



MINUTES
GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Fourth Quarter Council Meeting – Conference Call
December 1, 2011 - 9:30 AM

Call To Order

After establishing a quorum, the meeting was called to order.

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Steve Stancil, Chairman,

Council Members by speaker phone: John Bembry, Brent Dykes, Stacy Patton, Robert Farris, Chuck Leavell, Paul Michael and Mike Beatty.

Approval of the Minutes

Chairman Stancil presented minutes from September 6, 2011, Georgia Land Conservation Council meeting for approval. Robert Farris made a motion seconded by Stacy Patton to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Program Update

Kevin Clark stated with Curt Soper taking a position at the Trust for Public Land that he will take the role of executive director of the Land Conservation Council and Andrew Szwak will be taking on more of an active role with daily operations.

Resolutions for Curt Soper and Kristina Sorensen

Steve Stancil presented a resolution for Curt Soper and Kristina Sorenson for appreciation for their contributions to the Land Conservation Program. Paul Michael made a motion and seconded by Stacy Patton to approve the resolutions presented. The motion passed unanimously.

2012 Meeting Schedule

Chairman Stancil presented the following dates for the Land Conservation Council to meet in 2012: March 1, June 7, September 6 and December 6, 2012. Chuck Leavell made a motion and seconded by Stacy Patton to approve the dates presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on Operation Plan

Andrew Szwak gave the following update on the Action Plan:

Pursue Cost-effective Conservation Measures

As of November 8, 56 tax credits covering 11,358 acres have been approved in 2011, staff has spoken with multiple potential borrowers for the low interest loan fund, but no applications have been submitted to date. The Oakbin Pond Preserve project received USDA federal grants funds of \$600,000 and used biologist salary as match to several federal funds to protect the land around this site in Dooly County. There are 11 due diligence grant applications from 2011 that are currently pending.

Market and Demonstrate the Positive Economic Benefits of Land Conservation

There was an article published in the Department of Agriculture's Market Bulletin discussing the tax incentives to farmers for protecting their lands and staff has responded to over 200 related information

request. Staff have done some partnerships with military bases (Fort Stewart ACUB, Dobbins Air Force Reserve Base and Chattahoochee Fall Line).

Create and Cultivate Conservation Partnerships

The GLCP is serving on a task force formed by the Atlanta Regional Commission, which is charged with developing regional natural resource protection efforts consistent with their Plan 2040 and related Regionally Important Resources Plan. Staff regularly communicate with the private partners behind the Georgia Legacy Initiative and staff participate in meetings with private-sector conservation partners.

Robert Farris asked how much money is unobligated in Loans. Andrew stated that there is \$44 million in loan funds and \$80 thousand to assist agencies with the conservation easements but projects will be dropping off the list and that is not factored in. Andrew stated that he will email Council members with the specific dollars available.

Emerging Issues

John Bemby mentioned that Bibb County passed SPLOST for land conservation around \$6 or \$7 million that the voters approved that will mostly be used for encroachment issues with Robbins Air Force Base it was done in connection with Middle Georgia Regional Council through Department of Community Affairs in hopes that two other counties will join in. I am hopeful that Bibb County could use some of the loan funds to go ahead and get started. Kevin Clark stated that would be something that we will explore and see if there is a way to utilize some of the loan funds if Bibb County is interested. John Bemby stated that Houston County would have a similar SPLOST in March and hopefully it will pass also.

Chairman Stancil stated that Governor Deal is looking at the conservation easement program. The Governor will be very thorough in his investigation and is concerned about transfers of rights. Once we receive information to give out the Council will be informed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 1, 2012.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 a.m.

Kim Yawn, Senior Executive Assistant

Kevin Clark, Executive Director