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State Underwater Archaeology Managers Meeting (SUAMM II)

By Christopher F. Amer

From September 19-22, 2002, SCIAA's Maritime Research Division and Georgia's Department of Natural Resources hosted the second State Underwater Archaeology Managers Meeting (SUAMM II). This year's meeting was held at historic Rice Hope Plantation, located near Charleston, South Carolina on the Copper River. The meeting assembled state underwater archaeologists from around the country, who met to support Georgia in developing an underwater archaeology program to manage and research its underwater cultural heritage. Building on the success of SUAMM I, held in Texas two years ago, this year's meeting provided a venue for free and frank exchange of information about each state's strategies, successes, and failures in managing their submerged cultural heritage. The results of the four-day-session provided Dr. David Crass, Georgia's State Archaeologist and his staff with the tools and support to design and implement their own underwater archaeology program tailored to

Georgia's needs.

In the document, *From the Ground Up: A Preservation Plan for Georgia 2001-2006*, the authors note that, "Georgia, unlike neighboring states to the north and south has no underwater archaeology program" (page 59).

There are seven states in the United States that have formal programs for managing their submerged cultural resources. These include, Texas, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin. Why should Georgia develop such a program? The seven states, all but one of which is on the southern or eastern seaboard, have



SUAMM II participants (left to right) Ronnie Rodgers (Georgia DNR), Roger Smith (Florida State Underwater Archaeologist), Jim Spirek (SCIAA-MRD), David Crass (Georgia State Archaeologist), Christopher Amer (South Carolina State Underwater Archaeologist), Chip Morgan (Georgia DNR), Susan Langley (Maryland State Underwater Archaeologist), Richard Lawrence (North Carolina State Underwater Archaeologist), Vic Mastone (Director, Massachusetts Board of Archaeological Resources), Lynn Harris (SCIAA-MRD), and Steve Hoyt (Texas State Marine Archaeologist). (SCIAA photo by Jonathan Leader)

identified and recognized that the bottom lands beneath the waters of their states contain a vast multitude of unique and non-renewable vestiges of their past heritage. These physical remains include shipwrecks, historic docks and wharves, landings, and submerged abandoned towns, as well as evidence of over 13,000 years of Native American occupation. These remnants of our heritage have the potential to add to our knowledge of a largely undocumented aspect of each state's, and this nation's past. But only if they survive. On a daily basis, our underwater heritage is being destroyed by a variety of environmental and human factors, including erosion, pollution, development, and uncontrolled collecting and treasure hunting. One way to ensure that these endangered resources are preserved is to explore and record each site in a scientific manner and appropriately interpret it for the public.



SUAMM II participants get down to business in Rice Hope Plantation's historic dining room. (Photo courtesy of Susan Langley)