



MINUTES

GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM Scheduled Council Meeting June 13, 2006 - 9:00 AM

Call To Order

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

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Gena Abraham, Chairperson, Noel Holcomb, John Bembry, Stacy Patton, and Ken Stewart.

Present by speakerphone: Brent Dykes

Staff: Paul Burks, GEFA; Debra Elovich, GBA; Steve Friedman, DNR; Beverly McElroy, GEFA; Alisa Pereira, GBA; Jennifer Spivey, GEFA; Greg Mason, GEFA; Chris Tomlinson, GSFIC; Chris Canalos, DNR; Buford Sanders, GFC; Mike Gleaton, DCA; Denise Whiting-Pack, Law Department; and Kim Yawn, GEFA.

Approval of the Minutes

Chairperson Abraham presented minutes from the April 4, 2006 and May 22, 2006 GLCP meeting for approval. Stacy Patton made a motion seconded by John Bembry to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Introduction of GLCP Program Director

Chairperson Abraham introduced Curt Soper as the GLCP Program Director. Curt thanked the Council for the opportunity and stated that he would be contacting each Council member to meet with them and get their direction for the program.

GIS Mapping for Georgia Land Conservation Program

Chris Canalos with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) presented a map showing the GLCP Priority Projects. The Department of Defense should be contacted to include the army projects on the GIS map. Chris also presented a map showing the composite of areas of interest for six GLCP partners as of June 2006.

Project Application Process

Chairperson Abraham presented the GLCP loan/grant application process to the Council that will be used this year for projects. Council members will review applications by September 15, 2006.

GLCP Budget for FY 2007 and FY 2008

Brent Dykes thanked Paul Burks and staff for their assistance with developing the budget. Paul Burks presented the Operating budget for FY 2007: Effective July 1, 2006, \$5,000,000

dollars will be available for grants (\$4,863,800) and one staff person (\$136,200). GEFA will provide funding (\$79,500 in total) to cover expenses for Council meetings, rentals, ads, strategic planning retreat, and travel for the director and a Wildlife Biologist position at DNR that will assist with the ranking of projects and income tax credit program for conservation.

The FY 2008 Budget request will be \$5,267,171 for the following line items: \$5,000,000 for grants; \$139,000 for director's salary and benefits; \$150,000 marketing and education; \$10,000 for board meeting, rentals, ads, strategic planning retreat; \$6,000 for travel of the director, \$47,171 for a support person; \$15,000 for printing and supplies. GEFA will provide \$63,500 to cover the Wildlife Biologist position at DNR.

John Bemby stated that FY 2007 should have funds for marketing/outreach for the program. Chairperson Abraham stated that a new public information position will be at GSFIC that would be able to assist, and that we were looking at moving the website from DNR to SPC/GSFIC. Stacy Patton stated that a one page FAQ sheet should be developed. Curt Soper will also be working on finding ways to market the program during FY 2007.

A motion was made by Noel Holcomb and seconded by John Bemby to approve the FY 2007 Operating Budget and the FY 2008 Budget Request. The motion passes unanimously.

Coastal Comprehensive Plan Presentation

Mike Gleaton with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) presented an update on the Coastal Comprehensive Plan. Governor Perdue signed an Executive Order on February 11, 2005 for DCA to take the lead on developing a Comprehensive Master Development Plan for the Coastal Georgia region building upon the current Coastal Management Plan developed by DNR. DCA has been charged to outline a vision for Georgia's coastal area that promotes sustainable future development without compromising the region's valuable and vulnerable natural environment. DCA will complete the plan by September 30, 2007.

Chairperson Abraham stated that the Council should be supportive of this issue.

Department of Defense Regional Environmental Plan Presentation

George Carellas with the Department of Defense (DoD) presented DoD's past and current efforts in the areas of conservation. They look forward to working with the Land Conservation Council in the future.

Potential GLCP Projects

Beverly McElroy stated that GEFA has received 15 pre-applications and 2 complete full applications. Jennifer Spivey is working with the communities to complete the full application packages for the July 17, 2006 deadline. Oconee County submitted a loan application for \$3.5 million. A financial review has been completed. Council members will receive the criteria ranking as well as the financial review for all projects.

DNR Projects/Acquisitions

Steve Friedman presented the following projects:

Ball's Ferry State Park – The five-county area of Baldwin, Laurens, Johnson, Washington, and Wilkinson Counties (the latter three being Tier-1 Counties), historic associations, and others have studied since 1999 the establishment of a State Park near the intersection of the five Counties on the Oconee River. The Balls Ferry Historical Park Association, a non-profit

corporation, was formed as an outcome of this initiative to receive donations or to purchase property for the project. On May 18, 2005 the Association used federal and state funds to purchase the tract from Plum Creek (536± acres) for \$996,240 (\$912,560 from the federal grant, and \$53,680 in state funds).

Wilkinson County offered to donate to the State of Georgia/Department of Natural Resources 3.64± acres (\$24,967 value of donation) including a boat ramp edge-holding on the Oconee River and the historic road that leads to it. The boat ramp was the historic ferry of the project's name and, before 1900's highway bridges were built, had been one of the few places to cross the Oconee River for miles around. The location of the road at the river was a ferry crossing point and at least one Civil War skirmish with General Sherman's right wing was noted in the Park master plan as taking place on November 24, 1896, during the March to the Sea. The County will maintain the boat ramp at least until the State takes ownership of both this property and the larger Ball's Ferry Historical Park Association donation.

Together these properties will create the Ball's Ferry State Park near the intersection of five counties on the Oconee River.

Dawson Forest – This acquisition (9.8± acres) is the result of a mediated settlement. However, the property adds additional acreage to the Dawson Forest WMA and buffers a tributary to Skoal Creek. The net cost of \$86,787.70 was set by mediation and will be funded by WMA Stamp Funds.

Conasauga River - Holly Creek - In October 2004, The Department of Natural Resources was awarded a nationally competitive grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the Patterson Tract (257.16± acres) on Holly Creek, a tributary of the Conasauga River. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) provided the non-federal match through the portion of the Patterson Tract, which they bought at a bargain sale price. The Grant Agreement between USFWS and the State was sub-granted to TNC to assist with the land acquisition. TNC acquired the Patterson Tract May 2, 2005 and will manage the tract to benefit the many rare species. The conservation easement to DNR will assure permanent protection of the Patterson Tract and allow no development or subdivision of the property. This tract was critical to protect but it was not necessary for DNR to own it to do so. TNC has staff in this part of the State who can manage the property. They plan to conduct restoration timber harvests, demonstration controlled burns, and open the property for public access. They will not commercially lease the recreation rights. No appraisal of the conservation easement is needed and the appraised value of purchase was \$1,350,000.

The Holly Creek Natural Area boasts frontage on two mountain streams, Holly Creek and Dill Creek. Holly Creek is a stronghold for fishes with twenty-five species occurring there and in Dill Creek. It is among the few tributary streams that still contain viable and healthy populations of freshwater mussels. In a recent conservation assessment sponsored by DNR as part of our Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, Holly Creek was designated a high priority stream because it contains the best known populations of the Alabama moccasinshell, Coosa moccasinshell and five other imperiled aquatic species. The uplands on the Holly Creek preserve also feature diverse plant communities and an area of large rock outcrops.

Panola Mountain – TCF Tract - This acquisition (91.18± acres) will become part of the 1,025-acre Panola Mountain State Park. The Conservation Fund (TCF) tract is across from and preserves the viewshed of DNR’s recently-acquired Southernness and Alexander Farm tracts. The Panola Mountain State Park master plan calls for the TCF tract to be developed to provide hiking trails, nature study and conservation areas. The TCF tract will also accommodate the extension of the Arabia Mountain Multi-Use Trail in its proposed route through the Panola Mountain State Park to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit property.

The entire cost (\$900,000) of this project is being covered by the Land and Water Conservation Fund federal grant. The bargain sale price TCF is offering will provide the 50% match required by the grant.

Taylor County Natural Area - Eleven species of concern are known on the 884± acre site and at least three others are suspected of being present because of suitable habitat and nearby occurrences. Those species documented include the striped newt (state rare listing; proposed for elevation to state threatened and proposed for federal listing, population here is the only one known within the fall line sandhills region and may be genetically unique from others), tiger salamander, gopher frog (proposed for state threatened list and already state listed in every other state within its range; site has perhaps the largest population in Georgia), gopher tortoise (state threatened), bachman’s sparrow (state rare; confirmed breeding population); greater sandhill crane; sherman’s fox squirrel, pondberry (state and federally endangered), sandhill golden aster (state threatened), lax water-milfoil (state threatened) and Southern hognose snake (proposed as state threatened). Florida pine snake (proposed as state rare), and southeastern kestrel are all very likely to occur on-site, but have not yet been detected.

Source of Funding: Non-Game Funds (donations)	\$ 450,000.00,
USFWS Grant T-21-L	\$ 450,000.00
Private Donation	\$ 426,000.00
Total	\$1,326,000.00

A motion was made by Stacy Patton and seconded by Ken Stewart to approve all of the DNR projects. The motion passed unanimously.

Strategic Planning Retreat

Chairperson Abraham stated that staff has been interviewing facilitators for the Strategic Planning Session. Interviews will be completed this afternoon. The Strategic Planning session is scheduled for July 23 – 25, 2006 at Smithgall Woods. The intent of the session is to develop goals and objectives to be accomplished over the next couple of years.

Conservation Groups Staff Contact List

Chairperson Abraham thanked Susan Kidd for her assistance in developing a contact list for the NGO’s.

Action Items

Emerging land issues – land prices continuing to escalate.

Update on the tax credit program – Steve Friedman stated that a couple of meetings have taken place with stakeholders. Rules have been developed and hope to take to the DNR Board on June 28 and then post for the 30 day comment period. DNR Board would then approve end of August. Jim Stokes stated that the real estate community needs to be informed. Chairperson Abraham requested Noel Holcomb, Stacy Patton, and Curt Soper to assist with disseminating information on the tax credit bill to the realtors. Chairperson Abraham will also contact Wade Shealy to assist.

September Council meeting – possibly change the date and location of the September GLCP Council meeting to September 18-19, 2006 at the Jones Research Center. Council members will be contact to see if they are available.

Land Summit Meeting – ACCG will have a Land Summit meeting on July 12 – 13, 2006 at Callaway Gardens.

Adjournment

A motion was made by John Bembry to adjourn the meeting seconded by Noel Holcomb. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Kim Yawn, Executive Assistant

Paul Burks, Executive Director