

NETWORK NEWS 5/27/09

Issue Number 128

New land conservation tax credit rules are now in effect: The new rules, adopted by the Board of Natural Resources on April 29, went into effect on May 21. Henceforth, all applications for the tax credit will be reviewed for conformity with the new rules, which among other things, tighten the definitions of what lands qualify for the tax credit. New certification application forms (dated May 2009) and related documents may be found at www.glcp.ga.gov/taxcredit.

Georgia Land Conservation Council to meet June 3 & 4: The Council will hold a retreat at the Little Ocmulgee State Park Lodge near McRae next week and observers/participants are welcome. The meeting will start at 3:00 PM on June 3. Agenda items include a review of the budget and 2009 legislative activity, review of new and revised grant and loan applications, program updates, conservation values mapping (see next item), a presentation on stream and wetlands mitigation programs and emerging issues. The meeting will conclude with an overview of the field visit to the Lower Ocmulgee Conservation Area scheduled for the following day. After dinner, the Council – and others – will participate in a conservation values mapping exercise. On June 4, the Council will visit the Lower Ocmulgee Conservation Area. ► If you plan to attend, please contact Curt Soper at 404-584-1083 or curt@gefa.ga.gov so he can have a head count. To reserve space at the Lodge, call 229-868-7474.

Conservation values mapping: The Georgia Land Conservation Program is currently preparing maps of the ten conservation values identified in the Georgia Land Conservation Act. Overlaying the maps (or at least some of them) should help identify priority areas for Council attention. The maps may also be helpful to other agencies, such as the Georgia Water Plan's Regional Councils and the Georgia Forestry Commission, that is charged with the development of a Statewide Assessment of forest resources. Under the leadership of DNR's Chris Canalos, the following maps are in preparation: (1) NRCS prime agricultural soils; (2) buffers around existing conservation lands; (3) USFS high priority forest lands; (4) potential conservation opportunity areas from the GA Wildlife Action Plan; (5) slopes greater than 10%; (6) high priority watersheds; (7) National Wetland Inventory wetlands; (8) Heritage corridors and National Register sites; (9) Regional trails and SCORP local parks; and (10) Scenic Byways and Georgia Scenic Rivers. The development of these maps and various overlays raise several questions, including what additional data sources might make the results more accurate or robust; and how could/should the State (and others) make use of such maps?

Amend the Georgia Land Conservation Act to facilitate bridge loans: As reported in the March 11 issue of *Network News* (#125), the Attorney General's Office has issued an opinion to the effect that lands acquired by a land trust using a loan from the GA Land Conservation Program must be restricted at the time of acquisition. The practical application of this opinion is simple: bridge loans don't work. Consideration is being given to seeking an amendment to the Act to fix this. Other ideas for changes to the Act

should be submitted to Curt Soper at curt@gefa.ga.gov Please copy the Georgia Land Trust Service Center at hansneuhauser@bellsouth.net

Application procedures for funding from the Georgia Wetlands and Streams Trust Fund to change: The Georgia Land Trust Service Center and the Savannah District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are currently revising the procedures for applying for funds from the Trust Fund to bring them into conformity with the new Rules for Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources (*Federal Register*, April 10, 2008). Until these procedures are final, no new applications for funds will be accepted. An announcement will be made in *Network News* when new applications will be accepted.

Correction: Tammara Van Ryn, the Executive Director of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, requested that the following correction be provided to the “Thinking about applying for accreditation” note in *Network News* 5/1/09 (#127): “The requirements for accreditation that you wrote about have not changed in the since the pilot program. All of the organizations that participated in accreditation program – from the pilot program through today – have had to duplicate and store essential and irreplaceable documents in a location separate from the originals. Likewise, all applicants need to either meet basic stewardship fund requirements or have a credible plan for doing so. Our *Guidance Document* on stewardship funding came out in January 2008 and the one on recordkeeping came out in July 2008. No final accreditation decisions were made until August 2008. Many of the groups that were part of the pilots had to raise more money, develop credible stewardship plans or move documents off site. Your newsletter article diminishes all the hard work they did.” The Editor regrets the error.

Representative Nathan Deal signs on! Rep. Deal has become a co-sponsor of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act (HR 1831) to make the increased income tax deductions permanent for conservation easement donations. And now there are two co-sponsors from Georgia, Rep. Barrow having signed up earlier. Key members to be recruited are Cong. Linder and Lewis and Senators Chambliss and Isakson.

Reminder - Even small land trusts need to file a Form 990 this year. If you fail to do so, you could loose your tax exempt status.

Helpful links: Frank McIntosh with the Georgia Land Trust has accumulated a number of links to sites that may be of use to your land trust. If nothing else, they provide hours of distraction.

GIS/Mapping

Georgia Data Clearinghouse - <https://data.georgiaspatial.org/index.asp>

NRCS Web Soil Survey - <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>

NRCS Geospatial Data Gateway - <http://datagateway.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Alabama Data Portal - <http://portal.gsa.state.al.us/>

Alabama State Water Program - http://www.aces.edu/waterquality/gis_data/

GIS Pilot - <http://www.gispilot.com/>

USFWS GIS Data - <http://www.fws.gov/data/statdata/index.html>
National Atlas - <http://www.nationalatlas.gov/pros.html>
GIS Data Links - http://www.doylesdartden.com/gis/misc_gis.html
Georgia Maps - <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/gamaps.htm>
More Georgia Maps - <http://geology.com/state-map/georgia.shtml>
Google maps - <http://maps.google.com/>
Live Search Maps - <http://maps.live.com/> (good aerial photos; amazing birds eye view in urban areas)
NARSAL Watershed Maps - http://narsal.uga.edu/glut/maps_watersheds.html
Metro Atlanta Road Map - http://www.aaccessmaps.com/show/map/atlanta_metro_se.html

BDR Info

Georgia Info <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/>
New Georgia Encyclopedia - <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Home.jsp>
BNET (searchable articles on a lot of topics) - <http://www.bnet.com/>
GCWCS - <http://www1.gadnr.org/cwcs/>
USDA Plants Database - <http://plants.usda.gov/>
Fire Effects Information System - <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/index.html>
Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants - <http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>
NatureServe - <http://www.natureserve.org/>
Encyclopedia of Life - <http://www.eol.org/>
GA Rare Element Occurrences - <http://www.georgiawildlife.com/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=89&txtPage=9>
Encyclopedia of Earth - <http://www.eoearth.org/>
Sherpa Guides - <http://www.sherpaguides.com/>
Georgia Tax Assessors - <http://gaassessors.com/>
Coastal Georgia Ecosystems - http://gce-iter.marsci.uga.edu/public/app/all_species_lists.asp
Georgia Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy - <http://www1.gadnr.org/cwcs/>
Georgia DNR - <http://www.gadnr.org/naturalresources.aspx>
World Wildlife Fund (ecoregion descriptions)- http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial_na.html
The Nature Conservancy – <http://www.tnc.org>

Weather (handy for planning days to go into the woods or to stay in the barn)
Wundermap - <http://www.wunderground.com/wundermap> (interactive weather map with Google Map foundation. Has animation and storm track features.)
Unisys - http://weather.unisys.com/satellite/sat_ir_enh_us_loop-12.html
(Animated satellite map that is real handy for guesstimating weather based on a three or twelve hour scroll.)

Land Trust/Land Management Info

Land Trust Alliance – <http://www.lta.org>

Private Landowners Network -

<http://www.privatelandownernetwork.org/plnlo/doc280162.asp> (mother lode of resources)

Georgia/Alabama Land Trust – <http://www.galandtrust.org> (a lot of links posted on the site; some reasonably well thought articles on land protection.)

Appraisal Institute - <http://www.appraisalinstitute.org/>

American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers -

<http://www.asfmra.org/education/schedule/>

Forest Guild - <http://www.forestguild.org> (Has posts of its magazine Forest Wisdom)

Steve Small has a new book: A special updated edition of Steve Small's *Preserving Family Lands: Book I* has just been published. It includes information on the increased income tax deductions for conservation easement donations. Go to www.preservingfamilylands.com for ordering information, bulk order discounts and an order form.

Massachusetts joins ranks of states offering land conservation tax credits: In January, Governor Patrick signed legislation to create a tax credit program for the Commonwealth. The measure provides credits equal to 50% of the fair market value of the donation not to exceed \$50,000 with at 10-year carry-forward. Qualifying lands include lands that protect in perpetuity drinking water supplies, wildlife habitat and biological diversity, agricultural and forestry production, recreational opportunities, scenic or cultural values. In consideration of the current fiscal climate, implementation is delayed until January 1, 2011 and a \$2 million cap is in place. One provision should be considered for Georgia: a nine-member commission is created to study the transferability of tax credits; their report is due by the end of 2010. To read the legislation, go to: www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw08/s1080509.htm

Rally 2009 registration now open: “The National Land Conservation Conference – Leading and Learning in Uncertain Times” will be held in Portland, Oregon on October 11 – 14. Among the many offerings are field trips and seminars on Oct. 11 & 12 and concurrent workshops on Oct. 13 & 14. Register now for the best choices and the lowest prices (they go up after August 17); go to www.registration@lta.org Scholarships are also available; apply by August 10.

Jobs

The Nature Conservancy is seeking a “Fort Gordon Conservation Specialist” to develop, manage and advance conservation programs, plans and methods in the Fort Gordon conservation area near Augusta. To apply, log on to www.nature.org/careers

The Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts is looking for an Executive Director to replace Jill Ozarski who has moved to the private sector. For information, call CCLT at 303-271-1577.

Network News is a periodic communication produced by the Georgia Land Trust Service Center for land trust leaders in Georgia. To subscribe or to contribute news items, please contact Hans Neuhauser at the Georgia Land Trust Service Center: 706-546-7507 or hansneuhauser@bellsouth.net