Georgia Conservancy

FY 2015

Impact Report

THANK YOU!

YOUR SUPPORT HAS HELPED US MAKE GEORGIA A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT THRIVE.

A Georgia where People and the Environment thrive.

The Georgia Conservancy is a statewide, member-supported conservation organization. Our work for environmental advocacy, land conservation, coastal protection, sustainable growth and outdoor stewardship recognizes the connection between the environment, the economy and our quality of life.

THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY MISSION

To protect and conserve Georgia's natural resources through advocacy, engagement and collaboration.

Letter from the President

What is our impact? Have our past efforts led to a better Georgia – for its people and environment? What can we do today that will set the stage for the tomorrow that we all desire? These are questions that we at the Georgia Conservancy ask ourselves every day in our efforts to forward conservation and sustainability in our state.

As I transition into my second year as President of the Georgia Conservancy, it is important that I reflect upon the successes that have led us here and to actively lay the groundwork for future success that results in the conservation of the beautiful and life-sustaining natural resources found in our state.

In looking to the past, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Georgia Conservancy's *Blueprints for Successful Communities* program, an effort which has led to the creation of more than 30 sustainable growth plans for communities large and small across the state and one that has advanced the conversation about the effects that our built environment has on our natural resources and our own well-being. I can truly say that the work our sustainable growth team has accomplished has had a tremendous influence on better development planning and practices in Georgia and will continue to do so in coming years.

In looking toward the future, this year we unveiled a new five-year strategic plan. It has been exciting to dive into the details and forge paths that will guide our work and allow for the advancement of our mission.

One impactful initiative that stands out in the Georgia Conservancy's new strategic plan is the 100-Year Conservation Blueprint for Georgia. The ambitious plan is our effort to capture the influence that our precious natural places have on all of us and to further strengthen Georgia's culture of conservation so that both nature and generations of Georgians to come will have the ability to flourish sustainably in this great state of ours.

As you will find out in the following pages, our programmatic work this year forwarded our mission to protect and conserve Georgia's natural resources through advocacy, engagement and collaboration. Some highlights include:

- Continued landowner outreach and advocacy efforts by our Land Conservation Program to increase the total amount of critical habitat protected in its four years to more than 27,000 acres.
- Expansion in both the numbers of participants in our Stewardship Trips Program and the regions in Georgia in which we explore.
- Successfully working with coastal legislators, citizens and other conservation groups to pass legislation that established, for the first time, a statute that defines coastal marsh buffers.
- Exploring and educating Georgians on new ways to sustainably address the economic, planning and conservation challenges faced by small towns in Georgia.

Nothing that the Georgia Conservancy has accomplished this year can be solely attributed to the work of our members, staff, volunteers and board of trustees. We pride ourselves on being an organization that collaborates with a diverse range of partners with the goal of finding consensus around what is best for our state. We will remain committed to this approach and respect all who endeavor to conserve our natural places. Without engaging in these strategic and very important partnerships – whether they be at the State Capitol or in a kayak on the Altamaha River – our work to protect and conserve Georgia's natural resources would not be possible.

Robert Ramsay, President

Coastal Georgia

Conserving Georgia's gem

Georgia's coast stretches for nearly 100 miles and features some of the nation's most pristine beaches, remote salt marshes and protected maritime forests. A string of barrier islands, some only accessible by boat, remain largely untouched, offering a sanctuary for migrating birds and a home to a number of endangered or threatened species.

Protecting our coast has been a priority of the Georgia Conservancy for nearly 50 years. We maintain an office in historic downtown Savannah, headed by Coastal Director Clay Mobley, and are working on a range of projects to protect this precious natural resource.

Advocacy: Actively advocating with our partners to stop the construction of the Palmetto Pipeline, a gasoline pipeline that would traverse five major coastal watersheds

Land Conservation: Successfully conserved 2,093 acres of critical habitat in Georgia's coastal counties through strategic outreach to landowners

Stewardship Trips: Hosted 12 Stewardship Trips on Georgia's coast, including service weekends on Cumberland, Ossabaw and Sapelo islands

Sustainable Growth: Studying sea level rise and how to mitigate effects through engagement with community stakeholders and collaboration with planning and design professionals

Clay Mobley, Coastal Director

100 miles of coastline

2,093 acres protected

Year-Round Advocacy

12 Coastal Trips including 3 Service Weekends

(Sapelo, Ossabaw, Cumberland)

Sea Level Rise Education and Outreach

Where the Conservancy stands

Advocacy

Protected 25-foot salt marsh buffer

378,000 acres of salt marsh

Georgia Legacy

Solar Financing

School Construction

Aquifer Study Committee

The 2015 Georgia General Assembly demonstrated again why the investment in an effective and engaged Advocacy Program at the Georgia Conservancy is so important – it's necessary! Georgia Conservancy Advocacy Director Leah Barnett and our team of Allie Kelly and William Woodall tracked more than 35 pieces of legislation this year, in addition to the Governor's budget, and spent significant time, effort and influence working more than 15 bills.

Successfully advocated for:

- Passage of legislation that created a statute that protects the 25-foot salt marsh buffer
- Passage of legislation that reduces up-front costs for customers wishing to install solar technologies on their properties
- Introduction of Georgia Legacy legislation, ensuring its place on the 2016 Georgia General Assembly agenda
- Creation of a committee to study saltwater intrusion into the coastal aquifer
- Creation of Senate committee to study state requirements around school construction

Successfully fought against:

- Legislation that would prohibit communities from placing bans on the distribution of single-use plastic bags

Leah Barnett, Advocacy Director

Land Conservation

Saving our natural and working landscapes

The Georgia Conservancy's Land Conservation Initiative, begun in 2011, provides outreach, education and guidance to those who wish to conserve their properties through conservation easements or through participation in various other state and federal programs.

With the population of Georgia at 10 million, development is putting more pressure on our rivers and streams, posing a threat to biodiversity. We believe that the conservation of private lands by landowners and the responsible acquisition of critical acres for conservation by land trusts or federal, state and local bodies is a key to protecting our water resources, flora and fauna, and the citizens of our state.

In FY2015, the Georgia Conservancy's Land Conservation Program received more than 600 landowner inquiries and assisted in the protection or restoration of land in four different ecoregions within the state: Blue Ridge, Piedmont, Southeastern Plains, and Southern Coastal Plain. In total, 3,150 acres were permanently conserved, and an additional 850 acres were placed into perpetual Wetland Reserve Easements to be restored to their original hydrology. In four years, the Land Conservation Initiative has directly contributed to the successful protection or restoration of more than 27,000 acres across Georgia.

Our fiscal year conservation victories were led by Land Conservation Specialist Clint McNeal, Coastal Director Clay Mobley and past Land Conservation Specialist Fuller Callaway. Many of these successes were supported by the previous year's work from then Georgia Conservancy President Pierre Howard and Shannon Mayfield, past Director of Land Conservation.

Clint McNeal, Land Conservation Specialist

ACRES PROTECTED IN 2014 BY COUNTY

Brantley	726
Cherokee	599
Dawson	205
Effingham	250
Hancock	42
Long	1,117
Pulaski	333
Tift	721

3,993 acres

Building a better Georgia

Sustainable Growth

5 CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

15 LECTURES ACROSS THE STATE

with more than **600** participants

3 Blueprints Completed:

Mission Zero Corridor
Chattahoochee River Park
School Siting Impacts

The Georgia Conservancy's mission is to protect Georgia's natural resources. But in today's world, that means more than just protecting critical lands and habitats from development. It also requires that built spaces - our cities, towns and neighborhoods – grow and develop in a more sustainable fashion.

The bottom line: Better planning helps the environment, enabling communities to grow while using fewer resources and disturbing less open space.

Through several partnerships, the Georgia Conservancy has been able to provide technical training and workshops on where our schools are built, as well as to how to help our small communities thrive in spite of challenges faced in rural areas. Among other work, we have given presentations and facilitated conversations with the following groups.

Small Town Revitalization

- Georgia Academy for Economic Development, across the state (Ongoing; 12 during FY2014)
- Georgia Planning Association, Athens, September 2014
- National Main Streets Conference, Atlanta, March 2015

School Siting

- New Partners for Smart Growth, Baltimore Maryland, February 2015
- Council for Educational Facility Planners International, Georgia Chapter, Callaway Gardens, June 2015
- Assistance with conversations around community priorities and school placements in the Town of Tyrone, City of Harlem, and in Forsyth County.

Katherine Moore, Sustainable Growth Sr. Director

Stewardship Trips

Protecting and Exploring Georgia

There is perpetual need for a new generation of advocates and stewards who will champion the continued and future protection of Georgia's precious natural places. Experiencing the outdoors firsthand is the gateway to lifelong advocacy.

We use our network of partners and peers to provide access to barrier islands, river systems and nature preserves that are often inaccessible or off-limits to the public.

We traditionally offer five different types of experiences to choose from:

- **Heartland Rivers of Georgia:** Day and weekend paddles on incredible and seldom seen sections of river, with a focus on the heartland rivers in south and central Georgia
- **Bucket List Adventures:** Once-in-a-lifetime journeys to Blackbeard, Cumberland, Ossabaw and Sapelo Islands, the Conasauga River, Cloudland Canyon, the Okefenokee Swamp and the Cohutta Wilderness.
- **Service and Stewardship Weekends:** Opportunities to give back through service work on Cumberland, Ossabaw and Sapelo Islands, as well as the Len Foote Hike Inn.
- **Day Trips:** Weekend and weekday exploration of some of metro Atlanta's best, and often unknown, locations for outdoor recreation.
- **Cambium Member Trips:** Special access to locations such as Fricks Cave, Little St. Simons Island and Cloudland Canyon.

Georgia Conservancy members receive a discount to every Georgia Conservancy Stewardship Trip

Bryan Schroeder, Stewardship and Outreach Sr. Director

30 TRIPS ACROSS THE STATE WITH 2,402 PARTICIPANTS
including:

5 Service Trips

13 Heartland River Paddles

5 Bucket List Trips

4 Cambium Trips

1,151 paddlers
in one day at THE GRAND Columbus Whitewater Paddle (2014)

and

378 volunteers at
8 Corporate Service Projects

Income and Expenses

The Georgia Conservancy is pleased to report that our unaudited balance sheet showed an increase in surplus as of June 31, 2015. We also ended the fiscal year without drawing upon our reserves.

The Georgia Conservancy is a private nonprofit organization. The Conservancy's revenues come from a combination of individual memberships, unrestricted gifts, restricted grants, stewardship trip fees, special events and the sale of merchandise. All contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law. A certified public accounting firm audits the Georgia Conservancy annually. The FY15 audit will be available later this year. We do not anticipate any material change from the unaudited results.

Income	
Contributions	$406,239
Membership	$166,112
Program Services	$86,519
Special Events	$313,432
Restricted Contributions	$619,086
Other Income	$6,837
Total	**$1,598,225**
Expenses	
Outreach, Education and Advocacy	$730,222
Land	$174,493
Coastal Program	$147,105
Membership	$105,178
Administration	$190,459
Fundraising	$248,590
Total	**$1,596,048**
NET INCOME	**$2,177**

Unaudited Balance Sheet	
Cash and Cash Reserve	$1,218,500
Endowment Fund	$150,000
Other Assets	$155,309
Total Assets	**$1,523,809**
Total Liabilities	$79,453
Unrestricted Fund Balance	$953,609
Permanently Restricted Fund Balance	$150,000
Temporarily Restricted Fund Balance	$340,747
Total Equity	**$1,523,809**

Melinda Corbett, Finance Manager

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the individuals, corporations, foundations and organizations who generously supported the Georgia Conservancy and its leadership role in managing statewide environmental initiatives to protect Georgia's natural environment and resources. Due to space limitations, we are pleased to acknowledge gifts of $250 or more from the following individuals, foundations, corporations and organizations in FY15. We thank you for your generous support of the Conservancy's programs, projects and operations. Every effort was made to correctly list these donors from July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015. If you notice an omission or error, please contact the development team at 404-876-2900 or mail@gaconservancy.org.

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977 first time contributors

2,191 unique donors

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