



Senate Bill 402 Allows Conservation Groups to Receive ‘Bridge’ Loans

Governor Sonny Perdue has signed Senate Bill 402 – an important amendment to the Georgia Land Conservation Act that will increase the ability to utilize the State’s \$55 million Land Conservation Loan Fund.

SB 402 greatly improves the Georgia Land Conservation Loan Fund by allowing it to accommodate a common type of conservation financing known as “**bridge loans**”. Bridge loans are frequently utilized by conservation organizations to protect properties that are under imminent threat of development when sufficient public funding is not yet available but a public agency is the intended future owner. Previously, conservation groups like The Nature Conservancy or The Conservation Fund or The Trust for Public Land could not access the Land Conservation Loan Fund for loans without the acquired property being permanently encumbered with a conservation restriction at the time of the loan thereby reducing the market value of the property and making it impossible to fully reimburse these groups at the time of an eventual sale to the public agency. Allowing conservation organizations and land trusts effective access to the Land Conservation Loan Fund, which offers below-market rates of 2-3%, for bridge financing projects should result in cost savings and additional future acquisitions of natural resource lands and recreational facilities.

The Georgia Land Conservation Program and Georgia’s conservation community extends a special thanks to Senator Ross Tolleson as well as Representatives Buddy Harden and Lynn Smith for sponsoring and supporting the bill and seeing it successfully through the State Legislature. For an electronic version of SB 402, visit this link:

http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/sum/sb402.htm .