



# THIS IS YOUR GEORGIA

## SUMMER 2019

[www.GeorgiaConservancy.org](http://www.GeorgiaConservancy.org)



Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Phuc Dao.

## Mining Threatens the Okefenokee Swamp

In July, a proposal was submitted to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers by an out-of-state company, Twin Pines. They seek to extract heavy metals from a 12,000-acre tract extremely close to the southeastern edge of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Charlton County through a form of strip mining.

The mining would impact wetlands on or directly adjacent to this tract and could permanently impact the hydrology of the entire Okefenokee Swamp. The Okefenokee's 438,000-acre biodiverse ecosystem is home to the headwaters of two notable rivers, the Suwannee and the St. Marys.

Each year, 600,000 people visit the Okefenokee, generating \$88M in economic impact in Charlton, Clinch and Ware Counties.

Risking the health of the Okefenokee, its ecosystem, and its current economic impact is as unthinkable today as it was in the late 1990s. Then, the swift action of concerned citizens, scientists, lawmakers and conservation groups fought off a similar mining threat.

*Today, your help is needed with this evolving threat.* Please make a gift to the Georgia Conservancy to help protect the Okefenokee Swamp.

An incredible national treasure, the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, is again under threat.

*Learn more about the threat mining poses and what you can do to help ensure that this project does not proceed at: [www.georgiaconservancy.org/okefenokee/mining](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/okefenokee/mining)*



## THIS IS YOUR GEORGIA

### The President's Letter

When you hear “Georgia,” what comes to mind? A crisp fall day with scenic North Georgia Mountain foliage? The feel of excitement as you begin the Appalachian Trail? Maybe a memory of fishing on the Flint River, canoeing in the Okefenokee, or seeing the glistening Marshes of Glynn? For me, Georgia is all of these and more.

The Georgia Conservancy holds an incredible legacy protecting our state’s most vital natural resources. I am honored and humbled to carry this legacy forward as President.

With the launch of this newsletter, I ask for your support in reaching for the vision of a Georgia where people and the environment thrive. Together, we will determine whether future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy Georgia’s rich beauty and natural resources. *This is your Georgia.*

Bart Gobeil, President  
Georgia Conservancy

## THE DISTINGUISHED CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter



Shoals Spider-Lily by Chris Drummond



Flint River at Sprewell Bluff by Jim Farmer



President Jimmy Carter at the 2009 reopening of the Carter Library & Museum from The Carter Center

The Georgia Conservancy is pleased to announce Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter as our 2019 Distinguished Conservationist. The Award recognizes President Carter’s profound and lasting impact on the conservation and protection of Georgia’s natural resources.

President Carter, one of the Georgia Conservancy’s founding members in 1967, has a notable ecological legacy in Georgia and beyond which merits celebration. From his role in preserving the Flint River at Sprewell Bluff, to the support of significant environmental policy changes and unwavering commitment to Georgia’s natural resources, President Carter has left our lands and waters for the better.

The 26th Annual *ecoBenefête* is a singular opportunity to honor the legacy of President Carter and his profound impact on Georgia, the Georgia Conservancy, and the environment.

*“Now is the time for us to acknowledge that we can no longer live without respecting and understanding our mountain forests and the other great ecosystems of the earth which have for millennia supported the habitat of man.”* – President Jimmy Carter, preface to The Georgia Conservancy’s *Guide to the North Georgia Mountains*.

## HANDS-ON IN NEWTON COUNTY

### Exploring Perceptions of Housing

The Georgia Conservancy's Sustainable Growth Program plans for all parts of a city's natural and built environment, intending to create sustainable urban and rural spaces. Part of fostering sustainable places involves educating residents, planners, and students on what makes a place thrive. Through partnerships with universities in Georgia, and with your support, we engage students in real-world projects and exchange new ideas on emerging issues in the planning field.

This summer, we took our partnership with Emory's Community Building and Social Change Fellowship to the next level. Three students interested in housing issues engaged in hands-on work in Newton County. The group gathered resident perceptions of housing across the county and its cities as part of a more extensive project the Georgia Conservancy is completing for the Covington Housing Authority.

*"Housing, specifically its location and type, has a significant impact on our environment."* - Katherine Moore,  
VP Programs, The Georgia Conservancy

Over two months, the students paid several visits to Newton County locations and met with top officials, including the mayor of Covington. With guidance from Georgia Conservancy staff, they explored how housing and environmental challenges are intertwined, developed a housing perception survey for residents and business leaders, and analyzed and presented their data to staff. We are very proud of the work they have done and are excited about partnering with future student groups on projects like this.

Learn more at [www.georgiaconservancy.org/housing](http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/housing)



Emory Fellows from left to right: Julie Park, Théo Davis, and Afshin Valani

## CUMBERLAND ISLAND VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT PLAN



Backpacking on Cumberland Island by Phuc Dao

Cumberland Island is woven into the history of the Georgia Conservancy. Its conservation, protection and enjoyment for the people of Georgia has been a top priority throughout our 52-year history. In June, the Georgia Conservancy provided comments related to the Cumberland Island National Seashore Visitor Use Management (VUM) Plan.

Our initial comments, made through the lens of potential environmental impacts, highlighted issues to be addressed. These include analysis of visitor capacity, access areas, and facilities updates; additional recreational opportunities; and presence of commercial visitor services.

The National Park Service (NPS) faces a unique challenge of balancing the conservation of resources with judicious land use and access that is difficult on a remote island. Limited information has been provided to the public during the initial open house meetings. We look forward to having a more complete analysis and stakeholder interactions with NPS experts and resource managers as the plan is developed.

Your input will be crucial when the Draft VUM is released this winter, as your comments will help to inform any changes made by the NPS.

*For more information and to learn more about the Draft VMU schedule and comment opportunities:*  
[www.nps.gov/cuis/learn/management/vump.htm](http://www.nps.gov/cuis/learn/management/vump.htm)

## A NATURAL PARTNERSHIP

Bank of America Volunteers in Forest Park



The Georgia Conservancy's Natural Partners have long engaged employees in group service projects to positively make a difference in Georgia parks, riverbanks, and beaches. This summer, Bank of America employees are trying out a new type of volunteer experience with the Georgia Conservancy and the City of Forest Park, assisting with an historic neighborhood housing inventory project. The project will document and map housing type, parcel details, and housing conditions in two neighborhoods. This information will help to inform future neighborhood stabilization, affordable housing, economic development, and environmentally-sensitive land-use efforts in Forest Park.

Explore a Natural Partnership with the Georgia Conservancy. We offer multiple ways to engage your employees, promote your business, and help you be recognized for serving as a catalyst for the stewardship of Georgia's natural environment throughout the year. Contact Georgia Conservancy Vice President Jane Zoellick at 404-876-2900 x 123 or [jzoellick@gaconservancy.org](mailto:jzoellick@gaconservancy.org).

## A RECORD-SETTING SEA TURTLE SEASON

It's been a record-setting season for sea turtles on Georgia's 100-mile long coast. As of August 1, more than 3,840 sea turtle nests have been recorded on Georgia beaches—from Cumberland Island north to Tybee Island.

The previous record, set in 2016, was 3,291 nests. With the 2019 season continuing through mid-August, this year's record is likely to increase.

By far the most common sea turtle to nest in Georgia is the threatened loggerhead, though Kemp's ridley and green turtles have nested here in recent years.

Sea turtles and the beaches where they nest have long been a focus of our Coastal Program.

*Learn more about our work:  
[gaconservancy.org/coast](http://gaconservancy.org/coast)*



Loggerhead hatchlings by Georgia DNR



## GREEN READS BOOK CLUB

You are invited (including those located remotely) to explore essential reads related to land conservation and protection, sustainable growth, and stewardship among other environmentally-focused subjects with the Green Reads Book Club every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month. Exchange new ideas and share a love of literature with titles that are Georgia specific, global in perspective and include biographies, historical fiction, journalism, novels, scientific research, short stories, as well as literary works for young readers. *Contact Liza Mueller at [lmueller@gaconservancy.org](mailto:lmueller@gaconservancy.org) for details.*

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