

## Facts about Land Conservation in Georgia

### (Excerpt from Georgia Land Conservation Partnership Plan, Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and Georgia Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy)

#### Summary of Key Points

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- Georgia's population is expected to swell from 9.5 million to 11 million by 2015, 13 million by 2020 and 14.4 million by 2030 making the state the 6<sup>th</sup> most populous in the country.
- Georgia is the 4<sup>th</sup> fastest growing state in the nation with the 2nd fastest growing metropolitan area. The 28 County Atlanta metropolitan area added over 1 million people over the last 7 years (more than any other region in the country) and now has a population of 5,278,904.
- Land development is destroying the natural habitats of the state at an unprecedented rate. Georgia loses 106 acres per day to development, 50 acres per day in metro Atlanta is replaced by 55 acres of impervious surface (parking lots, rooftops, commercial building etc.)
- Since 1974 the State of Georgia has only invested \$331 million or an average of about \$11 million per year for acquisition of conservation and recreation lands. This compares to many other southern states and states around the country that spend \$100 million or more per year. For example – since 1990 the State of Florida has spent \$300 million per year acquiring and permanently protecting over 1.8 million acres of land
- Georgia is one of only 14 states in the country (1 of 2 in southeast region) that do not have a consistent, dedicated source of funds for parks, recreation and land conservation.
- Georgia ranks 12<sup>th</sup> out of 16 southern and south central states for percent of land area permanently protected.
- 88 % of all Georgians support public funding sources for land conservation, parks and recreation.
- Georgia ranks 40<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in total acres of publicly owned parks, forests and other natural areas.

- The Georgia Piedmont (where most of the state's population resides) has the second lowest percentage of lands in permanent conservation (5.1%) of all regions in Georgia.
- Percentage of permanent land conservation by region: Appalachians/Ridge & Valley (NW GA) 6.3%, Blue Ridge Mountains (NE GA) 38.9%, Piedmont 5.1%, Southeastern Plains (South and SW GA) 2.6%, Southern Coastal Plain (SE GA) 13.7%
- Outdoor recreation is big business contributing billions in tourism revenue every year (\$1.5 billion for fishing alone) to the local and state economies. Economic impact of outdoor recreation related spending is over \$769 million per year for state and local economies. Outdoor recreation areas also increase adjacent housing values (resulting in increased ad valorem taxes for local and state governments), and attract new residents and businesses.
- The demand for outdoor recreation will soon out-pace the supply of land and available recreation resources as well as the ability of recreation providers, including local and state governments to afford to meet this demand
- Unless we act now, the development demands of increasing urbanization will outweigh opportunities to conserve and provide greenspace and outdoor recreation resources. As a result, land for parks and greenspace will not be protected and many current and future Georgians may never see an intact forest, paddle in a stream, marvel at our abundant wildlife or have the chance to play ball.
- Decision makers, political leaders and others must be educated on the importance and benefits of providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities and conserving land for all Georgians.