



MINUTES

GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL Scheduled Council Meeting January 17, 2008 - 9:00 AM

Call To Order

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order.

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Kevin Clark, Chairperson, Noel Holcomb, John Bembry, Stacy Patton, Robert Farris, Brent Dykes and Mike Beatty.

Staff: Curt Soper, GEFA; Rod Bowlden, SPC; Steve Friedman, DNR; Jennifer Spivey, GEFA; Buford Sanders, GFC; Kristina Sorensen, DNR ; and Kim Yawn, GEFA.

Approval of the Minutes

Chairman Clark presented minutes from the December 5, 2007 GLCP meeting for approval. John Bembry made a motion seconded by Robert Farris to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

David Lamm with the Department of Agriculture provided a presentation on the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Land Conservation Program Marketing Efforts

Curt Soper introduced Rusty Paul with I Squared Communication, company that has been selected to assist with marketing the program.

Accomplishments to Date

Curt Soper stated that the Council has approved 40 projects protecting 60,000 acres. Total state investment is \$56 million; 29 grants and 5 loans to Department of Natural Resources, cities and counties; 12 conservation easements; 31 fee title acquisitions and 8 outright gifts of property to the state.

Land Conservation Project Applications

Curt Soper presented the following projects to be considered for approval:

McIntosh County requests a grant of \$490,000. This project would protect 1,356 acres consisting of bottomland hardwood forest, cypress/gum swamps and longleaf pine sandhills along the Altamaha River through the purchase of a conservation easement which would be held by the Nature Conservancy. Source of cash match is the Georgia Wetland Trust Fund.

TNC is also contributing an easement monitoring endowment of \$35,000. The tract is located in the immediate vicinity of several other conservation properties totaling over 70,000 acres. The Lower Altamaha and this site are rich in biological diversity and include over 30 rare species of plants and animals. The earthworks remains of historic Fort Barrington are located on this tract. The Fort was established by the British in 1730 and used as a ferry stoop from colonial times until the early 1900's. This tract contains one of only two known populations of the federally threatened Radford's dicerandra mint and habitat for the threatened eastern indigo snake. An MAI appraisal of the tract has been completed with values of \$4.1 million (\$3,000/acre) for the unencumbered property and \$3.05 million (\$2,250/acre or 75%) as the easement value. The easement would allow no future building or subdivision of the property. It also establishes a Bottomland Hardwood conservation area of 1,140 acres with no timber harvest allowed, and an upland area of 216 acres with very limited timber harvest allowed. A motion was made by Noel Holcomb and seconded by John Bemby to approve a \$490,000 grant to McIntosh County. The motion passed unanimously.

Walker County requests a grant in the amount of \$250,000. This project would protect 145 acres on Pigeon Mountain through purchase of a conservation easement designed to protect working forest and farmland. This tract is within a priority conservation area adjacent to the portion of Pigeon Mountain Wildlife Management Area known as The Pocket and lies in McLemore Cove, a community that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is a mix of farmland, plantation pine, and mixed hardwood forest with excellent scenic views of Pigeon Mountain and pastoral woodland scenery. Match sources include discounted sale of easement by landowner (\$160,000) and a grant from the NW Georgia Land Protection fund (Open Space Institute and Lyndhurst Foundation). One MAI appraisal has been completed with values of \$870,000 (\$4,200/acre plus 261K in improvements) for the unencumbered property and \$460,000 (\$3,172/acre) as the easement value. The easement would allow the future construction of 4 new single family homes with normal residential appurtenances on separate tracts totaling 9 acres of the property; 4 gazebos; a studio; and a new barn as well as continued forestry and agricultural uses in accordance with a written land management plan consistent with easement goals. A motion was made by Robert Farris and seconded by John Bemby to table the request at this time. The motion passed unanimously.

Liberty County requests a grant in the amount of \$300,000. This project would protect a 201 acre piece of timberland through purchase of a conservation easement. The property consists of mostly pine flat woods with some depressional wetlands and creeks in the middle. It is a very low-lying area with groundcover somewhat intact and there is good native restoration potential. There are scattered large slash and loblolly pine trees throughout, and some longleaf pine can be found. It is the stated intent of the landowner to carry out a longleaf pine forest restoration effort on this property. The property abuts Fort Stewart and is between two parcels (824/acres and 107/acres) already under protection through Army Compatible Use Buffer program (ACUB). Surrounding land use is primarily agricultural and low density residential. However, nearby Highway 196 is currently being 4-laned, and the property is only 7 miles from I-95, so development is likely to occur in this corridor. Match sources include Department of Defense ACUB program (\$300,000), and discounted sale of the easement by the Georgia Land Trust (\$420,000). One MAI appraisal has been completed with values of \$1.7 million (\$8,457/acre) for the unencumbered property and \$1.02 million (\$5074/acre) as the easement value. The easement would allow future construction of either two cabins, one single family home, or a nature center on 5 acres as well as continued forest management in accordance with a written land management plan and consistent with easement goals. It would also establish a Special Natural Area of 50 acres

where no consumptive uses or structures could occur. A motion was made by Noel Holcomb and seconded by John Bembry to approve a \$300,000 grant to Liberty County. The motion passed unanimously.

Evans County requests a grant in the amount of \$153,879. This project would protect a 150-acre property abutting Hwy. 280 and located in Evans County along the Canoochee River through the purchase of a conservation easement which would be held by the Georgia Land Trust. Most of the property's uplands are used for timber and wildlife management. The most common tree species on this tract are loblolly and slash pine and appear to be 20-25 years old. The old historic Savannah Highway runs through the northern portion of the property. This now dirt road is well established with 100 year-old plus live oaks along the edge. The Eastern edge of the property is made up of bottomland hardwoods and river floodplain and includes a half mile of Canoochee River frontage and this tract is part of a larger Canoochee River corridor conservation effort. The property is very near Fort Stewart and the match source is the Department of Defense ACUB program (\$153,879). One MAI appraisal has been completed with values of \$485,000 (\$3,233/acre) for the unencumbered property and \$307,879 (\$2,051/acre) as the easement value. The easement would allow the future construction of up to two single family homes with normal residential appurtenances over a total of 4 acres as well as continued forest management in accordance with a written management plan and consistent with easement goals. It would also establish a Special Natural Area of about 25 acres along the river edge that will be afforded greater protection with no structures or consumptive uses allowed. A motion was made by Mike Beatty and seconded by Brent Dykes to table the request at this time. The motion passed unanimously.

Bulloch County requests a grant in the amount of \$10,000 and a loan in the amount of \$132,300. This project would create a 29-acre park within the city limits of Statesboro. Most of the value would be donated to the county by the landowner with the remainder being purchased by the County using a small grant and a low interest loan from the GLCP. The loan rate would be at 3% over a 20 year term with an additional 2% closing fee. The property would be managed by the Bulloch County Parks Department as a passive forest conservation area and potentially as an equestrian use park accessible to school groups, families and individuals. The property includes an historic barn structure that would be preserved and a home site which would be used as a park headquarters, museum exhibit, and meeting space. The property has been in the Fletcher family's ownership and stewardship for over 100 years and the family's property once included over 200 acres. An MAI appraisal has been completed on the property with an estimated value of \$815,000. A motion was made by Brent Dykes and seconded by Noel Holcomb to approve a \$10,000 grant and a \$132,300 loan to Bulloch County. The motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Easement Presentations

Geoff Rockwell of the Forestry Commission gave a presentation regarding 3 recent conservation easement donations that will be held by the Commission and Steve Raper, recently hired by the DNR, gave a presentation on his new role in seeking and securing donated conservation easements for the State.

Emerging Issues

Curt stated that he would be tracking pertinent federal legislation and stated that a copy of the letter of support for making permanent the increased federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations was sent to the Georgia congressional delegation and was in the Council book.

Chris Clark stated that the Governors budget has \$35.1 million for the land conservation program; legislation will be presented to amend the land conservation statute to clean up language in the act and add a couple of agencies to be able to also have projects funded. GEFA would also be carrying legislation to amend and improve the conservation tax credit program.

Robert Farris gave Council members a copy of the DVD from the fire season with historical data. He stated that over a half a million acres were lost.

Adjournment

A motion was made by John Bembry seconded by Mike Beatty to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

Kim Yawn, Executive Assistant

Chris Clark, Executive Director