reports, and those are four to eight page reports that explain some of the more lengthy and detailed pieces of the Superfund process,” Thompson said. “They are made in coordination with our technical advisor, who is a third party consultant.”

The technical advisor reviews information provided by agencies like the EPA and condenses it to a shorter report. These reports, while easier to digest than the lengthier ones provided by federal and state agencies, can still require a certain level of previous understanding or scientific background to be easy to read, Thompson said.

“One of the things I’ve heard pretty frequently from various members of the community was that the technical assistance reports, they are really good, but for some people, something that text-heavy... it’s really not comprehensible for all reading levels,” she said.

GEC’s solution to address this gap is to provide videos that delve into what residents need to know about the Superfund sites, including their history, the clean-up efforts that are being undertaken or planned and the impacts and risks of living near these toxic areas.

These virtual events are also meant to be interactive, so participants will have the opportunity to ask questions as well.

Thompson has many years experience explaining these complicated topics and making information about Superfund sites in Glynn County accessible for local residents. She and her team intends for the new TECH Talks series to reach anyone in the community who wishes to better understand this issue.

The events will be fairly short, she said. The first is billed to be 30 minutes.



"It's not terribly long," she said. "It's short enough so that maybe if you're folding laundry or you're washing your dishes or some people listen to podcasts and things at work you can tune in and capture some of that information."

Those interested can also go back and refamiliarize themselves with this information, especially when a new meeting or public comment period regarding specific sites is coming up.

"The Superfund world is just so technical that you could probably hear the same presentation three times and you'll get something different out of it every time," Thompson said. "So there's this layering on of information that has to happen, and because the EPA cannot be here at the frequency that is necessary for that layering on of information we're trying to fill that gap."

Five TECH Talks are scheduled this year, each for the fourth Monday every other month other than November. GEC will also continue offering field trips to the Superfund sites, and those will take place on the following Saturday of each TECH Talk event. The next field trip is Feb. 3.

The first TECH Talk will focus on the basics of Superfund sites and which ones are found in Glynn County.

"This one is really just a brief introduction to Superfunds, and there's a video that we'll play as well that talks about where the Superfund program came from," Thompson said. "(The video is) actually something that was developed in partnership with the College of Coastal Georgia, which was really awesome."

The first event will begin with a 10- to 15-minute presentation that will be followed by viewer questions.

The community will also benefit from the raised awareness about Superfund sites and the cleanup efforts in this area, Thompson said.

"Our target is to help people that live near these hazardous waste sites have another option to increase their own understanding because people understand things in different ways," she said. "Some people prefer to read a few pages of a report. But some people prefer to have a video, and I know my personal learning style is that I like someone to walk through it with me."

This series is another way GEC can share this important information, she said.

"People have a right to know what's going on in their backyard, and it's our job to help them with that," she said.

RSVP at [glynnenvironmental.org/events](https://glynnenvironmental.org/events) to receive the Zoom information.



Lauren McDonald