

STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Sonny Perdue
GOVERNOR

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, December 5, 2007

Contact: Office of Communications, (404) 651-7774

Shane Hix, GEFA, (404) 584-1043
Beth Brown, DNR, (404) 463-2092

**20,000 Acres of Forest Land Permanently Protected through
Georgia Land Conservation Program**

*State Invests \$35 Million to Protect Property in Paulding, Decatur and McIntosh
Counties*

Dallas, Ga. – Standing on the bank of Corley Lake in Paulding County with a scenic view of the Paulding Forest behind him, Governor Sonny Perdue announced today a monumental investment in land conservation. The state of Georgia, through an investment of \$35 million and additional federal, local and private funds, will protect approximately 20,000 acres of pristine forest lands in Paulding, Decatur and McIntosh Counties.

“On the opposite shore of this lake, you see a rolling hillside with a beautiful stand of timber on it. Today I am proud to announce that due to the hard work and investment of many partners, we can guarantee views like this will be protected for generations to come,” said Governor Sonny Perdue. “As a part of the Land Conservation Program, the state of Georgia, along with federal, local and private partners, will purchase and conserve nearly 20,000 acres of land at three sites across our state.”

Joining Governor Perdue for today’s announcement was Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives Glenn Richardson and Paulding County Commission Chairman Jerry Shearin. Speaker Richardson has represented Paulding County in the General Assembly since 1997.

“I’d like to thank the Governor and all of those involved in this process for their efforts in creating a partnership between the state and the county so that we could preserve this valuable

natural resource for hunters, families, outdoor enthusiasts, and future generations to enjoy,” said Speaker Glenn Richardson.

Chairman Shearin was instrumental in the passage of a bond referendum in November 2006 that approved \$15 million to match the state funding toward the purchase of Paulding Forest. The bond referendum passed with 72 percent of the vote.

“The citizens of Paulding County voted overwhelmingly to tax themselves to protect this valuable natural resource,” said Chairman Shearin. “We recognized the value of the partnership the Governor had envisioned for protecting Georgia’s wild spaces.”

The lands approved for protection today through the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP) include properties in Paulding County at Paulding Forest, in Decatur County bordering Lake Seminole, and in McIntosh County along the Altamaha River. The three properties will be managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as wildlife management areas and will provide opportunities for outdoor recreation as well as the long-term conservation of important wildlife habitats.

These acquisitions represent an investment of \$34,740,289 in state funds, combined with \$58,216,107 from federal, local and private partners. Two of these three properties account for \$30 million of the \$42 million set aside as part of the FY2008 budget for the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP).

Additional information on these three properties is highlighted below. See the attached background summaries for more information on each property.

Paulding Forest Wildlife Management Area

The Paulding Forest Wildlife Management Area is a \$45.8 million acquisition that includes 6,865 acres previously leased by the DNR and the Georgia Forestry Commission. DNR will acquire approximately 4,350 acres, Paulding County will acquire approximately 2,500 acres.. The state and county property will be managed by DNR through a Memorandum of Agreement. The property protects a tributary of the Etowah River as well as the remnants of a rare montane longleaf pine forest. It is used by hunters, anglers and other wildlife enthusiasts and protects vast forest lands along the Silver Comet Trail.

The total project cost is \$45,866,156 which includes a \$15,177,320 GLCP grant. Matching sources include Paulding County (\$15,000,000), Polk County (\$100,000), federal Forest Legacy and Endangered Species Recovery Land Acquisition grants (\$7,788,836), and private foundations and organizations (\$7,800,000) including the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation and The Conservation Fund through the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The

Nature Conservancy will purchase and hold 320 acres of the property slated for acquisition by the state until additional federal funding is appropriated. It will then sell this acreage to DNR.

Silver Lake Tract at Lake Seminole Wildlife Management Area

Silver Lake Tract at Lake Seminole Wildlife Management Area includes 8,430-acres in Decatur County on Lake Seminole near Bainbridge. This property has been managed by International Paper as a research forest and contains extensive stands of mature longleaf pine with a population of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Over several phases, the state will acquire this property from The Conservation Fund at a cost of approximately \$38.6 million. The first phase will include approximately 3,900 acres at a cost of \$20.4 million.

The total project cost is \$38,600,000 which includes a \$15,000,000 GLCP grant and DNR Nongame Wildlife Conservation and Wildlife Endowment Funds (\$2,500,000). Matching sources include federal, state, Wildlife and Wildlife Restoration Grants (\$2,300,000), The Conservation Fund through the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (\$500,000), and the Georgia Ornithological Society (\$100,000). A combination of federal and local funds as well as funds from private foundations is expected to be used for the additional phases of the project (\$18,200,000).

Fort Barrington Tract at Townsend Wildlife Management Area

Georgia is working in partnership with the U.S. Marine Corps through the U.S. Navy to protect 4,162 acres as part of the Fort Barrington Tract at Townsend Wildlife Management Area. This acquisition will not only protect critical wildlife habitat and provide recreational opportunities on the Altamaha River, but will also help provide additional buffer around Townsend Bombing Range. This tract will add to a corridor of conservation lands along the Altamaha River that connect the Townsend Wildlife Management Area and the Altamaha Wildlife Management Area. The entire corridor will consist of more than 46,000 adjoining acres.

The total project cost is \$8,490,240 which includes a \$2,062,969 in DNR bond and Nongame Wildlife Conservation funds. Matching sources include federal coastal protection funds totaling \$2,077,271. The Nature Conservancy contributed \$2,000,000, the Georgia Wetland Trust Fund \$550,000 and additional funds may come from the Department of Defense to cover the cost of the restrictive easement, lowering the acquisition cost to the state.

Georgia Land Conservation Program

The GLCP is managed by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) and projects are approved by the Georgia Land Conservation Council. The program offers grants for fee title or conservation easement purchases from the Georgia Land Conservation Trust Fund. It also offers low-interest loans for fee title or conservation easement purchases from the Georgia Land Conservation Revolving Fund. Tax incentives are also available for donations of conservation lands or conservation easements. Since the program's inception, forty projects totaling 59,628 acres have been endorsed by the GLCP.

Conservation lands are permanently protected lands that are undeveloped and meet one or more of the goals of the Georgia Land Conservation Act. The goals include water quality protection, flood protection, wetlands protection, reduction of erosion, protection of riparian buffers and areas that provide natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species. The goals also include the protection of prime agricultural and forestry lands, protection of cultural and historic sites, scenic protection, recreation (boating, hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting) and the connection of areas contributing to these goals.

Governor Perdue introduced the Georgia Land Conservation Act to encourage the long-term conservation and protection of the state's natural, cultural and historic resources in the 2004 session of the General Assembly. The Georgia Land Conservation Act passed with broad bipartisan support and Governor Perdue signed it into law on April 14, 2005.

Applications for land conservation grants or loans are accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year. Applications and more information about the program can be found at www.glcp.org.