



## MINUTES

### GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM Scheduled Council Meeting July 20, 2006 - 11:00 AM

#### Call To Order

After establishing the existence of a quorum, the meeting was called to order by Chairperson Abraham on Thursday, July 20, 2006, at 11:00 a.m. in the Georgia State Financing and Investment Bid Conference Room in Atlanta, Georgia. A speakerphone was available for the general public and the business of the meeting was conducted over the speakerphone.

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Gena Abraham, Chairperson,

Staff: Paul Burks, GEFA; Curt Soper, GEFA; Debra Elovich, GBA; Rod Bowlden, SPC; Steve Friedman, DNR; Beverly McElroy, GEFA; Jennifer Spivey, GEFA; and Kim Yawn, GEFA.

Present by speakerphone were:

Council Members: Noel Holcomb, John Bembry, Stacy Patton, Brent Dykes, Ken Stewart, and Mike Beatty.

Staff: Buford Sanders, GA Forestry; and Denise Whiting-Pack, Law Department

#### DNR Projects/Acquisitions

Steve Friedman presented the following projects:

**Townsend Wildlife Management Area** – Located in Long and McIntosh Counties. Acquisition: Sand Ridge Tract 2,369.353±, Conservation Easement 4,344.789±. Partners for the project include: The Nature Conservancy, Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Department of Transportation, United States Marine Corps and Goodwood LLC. The total purchase price is \$5,750,000.

Source of Funding:

#### **Sand Ridge tract (2,369.353 Acres):**

USFS/GFC Forest Legacy Grant	\$1,970,000.00
State General Obligation bonds*	\$ 400,300.00
Private Foundation	<u>\$ 400,300.00</u>
Total Sand Ridge Price	\$2,770,600.00

#### **Conservation Easement (4,344.789 Acres):**

State General Obligation bonds*	\$2,049,700.00
Private Foundation	<u>\$ 929,700.00</u>
Total Conservation Easement Price	\$2,979,400.00

The Sand Ridge Tract has some of the highest quality riverine sand ridges with scattered cypress ponds remaining on the Altamaha River. This is a high priority conservation target because of the number of rare or imperiled species supported by these habitats. The cypress ponds within the sand ridge habitat likely harbor breeding populations of gopher frogs and striped newts. Other species found on the sand ridges are gopher tortoises and very likely the federally threatened eastern indigo snake. The non-native sand pine and offsite loblolly pine on much of the sand ridge habitat needs to be removed from the tract to begin restoring the habitat. The Goodwood, LLC TIMO will retain a timber deed over these pines for a period of 11 years, assuring that they are removed and most importantly lowering the upfront cost to the State.

DNR's Conservation Easement on 4,344± acres will eliminate all potential development and allow only one future subdivision of the tract. Timber harvesting will continue in the upland zones following state BMP's, however there will be no harvesting of timber in the bottomlands. Swallowtail kites, a State rare bird, nests in the larger swamps found on this tract. Public recreation rights will be conveyed to the State on the entire parcel. This easement allows the State to leverage its dollars and keeps the land in private ownership as a working forest.

A motion was made by John Bembry and seconded by Noel Holcomb to endorse the DNR projects. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Meeting Dates**

The Strategic Planning session will be held on August 27 – 29, 2006 at Smithgall Woods State Park. The facilitator will be Mr. Rob Williams, and he will be scheduling 30 minutes with each Council member (by telephone) to discuss the Strategic Planning session.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2006, at the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission office starting at 9:00 a.m. Applications will be presented at this meeting for discussion. Chairperson Abraham and Curt Soper will visit each Council member after the September 12, 2006, meeting to discuss any questions the Council members may have so that decisions can be made at the September 28, 2006 meeting.

GEFA received 21 applications totaling \$15.5 million.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Noel Holcomb to adjourn the meeting seconded by Stacy Patton. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

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Kim Yawn, Executive Assistant

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Paul Burks, Executive Director