



**MINUTES**  
**GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM**  
**Fourth Quarter Council Meeting – Conference Call**  
**December 2, 2010 - 9:00 AM**

**Call To Order**

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

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Steve Stancil, Chairman,

Present by speaker phone were:

John Bembry, Stacy Patton, Brent Dykes, Robert Farris, and Chuck Leavell.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Chairman Stancil presented minutes from the September 2, 2010 Georgia Land Conservation program (GLCP) meeting for approval. Robert Farris made a motion seconded by Brent Dykes to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Program Update and Transition**

Curt Soper stated that we have reached a couple of milestones: 1) 300 transactions that the Land Conservation program has been involved with where land is being permanently protected; and 2) Over 200,000 acres since the Council was formed back in 2006. We are working on a press release that will include that information as well as information about the year end donated conservation easements. At the State Properties Commission meeting in the middle of December we anticipate reaching 50,000 acres donated to the state through conservation easements. Included in your packet is a copy of the Transition team document that we have prepared for the Land Conservation program for incoming Governor Deals' team. Chairman Stancil stated that he has met with the transition team and did briefly discuss the program, they did not give any indication where they planned to go regarding the Land Conservation program. Curt stated that if he is asked he would bring up no cost strategies such as 1) supporting making the now expired tax federal tax incentives for land conservation donations permanent; and 2) supporting our private sector partners in their effort to establish a voter approved permanent source of funding for land conservation in Georgia. Those are things the program could and should be able to do at no cost to the state. There would be two or three very high leverage and low or moderate cost strategies that I would mention: 1) provide at least enough funding to continue covering the costs associated with donations to the state either by fee title or conservation easements which for the last couple of years has cost around \$100,000 a year; 2) Appropriate some dollars to the land conservation program to cover the 25 percent match requirement under the farm bill for the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program. There is some money on the table in Georgia to protect working farmland that we are not utilizing..... an appropriation of about \$500,000 could be leveraged into \$3 million worth of protected farm land and the NRCS would like to partner with us for this program. Brent Dykes mentioned that is familiar with that program and is going to meet with them soon; and 3) Provide some seed grant funding to do two things - attract more land conservation project loan fund borrowers (we still have the loan funds of about \$45 million and we have been most successful in loaning money when we are able to provide a little grant money) and continue to partner in the military base buffering program that is still active in Georgia at Fort Stewart and Fort Benning. For those cases we would need about \$10 million and we could probably triple that in terms of conservation value. Steve Freidman stated that there are also several other grants that we are not able to go after because we don't have match funding. Chuck Leavell stated

that one of the other Board's that he is on one has a project that they are funding, a national conservation easement database and asked Curt if he has had any engagement with any of our group. Curt stated that he was familiar with the research and study that is going on but has not had any contact with them. Chuck would like to have whatever we have on our books with data to be accessible to them. Curt will contact them. Kristina Soreasen stated that she has submitted all the state land conservation GIS database information that we have to them, so through DNR we have been in touch.

Brent Dykes thanked the Georgia Forestry Commission for the work they have been doing on a tract of land in Houston County, the Tucker Turf tract will be the first agricultural easement that the Commission is participating in and his staff is not as up to speed as the Forestry Commission is and they have done a great job of getting them up to speed and doing some field work. We look forward to hopefully taking a donated conservation easement of about 1,000 acres with about 52 or 55 percent being active crop land. There are four center pivots that border the property and we think it will be a great acquisition for the state. I appreciate the Forestry Commission, Curt, Andrew and Kristina participating with us on this project and look forward to completing it in a few days.

Robert Farris asked Buford Sanders to provide an overview of GFC's donated easements effort. Buford stated that we have a number of easements that are pending, Diamond Drake has been approved and will close in 2011 after resolving a mineral rights issue. Alligator Creek project is on hold due to an issue but. All due diligence has been done and everything is in order and approved for closing but the land owner has postponed the closing. The landowner is being influenced by the potential of an expanded federal tax reduction and we hope it will close but don't anticipate it to close this year. Kirkland Creek track is in the process of closing this year. The Hazel Welch tract is in the negotiation stage and will not close this year but hope to close in 2011. Also hope to close the Red Hawk tract of 450 acres, working through the process to hopefully close this one in 2010 as well.

Steve Raper for the Department of Natural Resources stated that they anticipate closing on three conservation donated easements in 2010, the Joiner conservation easements that is 133 acres, Rackley conservation easement that is 57 acres, and several other projects that will not close in 2010 but expect them to close in 2011. There is also a project called Raccoon Bluff that if not already closed, will be closing soon.

Curt Soper stated that the Council still has about \$100,000 left to dedicate for agencies' due diligence expenses associated with accepting donated easements.

### **Program Calendar for 2011**

Chairman Stancil stated that for the four at-large Council members appointed by the Governor, your terms will continue unless someone is appointed to replace you. Curt stated that Governor Deal has reappointed Chairman Stancil and Mike Beatty so they will also continue to serve on the Council. Chairman Stancil stated that the dates for 2011 are behind tab C so if you will place those meetings on your calendar. The next meeting is scheduled for March 3, 2011 in Atlanta.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

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Kim Yawn, Senior Executive Assistant

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Kevin Clark, Executive Director