



## Fast Facts

Every day, more than 100 acres of land in Georgia are covered by concrete, asphalt and rooftops.

Georgia voters are committed to protecting our natural areas. Since 2000, voters have passed dozens of local ballot measures, creating more than \$882 million for local land conservation initiatives.

According a University of Georgia study, across a sampling of 10 urban, suburban and rural counties, working farmland and forestland pays more in direct revenue than the cost of services received, unlike residential development.

Childhood obesity and cardiovascular diseases are growing problems statewide because of our less-active lifestyles. Outdoor recreation can reverse these trends.

For More Information:  
Georgia Wildlife Federation,  
Jerry McCollum or Glenn Dowling

The Conservation Fund,  
Rex Boner or Andrew Schock

The Nature Conservancy,  
Georgia Field Office,  
Shelly Lakly or Thomas Farmer

The Trust for Public Land,  
Helen Tapp

# Conserving Our Land and Parks

## What's at Stake?

From forested mountains to sweeping beaches, Georgia's natural environment provides sustainable jobs, vibrant communities and diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation. With leadership and foresight, we can set aside and protect our natural resources to ensure we have clean air and safe drinking water; to maintain the economic benefits that come to our state from tourism, forestry and agriculture; and to ensure our families continue to have the quality of life and health benefits derived from clean and plentiful natural resources, including parks and recreation areas.

In short, creating a culture of land conservation benefits Georgia by:

- Generating economic activity and tourism
- Ensuring balanced growth
- Increasing health and well being
- Protecting water and natural resources
- Building strong communities

Without continued investments in parks and natural areas, Georgia can lose its natural advantage in attracting workers, families, employers and tourists. And without state dollars for land conservation and parks, opportunities to leverage matching federal, foundation and private funds will be lost.

## Challenges

Georgia's natural landscape is disappearing at an alarming rate. According to the University of Georgia's Natural Resources Spatial Analysis Laboratory, more than 39,000 acres of land are covered with concrete, asphalt and rooftops every year. State agencies, local governments and conservation organizations are working together to identify the places most at risk and to prioritize the protection of these lands. This cooperation will provide a clear roadmap to protect the best of Georgia's remaining habitat and landscape-scale tracts of land.

Georgia's marvelous system of state parks and historic sites ranks among the top three in the nation and these sites help support our economy. To continue to draw millions of visitors annually, our state parks are poised to implement a clear plan of action laid out in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

But, without continued funding, we risk losing a legacy for future generations in land conservation and park development and maintenance. State grants and loans provide the critical leverage required to draw needed local, federal and philanthropic funds and partnerships to parks and land conservation statewide.

## Next Steps

As Georgia's population grows, it is critical for leaders in the public and private sectors to investigate the best way to protect conservation lands to ensure the health and future of our state's natural resources. Failure to invest now in protecting Georgia's natural resources will result in much higher expenditures for economic, social and ecological services we currently use and enjoy.

In order to invest in land conservation, the General Assembly can:

- Renew state funding for the Georgia Land Conservation Program;
- Fully fund state park development and operations;
- Study the successful land conservation experiences of other states as part of the Conserve Georgia agenda.