



MINUTES

GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM Strategic Planning Session August 27 - 29, 2006

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Gena Abraham, Chairperson; Noel Holcomb, Brent Dykes, Ken Stewart, John Bemby, Wade Shealy and Stacy Patton

Staff: Curt Soper, GEFA; Debra Elovich, GBA; Rod Bowlden, SPC; Steve Friedman, DNR; Buford Sanders, Georgia Forestry Commission; Stephanie Thornton, Office of Planning and Budget; Ericka Davis, GSFIC; and Kim Yawn, GEFA.

Chairperson Abraham reviewed the following accomplishments of the Land Council: hired Curt Soper to be the Director, Ericka Davis has developed a marketing brochure for the Council to review, fourteen projects have been endorsed by the Council, and staff is currently reviewing the first round of projects for funding by the Council. Chairperson Abraham stated that she would like to develop a plan for the next 18 months of what the Council would like to accomplish. Council members should give clear direction for Curt to follow. Rob Williams will be the facilitator. The following are the objectives of the retreat:

- Identify short-term objectives that address long-term goals of Council
- Establish an operational plan for the coming 18 months
- Explore possible “guiding principles” and “measures of success” for Council
- Discuss Georgia’s potential for land conservation
- Review outcomes of first Land Summit and opportunities for Council

Curt Soper thanked the NGO’s for attending to give an update on the progress that has been made on issues and opportunities identified at the July Land Summit. The Nature Conservancy received money to help implement the state’s Comprehensive Wildlife Plan and a feasibility study of what has been done in the past and where we could go. Also, the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land will be able to conduct a poll on specific conservation issues. The poll will be geared to determine the mindset of Georgia voters for land conservation and what is important for land conservation.

Researching four types of funding is taking place: 1) Real-estate transfer tax; 2) Sales tax ; 3) Deed recording fee; and 4) Tipping fee. Other topics discussed were issues with the tax reform and getting the public support that is needed.

Measures of Success

Mr. Williams facilitated a discussion of what the measures of success might be for the Land Conservation Council. The following categories were identified:

Identify land conservation priorities. Working with partners, develop and maintain a state-wide inventory of lands in conservation by type of conservation and an inventory of most critical areas of state for conservation. Create a matrix for rating the priority for conserving certain areas of the state.

Funding. Creatively leverage the state dollars for land conservation and increase the total dollars for land conservation through incentives, partnerships, and new financing options. Track the amount of additional dollars generated for every dollar allocated by the state to the Land Council.

Public awareness. Increase the understanding among targeted populations and the general public for the need for land conservation, the loss of natural lands, and need for public support of land conservation. Provide more information on populations and the general public for the need for land conservation, the loss of natural lands, and need for public support of land conservation. Provide more information on problems, including the loss, on average, of 108 acres a day in Georgia.

Longevity of the Council. Ensure the longevity and sustainability of this council so that it will exist past elections, be part of a dedicated land conservation funding program, and will serve as a policy advisory body to state agencies and the legislature for issues related to land conservation.

Importance of private land owners. Explore new strategies, both private and public, to sustain the economic viability of land conservation by individual owners (other than fee simple lands) and to service the total carrying costs of land conservation easements.

Leadership and building relationships. Provide leadership, facilitation and build relationships among state agencies, NGOs, local governments, and private entities focusing on land conservation and the role of green space in environmental quality of the state.

Operational Plan for 2007 – 2008

General and specific goals and objectives for the Program and the Council were discussed and put on flip charts. These materials will be synthesized by staff and put into an Operational Plan format in the coming weeks.

Guiding principles for Council

The Council should strive to be inclusive, innovative, identify good projects, take time to discuss issues, be clear with staff about expectations, create coalitions to support land conservation, be honest and open with each other and focus on policy, leaving the day-to-day operations to staff.

The Coastal Georgia Case Study

- Curt Soper lead a discussion on what it might look like to apply the principles, goals, and measures of success discussed thus far by the Council in Coastal Georgia

September 12, 2006 Meeting

There was a discussion about the upcoming Council meeting scheduled for September 12th at which GLCP grant and loan applications will be reviewed. Curt Soper stated the Council members will receive a one page criteria review, financial review, a copy of applicant's application and any letters of support received for each project. Curt and Chairperson Abraham will meet with each Council member after the September 12th meeting to answer any questions they may have about the projects.

Next Steps

The following represents an initial set of next steps discussed with staff.

- Review the operational plan above for accuracy and completeness.
- Identify any items that can not be done in next 18 months.
- Identify any area of operation not covered. Remember, the goal is to create a comprehensive operation plan.
- Assign observable measures to goal statements.
- Assign realistic time frames for goal statements.
- Develop a timeline/personnel/responsibility chart or other graphic to help Council members and staff see the flow and to avoid too much at one time.
- Share with a couple Council members to get feedback and then to full Council for approval.

Kim Yawn, Executive Assistant

Greg Mason, Interim Executive Director