

# Land Conservation News 9/9/09

Issue Number 133

**Council increases subsidies for easements donated to the state:** At their September 3d meeting, the Georgia Land Conservation Council increased the funding available to state agencies to help pay for the due diligence costs associated with donated conservation easements. Citing the example of an altruistic landowner who wanted to donate a conservation easement on a 4,883 acre tract in Berrien County (including 12 ½ miles on the Alapaha River), the due diligence costs were estimated at \$90,000. Previously, the Council had authorized the staff to expend a total of \$400,000 to help cover due diligence costs with a cap of \$20,000 on each project. Of that amount, \$33,500 has been expended and an additional \$235,000 has been requested. The Council has now increased the cap to up to \$30,000 per project. While the funding is not automatically guaranteed, it does represent a significant increase in the incentives the State offers for donated conservation easements. The other major incentive is not requesting stewardship fees from the donor.

**Loan repayment sources identified:** The Georgia Land Conservation Program still has money to lend to local governments to help acquire conservation lands. Even with the favorable interest rates being offered, local governments are often reluctant to borrow funds without a specific source of funds to repay the loan. The Program has recently compiled a list of potential loan repayment funds including Federal agency sources, local government sources and private partners. Local funding options include greenspace sales taxes (SPLOST), property tax dedications, water and sewer revenues, impact fees, tax increment financing districts, transfers of development rights, property-based revenues and more.

**Georgia Land Conservation Program now on Facebook; here's how to join:** The GLCP Facebook page can be viewed by clicking on the link at the bottom of the Program's main page: [www.glcp.ga.gov](http://www.glcp.ga.gov). To become a 'fan' of the GLCP, log on to your Facebook account. If you don't have a Facebook account, you can create one by going to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and following their instructions. Once on your facebook profile, conduct a search by typing "Georgia Land Conservation Program" into the search bar in the top right next to the 'logout' link and clicking the magnifying glass. This should take you the GLCP page. Select the 'become a fan' icon next to the program's name at the top of the page. This will allow you to receive GLCP event updates and other notifications as they are posted.

**Congressman Linder refuses to support expanded Federal tax incentives for land conservation.** Despite the good efforts of the Georgia Piedmont Land Trust and other people in his district and active support from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Georgia Land Conservation Program, Cong. Linder has declined to co-sponsor H.R. 1831 to make the expanded Federal tax incentives permanent. Instead, he favors the Fair Tax (H.R. 25) that would do away with "a cumbersome [tax code] system with far too many exclusions, credits, exemptions, shelters and loopholes." While certainly disappointing, it's not unusual for a Representative to take a blanket stance based on an overarching principle like the Fair Tax. Sean Robertson, Public Policy

Specialist with the Land Trust Alliance, notes: “Please rest assured your efforts are not wasted. While there’s probably little we could do that would persuade him to co-sponsor, he now knows that people he cares about care about this issue. When this comes up in committee, that could make the difference between him working against us and keeping mum. In the end, quieting a potential voice of opposition on the committee may be just as important as a dozen rank and file co-sponsors.”

**Nine members of Georgia’s delegation have not yet co-sponsored H.R. 1831:**

- Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Savannah)
- Rep. Stanford Bishop (D-Albany)
- Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R-Newnan)
- Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Lithonia)
- Rep. Tom Price (R-Marietta)
- Rep. Jim Marshall (D-Macon)—Co-sponsored last year!
- Rep. Paul Broun (R-Athens)
- Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-Marietta)
- Rep. David Scott (D-Jonesboro)

Can you help? Contact the Land Trust Alliance’s Sean Robertson ([srobertson@lta.org](mailto:srobertson@lta.org)) if you need talking points or sample letters or other information.

**Picking the best conservation tool: Does the landowner’s wishes trump all?** If a landowner wants to donate a conservation easement to government agency A but the better steward of the land’s resources would be land trust B, does the landowner always decide? Following *Land Trust Standards and Practices* 8 H, Evaluating the best conservation tool, the land trust must advise the landowner of appropriate land conservation tools, even if their use does not involve the land trust. The State is under no such burden to use the best tool. Should they be?

**Changes**

John William Ragsdale, Jr.: Bill Ragsdale, Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia, died suddenly on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Bill was a graduate of the University of North Carolina, received his law degree from the University of Virginia, and served in the United States Navy. He was a founding partner of the Atlanta law firm of Ragsdale, Beals, Hooper, Seigler, Patterson and Gray. As an avid outdoorsman, Bill had a special love for his North Georgia mountains. He often referred to his home in Pickens County as “Mid Eden”. For those who knew Bill, he was always a special friend and a joyous spirit, and quick to laugh. Bill was one of the long-time leaders of the MCTGA and a founder of the Georgia Alliance of Land Trusts. His dedication to land conservation will be missed.

Land Trust Alliance – Southeast U.S. Program office has new phone and fax numbers: Forced to move over Labor Day weekend, the Alliance’s Southeast office has a new telephone number, 919-515-0760, and a new fax number, 919-515-0767. The e-mail and mailing address for Director Chuck Roe and Program Associate Heidi Hannapel remain the same.

Dr. Mary Freeman now chairs the Broad River Watershed Association: The all-volunteer BRWA has new officers: Mary Freeman is chair; Robbie Griffith is co-chair, Vic Johnson is treasurer and Pat Kelly is secretary. Mary works as a research ecologist for the U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Georgia. Among her achievements: she was recently named the first Georgia River Hero by Georgia River Network; and she and her husband, Bud, described a new species of fish, the Halloween Darter. She can be reached at [mary@trout.ecology.uga.edu](mailto:mary@trout.ecology.uga.edu)

New board leadership at the St. Simons Land Trust: At their annual meeting, Lee Richards was elected chairman of the board and seven new board members were elected: Ellen Dempsey, John Dunham, Jim Jones, Don Myers, Gordon Strother, Brooke Sumerford and Sandy Turbidity. Fred Freyer and Russ Marane were re-appointed to two-year terms. Retiring from the board were Bill Edenfield, Duane Harris, Jack Hartman, John Ludwig and Jim Manning.

### **Dates**

September 21: Registration deadline for Rally 2009 in Portland, Oregon. For details, go to [www.lta.org/rally](http://www.lta.org/rally)

September 23: Colloquy with the Land Trust Alliance's Southeast Program Director, Chuck Roe. Starting at 10:00 AM at the Alcovy Conservation Center in Covington. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to [hans@galandcc.com](mailto:hans@galandcc.com)

October 11 – 14: Rally 2009, Portland, Oregon. For details, go to [www.lta.org/rally](http://www.lta.org/rally)

December 3: Next meeting of the Georgia Land Conservation Council. The meeting may be held by conference call.

March 17-19: The 2010 Southeast Land Trusts Conference, Westin Pointsett Hotel, Greenville, South Carolina. More information later.

**Land Conservation News** is a periodic communication produced by the Georgia Land Conservation Center for land trust leaders and others who care about the future of open space in Georgia. To subscribe or to contribute news items, please contact Hans Neuhauser at the Georgia Land Conservation Center: 706-546-7507 or [hans@galandcc.com](mailto:hans@galandcc.com)