



STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Sonny Perdue
GOVERNOR

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**More Than 200,000 Acres Protected Through
Land Conservation Program Since 2005**

Seven New Easement Donations Eligible for Conservation Tax Credits

ATLANTA – Governor Sonny Perdue today announced seven new conservation easement donations from private landowners to the state of Georgia as part of the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP), bringing the total acreage conserved through the GLCP to 211,176 since 2005. The seven new easement donations collectively conserve more than 6,000 acres of natural and working lands and are eligible for Georgia’s Conservation Tax Credit Program, which has been used to conserve 103,434 acres. In addition to the acreage conserved through the tax credit program, the GLCP and its partners have acquired 107,742 acres of conservation land with state grants, loans and landowner donations.

“Without the generous landowners of this state, Georgia would not be recognized as having one of the most progressive resource management programs in the nation,” said Governor Perdue. “Five years ago, we set out to preserve and protect our precious lands and I am proud to report on this monumental success of the Georgia Land Conservation Program.”

Four conservation easements were approved by the State Properties Commission today with the remaining easements approved earlier this year. The SPC also gave final approval of the Department of Natural Resource’s preservation of more than 10,000 acres in Middle Georgia known as Oaky Woods.

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements that permanently restrict how land can be used. Landowners maintain ownership of their properties, but they forfeit some development and other rights. The state of Georgia encourages conservation easements by offering income tax

credits to donors. The easements are then held by qualified state agencies, local governments or nonprofit land trusts. Federal tax incentives and other financial benefits are also available.

The GLCP is managed by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). The program works with public and private sector partners to permanently protect lands with high conservation value. Governor Perdue introduced the Georgia Land Conservation Act, which created the GLCP, during the 2005 session of the General Assembly to encourage the long-term conservation and protection of the state's natural, cultural and historic resources. The Georgia Land Conservation Act passed with broad bipartisan support and Governor Perdue signed it into law on April 14, 2005. Since the program's inception, the GLCP has participated in 312 land conservation transactions that have permanently protected a total of 211,176 acres. For more information on the GLCP, please visit www.glcp.ga.gov.

Brief summaries of the donated conservation easements are provided below.

Diamond Drake

Georgia native and major league baseball star J.D. Drew donated a conservation easement covering 1,008 acres in Meriwether County to the Conservation Fund, which will be transferring the easement to the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). The property contains the main trunk of Sulphur Creek and supports significant acreage of productive timber and agricultural lands. The easement terms permanently protect these important natural features, while allowing active forestry and recreation practices to continue.

Alligator Creek

Rick Towns of Alamo, Georgia, is donating a conservation easement covering 2,774 acres in Wheeler County to the GFC. The tract encompasses 2.5 miles of Alligator Creek. The easement terms permanently protect the tract's creek frontage, as well as important habitat for a wide variety of reptiles and amphibians including two state and federally-protected species (the Gopher Tortoise and Eastern Indigo Snake), as well as two plant species of concern (the Bog Bluestem and Wire-leaf Dropseed).

Kirkland Creek

Homer Breckenridge, Rufus Breckenridge and Elizabeth Dodds are donating a conservation easement covering 628 acres in Early County to the GFC. The mostly forested property fronts the Chattahoochee River for 1.5 miles and supports other smaller wetlands and waterbodies, including Kirkland Creek. The conservation easement will prohibit disturbances within the tract's wetland areas and bottomlands, while allowing forestry and agriculture to continue on suitable upland areas.

Red Hawk Pulaski Farms LLC

Red Hawk Plantation LLC is donating a conservation easement covering 454 acres in Pulaski County to the GFC. The tract contains steep slopes adjoining Big Creek and South Prong Creek, which has been designated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as a high-priority waterway containing excellent aquatic habitat. This sensitive natural feature, as well as the property's productive agricultural and silvicultural areas, will be conserved by the easement.

Tucker Turf Farm

Tucker Turf LLC is donating a conservation easement covering 1,055 acres in Houston County to the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC). The parcel contains substantial floodplain habitat along Big Indian Creek, a high-priority waterway that will be permanently conserved in the easement. It is also covered by Prime Agricultural Soils as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and currently supports active agricultural operations in a developing area of Houston County. This productive agricultural activity will continue under the terms of the easement.

Buckhead Creek

Hew Joiner and his wife are donating a conservation easement on 133 acres in Jenkins County to the DNR. The tract contains bottomlands and a half mile of frontage along Buckhead Creek – a tributary of the Ogeechee River. The Ogeechee supports numerous freshwater fish species, two of which are state threatened or endangered. The property falls between the Big Dukes Pond Natural Areas and Magnolia Springs State Park, which provide important wildlife habitat and recreational amenities. The easement will prohibit disturbances within the tract's bottomlands, while allowing ecological restoration forestry operations on the uplands.

Yuchi Wildlife Management Area

Stuart Rackley is donating a conservation easement on 58 acres in Burke County to the DNR. The protected property contains intact bottomlands along the Savannah River and adjoins the Yuchi Wildlife Management Area. It also supports suitable habitat for protected plant species including the Ocmulgee skullcap and Carolina pink. The easement terms will protect the bottomlands, while allowing forestry to continue on the uplands.

About the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority – Land Conservation Program

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) provides financial assistance and administers programs that encourage stewardship of the environment and promote economic development statewide. GEFA manages the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP), which works to preserve a statewide network of land and water resources for current and future generations to use and enjoy. The GLCP provides land conservation funding, including grants, low-interest loans and tax incentives, to achieve the permanent conservation of land through the acquisition of conservation easements and fee-title ownership. Since the program's inception in 2005, the GLCP has played a role in 312 land conservation transactions that have permanently protected 209,600 acres. For more information on the GLCP, please visit www.glcp.ga.gov or www.gefa.org.

GLCP is a participating member of Checkoff Georgia, a coalition of the eight funds that offer donation options on Georgia's state income-tax forms. Taxpayer tools, fact sheets, and fund profiles are available at www.checkoffgeorgia.com.

About Georgia Department of Natural Resources

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) works to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices. The Real Estate Office and Wildlife Resources Division of DNR provides technical guidance and administrative support to help private landowners donate high-value conservation lands and easements to the State of Georgia. For more information on the DNR, please visit: www.gadnr.org.

About Georgia Forestry Commission

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) provides leadership, service, and education to protect and conserve Georgia's forest resources. The GFC's Forest Legacy Program protects environmentally important working forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. The program allows for the donation and/or purchase of conservation easements and fee simple land from willing participants who wish to keep the land in forestry use. For more information on the GFC, please call 1-800-Ga-Trees or visit www.gatrees.org.

About Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission

The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) was formed to protect, conserve and improve the soil and water resources of the State of Georgia. The Commission's goal is to make Georgia a better place for its citizens through the wise use and protection of basic soil and water resources and to achieve practical water quality goals. The SWCC provides soil and water resource information; education; technical, financial, and planning assistance; and program oversight to landowners and private conservation initiatives as well as local, state and federal government agencies. For more information on the SWCC, please visit: www.gaswcc.org.

About Conserve Georgia

The Conserve Georgia program was developed to foster a culture of conservation throughout the state of Georgia. Nearly a dozen state agencies and authorities are working together with businesses, civic leaders, educational institutions, non-profit organizations and residents to make Georgia's land, water and energy resources more sustainable now and for generations to come. The program's Web site – www.conservegeorgia.org – serves as a portal to help Georgians find information on a wide range of conservation resources and programs.

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