



## MINUTES

### GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM Called Council Meeting October 16, 2006 - 11:00 AM

#### Call To Order

After establishing the existence of a quorum, the meeting was called to order by Chairperson Abraham on Monday, October 16, 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, and Noel Holcomb

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

Present by speakerphone were:

Council Members: John Bembry, Stacy Patton, Brent Dykes, and Ken Stewart.

Staff: Buford Sanders, GA Forestry

#### DNR Projects/Acquisitions

Steve Friedman presented the following projects:

**Chattahoochee River** – This assemblage will protect over 200 acres of land and would connect Smithgall Woods (5,664± acres) to Hardman Farm (173± acres) continuing beyond Hardman Farm to the city of Helen. This will allow for the construction of a trail from Helen all the way to Smithgall Woods and protect a key view-shed around Hardman Farms. It would also protect over 1,700 of frontage on the Chattahoochee River that will benefit water quality and provide public access for fishing, canoeing and kayak access. The remaining frontage along the Chattahoochee River that will not be in public ownership will be placed under a conservation easement. The conservation easement will allow for the construction of a public trail but will not allow the landowner to construct any houses or remove any timber. Total purchase price is \$1,736,107.

Source of Funding:

Georgia Wetland Trust fund	\$ 250,000.00
GLCA Bonds (DNR Bond #99, 2002-B series)	\$ 500,000.00
Chattahoochee River Bonds (DNR bonds #57)	\$ 986,107.00
Total Price	\$1,736,107.00

A motion was made by Ken Stewart and seconded by John Bembry to endorse the Department of Natural Resources project. The motion passed unanimously.

**Cathead Creek – Altamaha River-Buffalo Swamp WMA** – This donation will permanently conserve important, high quality wildlife habitat in the Lower Altamaha River Corridor. The Cathead Creek Tract includes 380 acres of forested wetlands, 157 acres of emergent wetlands, and 215 acres of uplands consisting of maritime forest. All of these are priority habitats and support species of conservation concern. The acquisition will eliminate a large (752 acre) in-holding within the 6,258 acre Altamaha River-Buffalo Swamp Wildlife Management Area. Recreational benefits include outdoor opportunities for hunting, fishing, birding, and hiking.

The Altamaha River has been identified as one of the Department of Natural Resources' six priority focus areas for habitat conservation. These focus areas were selected based on analyses conducted for Georgia's Wildlife Action Plan. The Wildlife Action Plan analyses identified areas that included important natural habitat that supported numerous species of plants and animals that are in need of conservation. This is a donation of fee ownership.

A motion was made by John Bembry and seconded by Stacy Patton to endorse the Department of Natural Resources project. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Georgia Forestry Commission Projects/Acquisitions**

Buford Sanders presented the following projects:

#### **Flint River, Turtle Shoals Plantation**

This tract consists of +/- 800 acres of working forest and protects almost 1 mile of frontage on the Flint River just north of Albany, Georgia. Acceptance of this easement will help protect this important watershed from development as well as serve as a model working forest providing habitat connectivity and water quality protection. This easement will ensure that timber management complies with Georgia's Best management practices and that agricultural and timber activities will continue. This property is within the Commission's Flint River Forest Legacy Priority Area and further meets the Commissioner's strategic objectives of promoting conservation of large private tracts within impaired watersheds. This property has a Forest Stewardship management plan developed by the Georgia Forestry Commission and will continue operating as a private entity with the commissions assistance. This acquisition will be phased into tow parts with half the donation of this year and the balance next year. This is a donation of conservation easement.

A motion was made by Stacy Patton and seconded by John Bembry to endorse the Georgia Forestry Commission project. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Joe Butler Tract Mitchell County**

This donation will permanently conserve important working forest and high quality wildlife habitat in the Georgia Forestry Commission's Flint River Legacy Priority Area of Mitchell County. This property has exceptional stands of loblolly, Slash and Longleaf Pine and a resident population of Gopher tortoise. This property is under strong threat of conservation to development from growth occurring around Camilla, Georgia. The existence of the Gopher tortoise makes this property attractive for protection. This property has a Forest Stewardship management plan developed by the Georgia Forestry Commission and will continue operating as a private entity

with the Commission's assistance. The landowner has a strong desire to preserve the legacy of this tract and to promote the Longleaf Pine ecosystem. This is a donation of a conservation easement.

A motion was made by Noel Holcomb and seconded by Stacy Patton to endorse the Georgia Forestry Commission project. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion took place regarding conservation easement and receiving approval from the Attorney General's office. Buford stated that the state has approved a uniformed conservation easement under the Uniform Conservation Act.

### **Update on Land Conservation Program**

Chairperson Abraham stated that she and Curt met with the Governor's office about where we are with reviewing the projects. The concern is that not many of the projects are truly ready to move forward. Chairperson Abraham stated that the program will consider moving the application process to run continuously rather than on a one time per year cycle. Curt and Chairperson Abraham would like to schedule a conference call with each member to discuss. Curt will provide a list of projects that are ready to go, the status of due diligence and project maturity, and a recommendation of projects to receive approval.

Also Chairperson Abraham discussed with the Governor the possibility of developing a list of qualified appraisers to work on GLCP projects. All appraisals will be reviewed by the State Properties Commission prior to final release of funds. In the future 2 MAI appraisals will be required as well as an Environmental Site Assessment, valid legal description or survey and title insurance. Conservation easement documents will need to be reviewed by GLCP staff.

Ken Stewart stated that the tax credit provision should be looked at prior to the session to see if the provision for appraisal is appropriate and that there is a clean and clear process for perspective applicants. Noel Holcomb stated that he has been working with Bart Graham to clean up some of the legislation but he is not sure yet which agency will handle the legislation.

Ken Stewart also mentioned that funding through the ¼ mill state property tax assessment needed to be looked at for possible use for funding of land conservation projects. Curt stated that he and Chairperson Abraham will be meeting with the NGO's to discuss a variety of funding options.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Noel Holcomb to adjourn the meeting seconded by John Bemby. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

---

Kim Yawn, Executive Assistant

---

Greg Mason, Interim Executive Director