



MINUTES

GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM Third Quarter Council Meeting September 3, 2009 - 9:30 AM

Call To Order

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order.

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Steve Stancil, Chairman, John Bembry, Stacy Patton, Mike Beatty, Chris Clark, Paul Michael, and Robert Farris.

Approval of the Minutes

Chairman Stancil presented minutes from the June 3, 2009 GLCP meeting for approval. Robert Farris stated that Bembry spelling needed to be corrected on page two. Robert Farris made a motion seconded by Chris Clark to approve the minutes with the one correction. The motion passed unanimously.

Program Update and Budget Status

Curt Soper stated that 119,697 acres have been permanently protected since inception of the program; 58 grants/loans totaling 78,278 acres protected and 123 certified tax credit projects totaling 41,419 acres. The state's investment is \$73 million. All statewide grant funds have been committed. The Council voted to have \$400,000 set aside for due diligence cost associated with donated easements, to date \$33,500 has been expended, \$235,000 has been requested and there is \$131,500 remaining.

Curt Soper stated that the Attorney General's office is currently working on language for the Land Conservation Act to accommodate bridge loans to the NGO's. Senate Bill 55 was passed during the 2009 legislative session and staff has met with Department of Revenue (DOR) regarding implementation and DOR did roll this out at their annual assessors meeting and has committed to having revised rules/policies beginning this fall. This should help owners of conservation easement encumbered properties with their assessed value. Staff has created a pre-application form and it has been placed on the website to help identify possible future projects. Curt stated that there is a listing of matching grant fund sources and loan payback sources included in the Council packet. Stacy Patton asked Curt Soper to provide a summary of pre-applications prior to the session.

Proposed Policy Change Regarding Donated Conservation Easement Due Diligence Costs

Chairman Stancil stated that next item is an action item that is for the due diligence costs of a conservation easement and there has been some discussion on revising that process. Curt Soper stated that the current policy is that the agency can come to the Land Conservation Council with an application requesting funding to help pay for the cost and the level is capped at \$20,000 and we have had several projects where the expenses incurred have been higher and the agencies do not have a source of funding to cover them. Buford Sanders presented several examples of projects where this has occurred. John Bembry asked what an estimated cost is for a donated conservation easement. Buford Sanders stated that there is not really an average cost but we are learning as we go through the process. Curt stated that each project is different and it would depend on the size of each project.

Agencies are required to apply for and document and requested funding before being reimbursed and they do not just automatically receive the maximum amount.

Stacy Patton made a motion which was seconded by Mike Beatty to raise the \$20,000 cap to a not to exceed \$30,000 cap for due diligence costs associated with a donated conservation easement. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentation on Ecological Credit Trading Strategies for Landowners

Dr. Thompson with CH2MHill presented a presentation on Approaches for Land Conservation. A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.

Report on Conservation Values Mapping and Program Outreach

Andrew Szwak stated that the program is currently working on three major mapping related areas: adding data and cleaning up some of the maps; making them more user friendly; and assessing the accuracy of the maps and using them in our outreach efforts with the GLCP. Andrew stated that staff is working with the new Regional Commissions, formerly known as the Regional Development Commissions, looking at new initiatives of regionally important resources. Also working with the coastal study group with their habitat focus. Land Conservation program also now has a facebook page which can be found on and linked through the Land Conservation web site.

Emerging Issues

There were no new emerging issues presented.

Next meeting is scheduled for December 3, 2009 and we may conduct the meeting by conference call. Chairman Stancil stated that Rob Bowlden with the State Properties Commission will be retiring the end of September.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Kim Yawn, Senior Executive Assistant

Phil Foil, Executive Director