

**Board of Natural Resources
Minutes**

2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive
Suite 1252 East Tower, S. E.
Atlanta, GA 30334

February 25, 2009

Attending:

Board Members

Bill Carruth, Chairman
David Allen
Bill Archer
Earl Barrs
Jenny Lynn Bradley
Warren Budd
Joe Hatfield
Walter Hudson
Phyllis Johnson
Ray Lambert
Bob Rutland
Loyce Turner
Jim Tysinger
Jim Walters
Philip Watt
Tom Wheeler

Visitors

Lauren Curry, Department of Economic Development
Bruz Clark, Lyndhurst Foundation
Elliott Davenport, Lula Lake Land Trust
Catherine Eddins, Georgia Land Trust
Carol Hassell, Georgia Piedmont Land Trust
Hans Neuhauser, Georgia Land Trust Center
Chris Butts, Georgia Green Industry Association
Andrew Schock, The Conservation Fund
Stacy Funderburke, The Conservation Fund
Mike Giles, Georgia Poultry Federation
Bryan Tolar, Georgia Agribusiness Council
Gary Black, Georgia Agribusiness Council

Staff Members

Noel Holcomb
Chris Clark
Paul Burkhalter
Carol Couch
Susan Shipman
Steve Friedman
Todd Holbrook
Marlin Gottschalk
Becky Kelley
Ray Luce
Jac Capp
Doralyn Kirkland
Linda MacGregor
David Crass
Jimmy Johnston
Bryan Alexander
Steve Saunders
Pam Earl
Connie Buck
Antoinette Norfleet
Sherry Crew-Jay
William Cook
Sarah Dearman
Emily Hitchcock
Mary Ann Evans
Hellen Harris

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Shana Udvardy, Georgia Conservancy
Will Wingate, Georgia Conservancy
Phil Zinsmeister, Sierra Club
Bettie Sleeth, Home Builders Association of Georgia

The February 25, 2009 meeting of the Board of Natural Resources was called to order by Board Chairman Bill Carruth.

Chairman Carruth called for a motion for the approval of the minutes of the January 28, 2009 meeting.

A motion was made by Mrs. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Hatfield, and carried unanimously that the minutes of the January 28, 2009 meeting of the Board of Natural Resources be approved.

Chairman Carruth called on Commissioner Noel Holcomb to give the Commissioner's Report.

Commissioner Holcomb called on Gary Black from the Georgia Agribusiness Council, who called attention to a Legislative Directory distributed to Board members; and he stressed the importance of helping to restore consumer confidence in the Georgia peanut industry following a recent salmonella outbreak tied to a Georgia peanut company.

Commissioner Holcomb expressed appreciation to Mr. Black for the Legislative Directory and comments about consumer confidence in the peanut industry.

Commissioner Holcomb stated that he would be signing a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the right of entry and license agreement between Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Lula Lake Land Trust on a project in Northwest Georgia, which involves a connector trail that would connect Trenton, Georgia to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

He called on Becky Kelley, Director, Parks, Recreation, and Historic Sites Division (PRHSD), to introduce the speaker regarding the Cloudland Canyon Connector.

Mrs. Kelley introduced Bruz Clark, President of the Lyndhurst Foundation, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and called on him to give a presentation, highlighting the Cloudland Canyon Connector project. She also introduced Elliott Davenport, from the Lula Lake Land Trust, key partner of the project; and Catherine Eddins from Georgia Land Trust; which were part of the collaborative team to make the Cloudland Canyon Connector possible.

Mr. Clark expressed appreciation to Commissioner Holcomb and DNR staff for their professionalism and work with his organization on this and other projects to protect Georgia's natural resources. He stated that the Cloudland Canyon Connector project involved much time, effort, and money, which had created an opportunity for a

public/private partnership to knit together 8,000 acres of landscape containing significant natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources and assets to bring about the development of a low-cost, low-impact, user-friendly and esthetically-pleasing trail corridor. He further stated that the partners of the project involved DNR, Lula Lake Land Trust, the Lyndhurst Foundation and the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association.

He stated that the Cloudland Canyon Connector would be part of the Great Eastern Trail under development, which would connect the panhandle of Florida through Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the Appalachian Mountains to the Finger Lakes Region of New York and eventually unite communities for recreation and economic developmental purposes. He pointed out existing trails and areas of the Georgia Wildlife Management Plan that would become a part of the Cloudland Canyon Connector, and further stated that 15 to 30 miles of trails would eventually be added to DNR's current trail system and become a model for future collaboration. He compared the completed Connector to the Virginia Creeper Trail, and he listed some of the plant species, cultural and historic resources that would be protected by the project.

Mr. Clark expressed appreciation for DNR's collaboration to make the Connector possible and stated that the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding was the key that would open the greenway project. He stated that the project would help fulfill DNR's mission to "sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic, cultural resources for present and future generations..." especially as it relates to recreational trails. (PowerPoint attached and made a part hereof)

Commissioner Holcomb stated that the Connector would protect valuable natural resources and contribute significant eco-tourism to Northwest Georgia, and that it was his pleasure to sign the Memorandum of Understanding. (Copy attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Commissioner Holcomb called on Becky Kelley to give an update from PRHSD.

Mrs. Kelley stated that the Cloudland Connector is the beginning of a great opportunity, and that PRHSD would be using this project as a template to discuss multiple trails with communities across the state to create connective greenway and blueway trails.

She stated that management activities at PRHSD include prescribed burning for invasive animal and plant control and that a prescribed burn had taken place recently at FDR State Park to protect long-leaf pines. She further stated that on March 13, 2009, PRHSD would be working with Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) and Georgia Forestry Commission to implement a burn, "Fire on the Mountain," at Sprewell Bluff State Park and Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

She listed other events taking place in PRHSD and stated that the Division's historic site region would be reorganized and would focus on finding a Cultural Resource Manager. She further stated that the 64th Commemoration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death would be held on April 14, 2009. She added that the Georgia Get Outdoors initiative has been very successful to encourage citizens to get outdoors and spend the night at a state park.

She stated that PRHSD had launched an email newsletter in January 2009 for the Junior Ranger Program. She further stated that there would be a meeting of Friends Chapter organization in March 2009 to increase awareness of the importance of Friends' efforts to meet the current challenges affecting parks and historic sites operations. She announced State Parks Day at the Capitol for March 12, 2009 and invited the Board to attend. She added that the only PRHSD Legislative bill under consideration was a housekeeping item relating to High Falls Lake dock permits.

Mrs. Kelley called on Bryan Alexander, Grants Coordinator, Recreation Trails Program, PRHSD, to brief the Board on the recommendations relative to this year's Recreational Trails Grant Program.

Mr. Alexander stated that the federal government provides nearly \$2 million yearly to DNR for trails grants. He reviewed the history of the program and mapped out various counties in which grant funds had been awarded over the past three years. He further stated that the next grant cycle would apply to single and diverse-use nonmotorized trails and to motorized trails. He added that the program requires a 20% match from state or local communities for the trails, and that matches had far exceeded the amounts required. He further added that the program requires that 30% of the funds apply to motorized trails.

He stated that applications for trail grants would be made available to counties and local communities in October 2009, and that the applications would be due in November 2009. He further stated that over \$1 million was available for motorized trails, over \$440,000 for single use nonmotorized trails, and over \$649, 000 for diverse uses. (PowerPoint attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Commissioner Holcomb called on Commissioner-Select Chris Clark to give an update on the DNR budget.

Commissioner-Select Clark stated that before updating the budget, he wanted to express appreciation to staff member Sarah Dearman for her work on Weekend for Wildlife and for her interim work in DNR communications in the absence of Beth Brown. He introduced Lauren Curry as the new Director of Communications for DNR and stated that she comes from the Georgia Department of Economic Development, where she

worked as Special Assistant to the Commissioner and on the Communications and Marketing Team. He added that before working with Economic Development, she worked in Communications in the Governor's office and that she would bring excellent talent, background and experience to DNR.

Mr. Clark presented the House version of the amended 2009 DNR Budget and stated that the budget would be finalized and voted on in the House and Senate within a few weeks. He further stated that he would keep the Board informed on the progress of the 2010 budget in March. He added that there was very little difference between the Governor's recommended 2009 budget and the House version. He further added that PRHSD and Environmental Protection Division (EPD) received no additional cuts, but that additional reductions were reflected in Administration, Coastal Resources Division (CRD), Historic Preservation Division (HPD), and Wildlife Resources Division (WRD).

He stated that the Governor's 2009 budget reflected a 17.8% reduction and the House budget reflected an 18.5% reduction or over \$24 million. He further stated that after the 2009 budget is voted on, he would supply an update to the Board. (PowerPoint attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Holcomb called on Todd Holbrook, Assistant Director, WRD, to give an update on items of interest from WRD.

Mr. Holbrook called attention to a handout of photos on the Governor's Go Fish initiative and gave a brief update on the progress being made.

He reviewed several bills relating to WRD, which were moving through the Legislative process. He stated that House Bill (HB) 182 would exempt land of 5 acres or more from local firearms ordinances, that HB 207 would prohibit use of Over the Road Vehicles from stream beds, that HB 402 requires one closing date for deer hunting season statewide, that HB 416 relating to use of contraceptives in deer on WMAs had been tabled, and that HB 326 relating to the hunting and fishing licensing system would modernize the licensing system and solve the issue of a processing service charge.

He stated that Senate Bill (SB) 72 would update the way in which regulations passed by the DNR Board could be enforced criminally, that SB 75 would limit liability and add protection to certain landowners who permit persons to hunt or fish on their property or who allow persons on their property for agritourism, and that SB 399 would put a limit on modification and length of vessels on Lake Sinclair.

Mr. Holbrook called on Mark Whitney, Chief, Game Management, WRD, to give an update on Georgia's Hunters for the Hungry Program (GHFTH).

Mr. Whitney stated that WRD has been involved in the GHFTH Program since 1993, that it is the largest and only statewide venison program in Georgia, and that other partners in the Program include Georgia Wildlife Federation, Department of Agriculture, Department of Corrections, and the Atlanta Community Food Bank. He explained that as part of the Memorandum of Understanding with GHFTH Program, WRD has the responsibility, along with other Program partners, for promotion of the program, which is an opportunity to call attention to many of the small groups, churches, and organizations involved in providing venison to the needy. He further stated that current DNR promotions involve press releases, public service announcements, ads in the yearly WRD Hunting Regulations booklet, and website information. He added that WRD staff across the state would be soliciting input from other local groups and organizations that also provide venison to the needy and offer ways to help them expand hunter participation in venison programs.

He stated that in 2008, Governor Perdue participated in serving the one-millionth meal for the GHFTH Program. He further stated that venison donations through GHFTH Program for the 2008-2009 season set a record with 29,000 pounds of venison for a grand total of 257,000 pounds of venison since the Program's inception, which translates to 1.3 million high quality meals.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Holcomb instructed WRD staff to give an update on the February 2009 Weekend for Wildlife at the March Board meeting.

Commissioner Holcomb called on Ray Luce, Director, Historic Preservation Division (HPD), to give an update on items of interest from HPD.

Dr. Luce explained that HPD processes Georgia nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and submits them to a distinguished review board for evaluation. He stated that a recent nomination involved the Georgia Rosenwald Schools for African American education during the period of segregation. He further stated that the Ellamae Ellis League House in Macon had been awarded a certificate as the first ranch house individually listed on the National Register. He added that HPD had just sent in its 2000th nomination to the National Register on a property in Waynesboro and would be having a celebration if and when the property is listed by the Register.

He stated that HPD had received the Preserve America Grant for dealing with landmark buildings and tourism, and that HPD would be working closely with the

Department of Economic Development and holding a conference in 2010 regarding the grant. He further stated that the Archaeology Unit had been working at the Atlanta Oakland Cemetery involving restoration from tornado damages.

Commissioner Holcomb called on Susan Shipman, Director, Coastal Resources Division (CRD), to give an update on items of interest from CRD.

Ms. Shipman stated that only a few bills affecting CRD were being considered by the 2009 Legislature. She further stated that HB 170 relates to the Coastal Marshland Protection Act (CMPA) and deals with water bottoms leases to establish a fixed lease rate of \$1,000 for permitted community docks and for marinas which have docking space of 500 linear feet or more. She added that if the bill passes, she would come back to the Board for rulemaking to establish the procedure for the annual rate adjustment to reflect inflation or deflation.

She called attention to a handout announcing CoastFest 2009, scheduled for Saturday, October 3. She stated that the next Coastal Marshland Protection Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 27; and that Board Chairman Bill Carruth, Vice-Chairman Mrs. Bradley, and Mr. Wheeler, Chairman of Coastal Committee, would be attending. She further stated that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council would be meeting the first week of March on Jekyll Island to discuss issues relating to Red Snapper and that she would update the Board in March with information from that meeting.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Holcomb called on Carol Couch, Director, Environmental Protection Division (EPD), to give updates from her division.

Dr. Couch gave an update on Legislative items relating to EPD. She stated that an important bill being considered in Committee related to vehicle emissions inspections. She further stated that EPD receives 95¢ from each \$25 emissions inspection on vehicles in nonattainment areas, and that the funds are currently used for administration of the emissions inspection program. She added that EPD is requesting flexibility in the purpose of the funds to include air monitoring, planning and other factors related to vehicle emissions controls.

She stated that Senate Bill (SB) 15, which passed out of Committee, would establish new responsibilities for EPD and the Board to provide for administration and oversight relative to the cleanup of methamphetamine houses. She further stated that EPD has continued to request a redirection of those responsibilities to the State Health Department because EPD does not have the staff, training or experience to implement the program. She added that HB 248, a complex and highly technical bill, would

present a major change to the Hazardous Site Recovery Act and would propose a voluntary cleanup of a contaminated site by the owner, which she felt could present a threat to drinking water supply if the contaminated groundwater at the site were not cleaned up.

She stated that SB 155 related to an existing exemption regarding the 25-foot stream buffer process in the DNR Board rules and addresses the issue as to whether features in the land that drain water during rainfall are protected by buffers. She further stated that the bill uses different but acceptable and appropriate scientific terminology to translate the DNR rule provision into statute, and that passage of the bill would impose no effective change in EPD's current administration of providing buffer protection in the state.

Discussion ensued.

She stated that if other bills relating to EPD move forward in the Legislature, she would provide information to the Board.

Chairman Carruth called on Walter Hudson, Chairman of the Environmental Protection Committee, to present an action item from the Committee.

A motion was made by Mr. Hudson, seconded by Mr. Walters, and carried unanimously that the Board approve the Grant Criteria for Georgia Diesel Engine Retrofits Grants. (Grant Criteria attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Chairman Carruth called on Dr. Watt, who acknowledged and commended WRD Law Enforcement officers for their quick response in the aftermath of recent tornadoes in the Thomasville area and other parts of the state.

Mr. Wheeler commended DNR staff for their efforts to make the 2009 Weekend for Wildlife a success.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Bill Carruth, Chairman

ATTEST:

Earl D. Barrs, Secretary