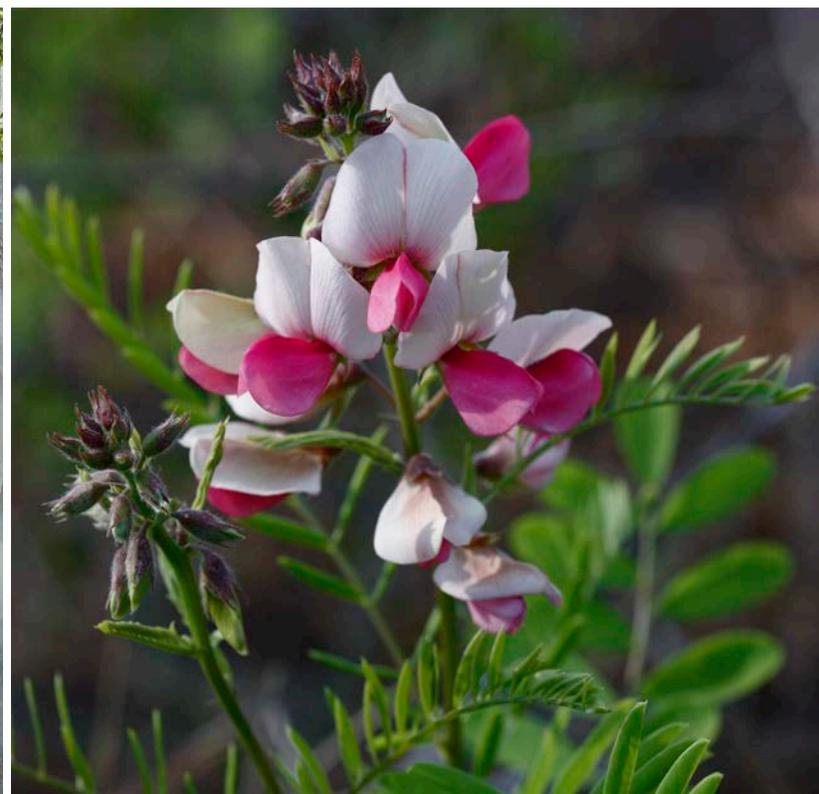


Seventh Edition
2025

Landowner's Guide

To Conservation Resources in Georgia



About This Guide

The Georgia Landowner's Guide to Conservation Resources provides the fundamental aspects of select programs that benefit forestry and wildlife in a format that allows for easy comparison by landowners. It is not an all-inclusive list of programs available for conserving land. Also, many of these programs are subject to funding and legislative changes. For the latest information, please contact the organization that manages the program.

The guide is regularly updated. This content was current as of November 2025. Visit georgiawildlife.com/landowners to see if a more recent version is available for download.

Programs are listed in alphabetical order and grouped – where needed – by the coordinating agency or organization.

For more information and resources from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division, visit georgiawildlife.com.

The landowner's guide was developed and updated by Wildlife Resources Division staff. Many people from other agencies helped compile and review the information. Credit also goes to the editors of previous editions: Brad Alexander, Joe Burnam, Shan Cammack, Steve Raper, Sharon Swagger, Kristina Sorensen and Eric Van de Genachte.

The Wildlife Resources Division's Diana McGrath, Erin Cork and Tony Kroeger edited the 2025 revision.

For more information, contact the DNR Wildlife Resources Division's Wildlife Private Lands Program at 229-420-1183 or georgiawildlife.com/landowners.

On the Cover (Left to Right)

Gopher tortoise (Dirk J. Stevenson)

At the end of a youth quail hunt (GA DNR)

Spring prescribed burn in the Piedmont (GA DNR/Berkeley Boone)

Goats rue and other groundcover plants (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

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American Forest Foundation: Family Forest Carbon Program

Developed by the American Forest Foundation and The Nature Conservancy, the Family Forest Carbon Program helps woodland owners implement sustainable forest management practices that result in healthier forests, higher quality timber, improved wildlife habitat and increased carbon storage. This program enables private landowners in Georgia access to the voluntary carbon market, a growing market that was traditionally inaccessible to smaller forest owners, providing landowners with income they can use toward forest management costs and property taxes.

When you enroll, you'll receive annual payments for implementing forest management practices that increase the carbon sequestered and stored on your land. You'll also receive an expert consultation from a forester and a forest management plan designed for your property and your goals. As part of the Family Forest Carbon Program, Georgia landowners with at least 40 acres of unplanted fields can also receive funding and guidance to grow pine for profit through the Fields & Forests project. Visit fieldsandforests.org for more information.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

The Family Forest Carbon Program's primary goal is connecting landowners with forestry professionals to assist in the stewardship of their woodlands. This program fits landowners who are trying to preserve woodlands and increase wildlife habitat by promoting the growth of native species and generate older and more mature forests. Some additional benefits include:

- ↳ Guaranteed annual income per acre of enrolled land, to use however you please.
- ↳ Financial and technical support to develop a forest management plan tailored to your specific property and goals.
- ↳ Improved air, water and timber quality on the land.
- ↳ Resources for enrolled landowners and future generations, including access to a community of like-minded landowners and a wide network of partner organizations.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There is no direct cost to the landowner.

TERM

The contract term is 20 years.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Participants must enroll at least 30 forested acres. You may enroll all or part of your property. Hardwood forests must be naturally occurring (i.e., no plantations). Forests must meet stocking level requirement of 4 MBF (4,000 board feet) per acre. The project area cannot be subject to any legal encumbrance that restricts timber harvest activities.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Recommended conservation practices will be specific to landowners and outlined in the forest management plan developed in partnership with their forester. Activities and schedules will follow best management practices and can include sustainable harvesting.

Should you choose to conduct a timber harvest, it must not remove more than 25% of the basal area per acre. Basal area is measured by your forester and is the cross-sectional area of trees at breast height. If multiple harvests occur, the cumulative percentage of basal area removed shall not exceed 25% of the initial basal area per acre. High-grading (defined as a reduction in quadratic mean tree diameter of more than 10% from the pre-harvest condition) is prohibited during the contract period.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit familyforestcarbon.org.
- ↳ Contact info@familyforestimpact.org or 844-790-0045.

Birds Georgia



Birds Georgia is a member-supported, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to building places where birds and people thrive. The organization is centered on creating a conservation-minded Georgia where birds prosper, habitats flourish and communities are engaged. Bird Georgia's pillars of conservation, education and community engagement use science-based, bird-focused programs to promote a conservation ethic in individuals, landowners, businesses, partner organizations, policy makers and communities throughout the state. As part of the conservation pillar, several statewide private lands initiatives are offered. The organization also provides programs for private landowners with a variety of financial and other incentives. These include the Habitat Restoration Program, Habitat Stewardship Program, Georgia Private Lands Birding Trail and the Wildlife Sanctuary Program: Small Private Lands.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Benefits are specific to each program. For details, see the list at birdsgeorgia.org. Overall benefits include access to technical assistance, educational resources, membership perks and recognition as a Birds Georgia Habitat Steward.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Some programs, such as the Habitat Stewardship, require enrollment fees, while some only require a voluntary enrollment agreement. Other programs have no upfront costs but the landowner could be responsible for costs associated with habitat restoration.

TERM

Terms for each program are available on the website.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Eligibility for each of the programs is available on our website.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Habitat Restoration Program:
Visit birdsgeorgia.org/habitat-restoration.html.
- ↳ Habitat Stewardship Program:
Visit birdsgeorgia.org/habitat-stewardship-program.html.
- ↳ Georgia Private Lands Birding Trail: Visit birdsgeorgia.org/private-lands-birding-trail.html.
- ↳ Wildlife Sanctuary Program:
Visit birdsgeorgia.org/wildlife-sanctuary-program.html.



Swallow-tailed kite (GA DNR/Todd Schneider)

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a binding legal contract between a landowner and a qualified entity (called the easement holder) that ensures the conservation values on a piece of property are maintained. Easement holders include local, state or federal agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations typically referred to as land trusts. The protected property remains in private ownership and can be bought or sold, but easement restrictions stay with the property.

Conservation easements are typically granted in perpetuity, meaning that the property is permanently protected by the easement terms. The easement holder is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the terms. Conservation easement terms are variable and negotiated between landowners and the easement holder based on the conservation values that will be protected. Examples of rights typically not allowed by a conservation easement include subdividing the property, future development, mining, billboards, utilities and significant changes to natural features. However, a conservation easement often allows continued agricultural or forestry use and the building of additional structures if they are compatible with the conservation purposes. These easements are a flexible tool used to protect natural resources and to help keep land in its current condition for future generations.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

The donation of a permanent conservation easement is eligible for significant federal and state income tax incentives. It may also reduce the landowner's property taxes by reducing the assessed value of the land. Landowners may ask for a re-assessment by their local tax assessor after completing a conservation easement.

LANDOWNER COSTS

The main cost is the lost development potential and any resulting profit. Easements typically diminish the market value of the land based on the amount of reserved rights, the location and the property size. Landowners are responsible for "due diligence" costs typically associated with any land transaction (attorney and accountant fees, surveys, etc.) and must pay for a qualified appraisal of the easement value to receive tax incentives. Landowners also may be asked to provide the easement holder with a stewardship endowment to help ensure the conservation organization has the means to monitor and defend the easement in perpetuity.

TERM

Conservation easements in Georgia are generally perpetual easements, but the terms of different programs may vary.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Any landowner, private or corporate, can place an easement on their property. There is no minimum or maximum size requirement, but eligible lands must meet conservation purposes as defined by the IRS to qualify as a charitable gift and receive federal tax incentives. To receive the state income tax credit, the land must be certified for conservation purposes as defined by Georgia DNR. See Tax Incentives for Land Conservation in this guide for more details.

FOR MORE

- ↳ The first step in donating a conservation easement is finding a qualified organization or government agency willing to hold the easement. Information on land trusts operating in Georgia can be found in the Working With Land Trusts section.

Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership



The Chattahoochee Fall Line Conservation Partnership is a collaborative group of public and private partners working in west Georgia and east Alabama, near Fort Moore, to conserve, restore and manage the longleaf pine ecosystem. There are 18 similar partnerships active in specific geographic locations across the historic range of longleaf pine working to support the goals of America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative (americaslongleaf.org).

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

The partnership hosts a variety of educational events and field days focused on land stewardship throughout the year. Financial assistance programs for longleaf restoration activities may be available. The activities funded vary from year to year. Join the West Central Georgia Forest Landowners Association to stay up to date on programs and activities.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Most outreach programs are either free or require modest registration fees. Cost share programs usually require landowner match and are reimbursement-based. Membership in the West Central Georgia Forest Landowners Association is free.

TERM

Determined by the activity being funded.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Outreach programs are open to all interested participants. Cost share programs are usually focused on counties in west central Georgia, including Chattahoochee, Harris, Macon, Marion, Meriwether, Muscogee, Schley, Stewart, Sumpter, Talbot, Taylor, Upson and Webster, and the east Alabama counties of Barbour, Lee, Macon and Russell.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Restoration activities focused on longleaf pine.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit cflcp.org.
- ↳ Contact LuAnn Craighton, Outreach Director, The Nature Conservancy: lcraighton@tnc.org.
- ↳ Join the West Central Georgia Forest Landowner Association: Contact RT Lumpkin at the Georgia Forestry Commission, rlumpkin@gfc.state.ga.us.
- ↳ Follow the association on Facebook: facebook.com/WCGFLA.

Chattahoochee Fall Line Prescribed Fire Cooperative



The Chattahoochee Fall Line Prescribed Fire Cooperative connects landowners with land stewardship resources and focuses on the use of prescribed fire as an important land management tool.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

The co-op provides cost share for prescribed burning, as well as technical advice and training events to gain a better understanding of prescribed fire.

LANDOWNER COSTS

The West Central Georgia Rx Fire Initiative cost share program offered through the co-op is reviewed annually to update payment rates. Typical payments range between \$12-\$18 per acre, with a maximum annual cap of \$2,500-\$3,750 per landowner. Training events are free to landowners.

TERM

The West Central Georgia Rx Fire Initiative is open for sign-ups between October and January. The landowner must have wildlife management as a priority objective and agree to leave the land forested for three years. Training events are announced as needed.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Only forested private lands in Chattahoochee, Dooly, Harris, Macon, Marion, Muscogee, Schley, Sumter, Stewart, Talbot, Taylor and Webster counties are eligible. Practices must be completed between January and April.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Cost share for prescribed burning and hands-on training to develop prescribed fire practitioners.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit gatrees.org/fire-prevention-suppression/cflrxfirecoop.
- ↳ Contact RT Lumpkin, Prescribed Fire Center coordinator, Georgia Forestry Commission: rlumpkin@gfc.state.ga.us or 478-957-0307.



Prescribed burn reducing pine encroachment in a wetland (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA)

Certain properties, including agricultural lands, forestlands and environmentally sensitive areas, may be eligible for reduced property tax assessments through conservation use valuation. These properties are assessed according to a combination of soil type, productivity and use. This typically results in a significant reduction of property taxes. Conservation Use Valuation Assessment is commonly called CUVA.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners receive a reduced ad valorem tax assessment for their property.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There are no direct costs to the landowner for entering a CUVA covenant for forestlands or agricultural lands. There may be costs, however, for landowners entering a CUVA covenant for environmentally sensitive land, because of the specific regulations for certification. Also, there are significant penalties for landowners who break the covenant before the end of the 10-year period. Owners who do must pay back-taxes up to twice the savings they received over the life of the covenant up to the point it was breached. If the property is sold during the covenant period, the new landowner must agree to continue the covenant or be responsible for penalties and taxes due if the covenant is breached under their ownership.

TERM

Landowners must promise to maintain their lands in the designated use (agriculture, forestry or environmentally sensitive) for 10 years. Landowners can re-enroll after 10 years if they wish to remain in CUVA.

ELIGIBILITY

Each county tax assessor's office is charged with administrating the program. Generally, there is no minimum acreage requirement; however, owners of fewer than 10 acres must provide written documentation giving evidence of qualification. No more than 2,000 acres can be enrolled in CUVA by any one non-industrial, private landowner. Foreign citizens and foreign corporations are not eligible to enroll. The land must be kept in its qualifying use and cannot be used for any non-agricultural commercial business.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact the local county tax assessor's office (found at qpublic.net/ga/gaassessors) for applications and enrollment information. Applications for conservation use assessment must be filed with a county's board of tax assessors on or before the last day for filing ad valorem tax returns in the county (usually April 1).
- ↳ Visit dor.georgia.gov/conservation-use-assessment-information.



Pitcherplant bog (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

Farm Service Agency: Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, is a voluntary, Farm Service Agency program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched but instead devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP protects more than 20 million acres of America's topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the nation's natural resources. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP protects groundwater; helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds and streams, and contributes significantly to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners may receive annual rental payments and cost-share and technical assistance for eligible conservation practices through partnering agencies. Rental payments vary based on the agricultural rental value of the land. Additional incentive payments may be made after contracts are approved and eligible practices installed. An annual maintenance fee is also provided to the landowner.

LANDOWNER COSTS

CRP provides a 50% cost-share reimbursement; thus, landowners may pay at least half of the costs of establishing the approved conservation practices.

TERM

Participants enroll in CRP contracts for 10-15 years, with the potential to renew.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Landowners are eligible if the land is owned or operated for at least 12 months, has recently been planted in an agricultural commodity (for the 2018 Farm Bill this is defined as at least four of six years from 2012 through 2017), and is physically and legally capable of being planted. Other eligible acres can be considered if they are in a national or state CRP Conservation Priority Area or have highly erodible soils. For certain conservation practices, marginal pastureland may also be considered. The Farm Service Agency uses the following factors to assess the environmental benefits for the land offered: 1) wildlife habitat benefits resulting from cover on contract acres; 2) water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching; 3) on-farm benefits from reduced erosion; 4) benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period; 5) air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion; and 6) cost.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

CRP practices most beneficial to wildlife include hardwood and longleaf pine planting, thinning of already established CRP pine stands, prescribed burning, native grass planting, permanent wildlife habitat establishment, riparian buffers, field borders, filter strips, and wildlife opening establishment.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Sign-up dates vary by conservation practice. For details, contact your local Farm Service Agency office. Find the office at farmers.gov or visit fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program.

Forest Land Protection Act

Large tracts of privately or corporately owned forestlands may be eligible for reduced property tax assessments through this conservation use tax program. The Forest Land Protection Act (FLPA), passed in 2008, established a class of conservation use valuation for large working forests. These properties are assessed according to soil type, productivity and use similar to the formula used for Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA) properties.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners receive a reduced ad valorem tax assessment for property enrolled under the Forest Land Protection Act. There are significant penalties for landowners who break the covenant before the end of the 15-year period on all covenants that began before 2019. Owners who breach their FLPA covenant must pay back-taxes up to two times the savings they received. If the property is sold during the covenant period, the new landowner must agree to continue the covenant or be responsible for penalties.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There are no direct costs for entering an FLPA covenant.

TERM

Landowners must promise to maintain their lands in a qualified use for 10 years if applying in 2020 or later. Landowners can re-apply after the original 15-year covenant expires if they want to remain in the FLPA program. Any purchase of existing covenant property that started in 2009-2018 will run its original 15 years. Any new covenant application or renewal of an expired covenant will be for a period of 10 years.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Eligible tracts must be used for subsistence or commercial production of trees, timber or other wood and wood fiber products. The value of any residences on the property is excluded. Properties must be a minimum of 200 acres per covenant and 100 acres per parcel. However, unlike CUVA, there is no maximum acreage cap. Eligible landowners do not have to be U.S. citizens. They can be individuals or any entity registered to do business in Georgia. Multiple parcels under same ownership no longer must be contiguous if applying for FLPA.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Each county tax assessor's office is charged with administering the program. Contact the local county tax assessor's office (details available at qpublic.net/ga/gaassessors) for applications and enrollment information. Applications for FLPA assessment must be filed with the county board of tax assessors on or before the last day for filing ad valorem tax appeals in the county.
- ↳ Visit dor.georgia.gov/georgia-forest-land-protection-act.



Meadow beauty blooming in a longleaf pine stand (GA DNR/Rick Lavender)

Fort Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership



The Fort Stewart/Altamaha Longleaf Restoration Partnership is a collaborative group of public and private partners working in 28 southeast Georgia counties and in and around the Department of Defense's Fort Stewart, the largest U.S. Army installation east of the Mississippi River. The partnership's mission is to provide project coordination, technical support, learning opportunities and leveraged resources for private and public lands in southeast Georgia to conserve, sustain and improve the longleaf pine ecosystem.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

The partnership provides landowners with information and resources to connect them with agencies and organizations that provide financial assistance. Many of these programs offer cost-share for land and water management activities and are reimbursement based. As a team, the partnership provides expertise regarding land conservation transactions, prescribed fire, forest restoration and management, wildlife management, rare species management and more.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Education and outreach programs (either virtual or in-person) and field days hosted by the partnership are typically free or have a modest registration fee. Some learning courses may have scholarships available for those needing financial assistance.

TERM

None.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

The partnership's longleaf conservation efforts are focused in a 28-county area of southeast Georgia including Appling, Ben Hill, Brantley, Bulloch, Bryan, Candler, Chatham, Coffee, Dodge, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Glynn, Irvin, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Montgomery, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Turner, Wayne and Wheeler.



Longleaf pine cone (GA DNR/Hal Massie)

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The focus is to work with landowners on sound stewardship, conservation efforts and practices to protect and enhance longleaf pine systems. Agencies and organizations in the partnership may offer financial assistance for forest stand improvement, tree planting, prescribed fire, invasive species management and native groundcover restoration.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact Lisa Lord, Conservation Programs Director at The Longleaf Alliance:
lisa@longleafalliance.org.

Georgia Association of Conservation Districts



The Georgia Association of Conservation Districts is a locally led nonprofit organization representing 40 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the state. Conservation Districts were established across the nation in the aftermath of the Great Plains' 1930s Dust Bowl to ensure continued protection of natural resources through local leadership. From the mountains to the coast and from forests to fields, local leaders throughout the state work to protect, enhance, sustain and restore Georgia's diverse natural landscape. The association's mission is to advocate for the conservation of Georgia's natural resources by providing organization, leadership and a unified strategic direction to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of the state.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Programs vary by district, but examples of past and current initiatives include Feral Hog Control Services, green infrastructure storm water control, pollinator plantings and educational scholarships, as well as outreach and educational workshops for children and adults. Contact your local district to learn more about programs in your area.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Depends on the program.

TERM

Depends on the program.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Depends on the program.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Depends on the program.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit gacd.us.
- ↳ Email info@gacd.us or call 833-411-4223.
- ↳ To find your local Soil and Water Conservation District, go to gacd.us/districts.



Cypress wetland (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

Conservation District Feral Hog Control Services

The Conservation District Feral Hog Control Services program was started in 2017 by Brier Creek Conservation District Chair Tom Mims and the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts to help producers and landowners experiencing significant damage by feral hogs. The district chooses a local hog control custodian and provides that person with trapping equipment to help eradicate feral hogs in the district.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Control of feral hogs causing significant damage to land and fields.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Conservation districts and hog control custodians set their fees. For example, some may charge per hog taken, while others may charge a flat fee for setting up the trap.

TERM

This is an ongoing program with no deadlines or set expiration.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

As of 2025, there were 21 Conservation Districts spanning 115 counties participating in the Feral Hog Control Services program. A list of districts and counties covered, plus hog control custodian contact information, can be found at <https://www.gacd.us>.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts at 833-411-4223 or by email at marc@gacd.us or info@gacd.us.
- ↳ Visit [gacd.us/feral-hog-control-services](https://www.gacd.us/feral-hog-control-services).

Georgia Association of RC&D Councils

Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D) are 501(c)(3) organizations dedicated to addressing the environmental, economic and social needs of local communities. Operating regionally, these councils focus on land conservation, water conservation, community development and land management. They bring together local volunteers, community leaders, farmers, business owners, and government representatives to identify problems, develop strategies and implement beneficial programs and projects in member counties. About 75% of Georgia's counties are members of one of the state's 11 regional RC&D Councils.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Georgia's RC&D Councils implement a variety of projects, including soil conservation, watershed protection, wildlife habitat restoration, energy conservation and community development. The RC&D Councils collaborate with federal, local and state agencies - such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the 40 Soil and Water Conservation Districts - as well as nonprofit organizations and private sector partners.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Depends on the project.

TERM

Depends on the project.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Depends on the project.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Examples of RC&D projects include pig brig rentals for feral swine control, household water-well programs, Firewise Community workshops, raised beds and high tunnels, no-till drill rentals, Clean Water Act Section 319 projects, and education programs focused on sustainable farming practice.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Email georgiarcd@gmail.com.
- ↳ Visit garcdc.org/garcds to find your local RC&D office.

Georgia Conservancy

Georgia Conservancy partners with private landowners to keep Georgia's forests, farms and natural habitats thriving for generations to come. Through collaboration with state and federal partners, we provide technical guidance and financial assistance to help landowners manage and conserve their land - whether the goal is sustainable forestry, wildlife habitat restoration or long-term protection through a conservation easement. From the mountains to the coast, Georgia Conservancy is committed to helping landowners care for the lands that define our state's natural heritage. Together, we can protect Georgia's future - one acre at a time.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

- ↳ Development of personalized land and habitat management plans.
- ↳ Cost-share funding for conservation practices such as prescribed fire, reforestation and stream restoration.
- ↳ Assistance in establishing conservation easements that safeguard property and may offer tax benefits.
- ↳ Connections to trusted land trusts, funding programs and conservation partners across Georgia.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Depends on the program

TERM

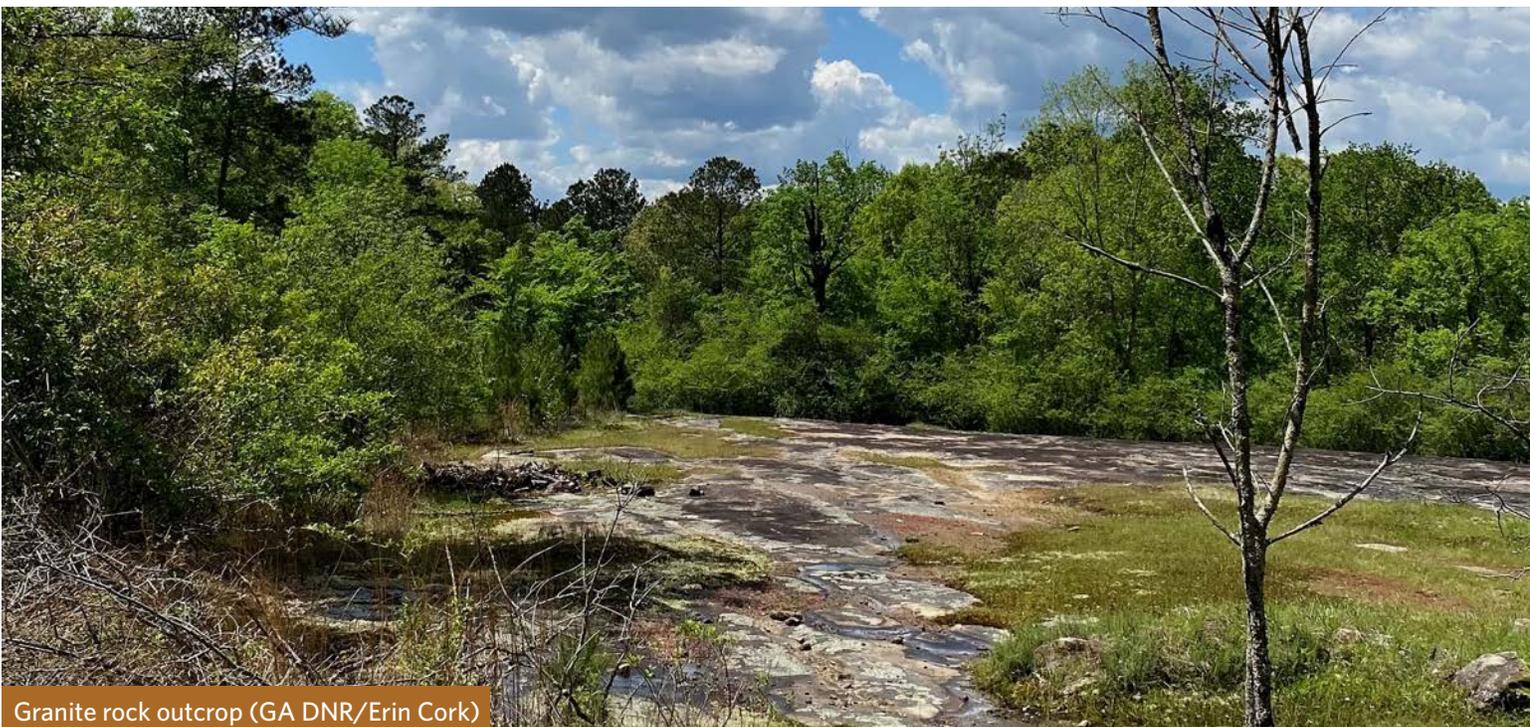
Depends on the program.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Depends on the program.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit GeorgiaConservancy.org
- ↳ Contact us by phone at 404-876-2900 or email at info@georgiaconservancy.org.



Granite rock outcrop (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

Georgia DNR Private Lands Program

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Private Lands Program assists private landowners who are interested in integrating wildlife into their land management objectives. Biologists provide free technical assistance to all Georgia landowners for game and nongame species and habitat objectives to promote healthy ecosystems throughout the state. Through science-based conservation planning, landowners can more effectively achieve their wildlife and natural resource goals and make sure these resources are in good condition for Georgia's future generations. Private Lands biologists are available to all Georgia landowners regardless of whether they are seeking financial assistance opportunities, and biologists can assist with game and nongame management planning.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Biologists can provide assistance with identifying wildlife resource concerns, property mapping, management options and invasive species identification. Private Lands biologists stay up to date on financial assistance programs and can help guide landowners through the requirements and expectations of specific programs. Selecting the appropriate program depends on a landowner's management objectives and can be affected by several environmental factors.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Biologists are available to offer free general technical and onsite consultations to provide management recommendations and guidance on financial assistance programs.

TERM

None.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

None.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Recommendations to cost-share programs can be provided to landowners through detailed plans.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit georgiawildlife.com/privatelandsprogram or call 229-420-1183.



DNR Private Lands biologists discuss timber thinning on a private tract (GA DNR/Matthew Cooper)

DNR Bobwhite Quail Initiative Cost Share Program



The Bobwhite Quail Initiative offers financial cost share to private landowners wanting to improve habitat for bobwhite quail and other early successional wildlife. Custom conservation plans are created for properties based on biologist recommendations and the landowner's voluntary approval. Once implemented, habitat practices beneficial to bobwhite quail are eligible for financial reimbursement to the landowner after approval by a biologist.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners receive technical assistance in the form of custom conservation plans for their properties. Landowners also receive financial reimbursement for habitat improvement practices as well as potential habitat rental rates for agricultural and pastureland removed from production. Total financial incentives are capped at \$20,000 per contract.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Landowners are responsible for up-front costs associated with implementing habitat practices. Landowners are limited to contract reimbursement rates for these practices.

TERM

Contracts are for up to three years. Landowners can re-enroll once after the initial contract but then are not eligible for three years. Land enrolled in habitat incentive rentals but not kept by the landowner in good habitat condition can be terminated from the contract as determined by the cooperating biologist.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Owners of any property over 50 acres are eligible to apply, but priority will be given to properties in the bobwhite focal landscape of Baker, Bulloch, Burke, Calhoun, Decatur, Dodge, Dooly, Dougherty, Grady, Jenkins, Laurens, Lee, Mitchell, Pulaski, Screven, Terrell, Thomas and Worth counties. Contracts are limited to one per cooperator per term. Acres enrolled in other federal, state or non-profit programs are not eligible to enroll. Commercial shooting preserves are not eligible. Landowners must agree to be willing to participate in monitoring efforts associated with the contract term.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

- ↳ Field Borders - 30-foot minimum width.
- ↳ Hedgerows - 30-foot minimum width; 300-foot minimum length.
- ↳ Filter Strips - 30-foot minimum width; 300-foot minimum length, adjacent to ditch bank or drainage.
- ↳ Fallow Patch/Pivot Corners - 1-acre minimum.
- ↳ Native Grass Establishment- No grazing/haying for two years.
- ↳ Forest Openings - 1-5 acres in size, minimum 200-foot width.
- ↳ Forest Understory Management - Burning, herbicide applications and disking in stands $\leq 60\text{ft}^2$ BA.
- ↳ Linear Forest Practices - Daylighted road edges, edge feathering, borders on surrounding forests; 40-foot minimum width.
- ↳ Native Wildlife/Pollinator Plantings.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit georgiawildlife.com/bobwhite-quail.
- ↳ Call the DNR Private Lands Program, 229-420-1183.



Youth quail hunt at a BQI restoration area (GA DNR)

DNR Deer Management Assistance Program



Deer Management Assistance Programs are used by most Southeastern states to address site-specific deer management issues with science-based flexibility on private lands. DMAPs provide the ability to resolve deer management issues at the individual property level through data collection and analysis while maintaining simplified and less complex hunting regulations across a much larger geographic area that are responsive to hunter desires (e.g., reduced doe bag limit). This strategy protects more casually managed properties from over-harvest, while affording science-based flexibility for more intensively managed properties. Georgia's Deer Management Assistance Program is operated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

- ↳ Landowners are classed by the level of management requested.
- ↳ Level 1 cooperators receive general harvest and habitat recommendations along with technical guidance and data analysis.
- ↳ Level 2 cooperators receive a data collection package, access to a biologist assigned to the property, aging of each deer killed, data analysis and site-specific harvest recommendations, a basic boundary map with landcover, an annual visit by the assigned biologist, general habitat recommendations, and when biologically justified, flexibility in the antlerless harvest (a 250-acre minimum is required for harvest flexibility).
- ↳ Level 3 cooperators receive all Level 2 services plus help facilitating and coordinating the formation of cooperatives; assistance with live-aging bucks; a written wildlife management plan; a map showing boundaries, landcover, food plots and forest-stand delineation; and when biologically justified, harvest flexibility relating to buck-only days, season length and antler restrictions (500-acre minimum for harvest flexibility).
- ↳ Level 4 cooperators receive all Level 2-3 services plus a detailed habitat and wildlife management plan, detailed maps, at least two site visits annually by the assigned biologist and site- and criteria-specific flexibility for buck harvests (1,500-acre minimum for harvest flexibility).



Landowner drag seeding
(GA DNR/Brad Alexander)

LANDOWNER COSTS

There are no fees for Level 1. Level 2 startup fees are \$200 with a \$100 annual administrative fee. Level 3 startup fees are \$400 with a \$200 annual administrative fee. Level 4 startup fees are \$1,000 with a \$500 annual administrative fee. All fees are assessed annually.

TERMS

Enrollment is annual.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Acreage minimums only apply to harvest flexibility. There is no minimum acreage to enroll at any level. Cooperatives of multiple adjacent lands can be used to meet acreage minimums for harvest flexibility.

Eligible properties include public, private and leased lands. Participants may be individuals or a group of individuals. Cooperators are responsible for collecting harvest data and conducting camera surveys.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit georgiawildlife.com/dmap or for program staff and contact information call 706-557-3350.

Quail Country Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances

In collaboration with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Georgia DNR and Tall Timbers implement the Quail Country Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for private landowners in southwest Georgia. The goal of the voluntary agreement is to provide incentives to landowners to conserve species at risk of becoming listed under the Endangered Species Act. For the length of the agreement, landowners agree to do specific activities that address identified threats to the target species. The CCAA covers the following species: striped newt, gopher frog, swallow-tailed kite, southeastern American kestrel, Henslow's sparrow, frosted elfin, monarch, gopher tortoise, southern hognose snake, Florida pine snake, eastern diamond-backed rattlesnake and southeastern pocket gopher.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Through this voluntary partnership, landowners receive technical assistance to enhance habitat for at-risk species and avoid further regulatory oversight. During the length of the agreement, landowners in compliance with the terms are provided regulatory assurances should species they are managing for become listed under the Endangered Species Act.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Landowners maintain or improve existing conditions as outlined in a site-specific conservation management agreement.

TERM

The minimum enrollment period is 10 years.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Eligibility is limited to landowners with at least one of the covered at-risk species on their property or a bordering tract in the 28-county area of southwest Georgia, including Baker, Brooks, Calhoun, Colquitt, Crisp, Decatur, Dodge, Dooly, Dougherty, Grady, Lee, Macon, Marion, Miller, Mitchell, Pulaski, Schley, Seminole, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Terrell, Thomas, Tift, Turner, Webster, Wilcox and Worth counties.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact Erin Cork, senior wildlife biologist with DNR's Wildlife Resources Division, at erin.cork@dnr.ga.gov.



Gopher frog in a gopher tortoise burrow (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

DNR Urban Wildlife Program



The DNR Wildlife Resources Division's Urban Wildlife Program was created to help reduce human-wildlife conflict in the metro Atlanta and Savannah areas. This program works toward reducing and resolving human-wildlife conflict through outreach and education efforts, situation-specific technical assistance to residents over the phone and onsite response to emergencies such as sick or injured wildlife. As more and more people move to suburban and urban environments, it will be important to reach these citizens and foster an appreciation of wildlife in these areas. Since November 2019, the Urban Wildlife Program has provided technical assistance to over 13,000 residents by phone, with about half of those calls requiring a field response and resulting in a site visit.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

This program works toward reducing and resolving human-wildlife conflict through proactive outreach and education efforts, situation-specific technical assistance to residents over the phone and onsite response to emergencies, such as sick or injured wildlife.

LANDOWNER COSTS

None.

TERM

None.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

The UWP coverage area consists of Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties in metro Atlanta and Bryan, Chatham, Liberty, Effingham and McIntosh counties in the Savannah area.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Experiencing human-wildlife conflict in the Atlanta or Savannah area? Call 1-800-366-2661 to talk with someone about the best way to resolve the conflict.
- ↳ Also visit georgiawildlife.com/urbanwildlifeprogram.



Buck tangled in a hammock (GA DNR/Ben McCullar)

Georgia EPD: Section 319(h) Grant Program

The Section 319(h) Grant Program is a water quality improvement cost-share program made possible by Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) annually conducts a competitive process to select eligible projects for funding that best support the Georgia Nonpoint Source Management Program. EPD awards 319(h) funding to partner organizations such as state agencies, state colleges and universities, regional commissions, resource conservation and development councils, and local governments to offer cost-share opportunities to prevent and control nonpoint source pollution in specific watersheds throughout the state.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners receive technical assistance and funds to install best management practices that reduce pollution and result in measurable water quality improvements. Financial cost-share assistance typically covers 60 percent of the costs of implementing the selected management practices.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Landowners are usually responsible for 40 percent of the cost-share for management practices installed.

TERM

Terms vary by partner and project, but each grant award must be completed within three years. Landowners are expected to ensure maintenance during the expected lifespan of the practice and in accordance with accepted standards, usually between five and 10 years.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Funding is available to landowners through partner organizations implementing projects in designated watersheds.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Depending on the goals of each partner and project, 319(h) funds can be used to develop nutrient management plans, conduct farm assessments and install best management practices (BMPs) that reduce water quality degradation. Potential practices include installing livestock stream crossings, stream buffers, fencing, filter strips, stack houses, winter feeders, composters, heavy use areas, water troughs and more.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Grant details are available at epd.georgia.gov/outreach/grants/section-319h-georgias-nonpoint-source-implementation-grant.
- ↳ Visit epd.georgia.gov or call 404-651-8532.



Creek on Broad River WMA (GA DNR/Mishay Allen)

Georgia Forestry Association



The Georgia Forestry Association's promise is to keep landowners protected, connected and empowered. The association is focused on delivering direct return on your membership investment by lowering costs and increasing demand for timber, decreasing taxes at the state and federal level and protecting Georgia forestry's social license to operate. GFA works to connect landowners with resources and information to make informed investment decisions and hosts regional forestry meetings across the state to connect landowners with their local forestry community.

Through their 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Georgia Forestry Foundation, GFA seeks to connect Georgians to a sustainable future. The foundation's work centers on connecting all Georgians to the importance of working forests through education and outreach. Market-based solutions are identified that empower forest landowners and increase awareness of sustainable working forests, ensuring the competitiveness of the forestry supply chain through research.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

GFA continues to deliver legislation beneficial to Georgia landowners, including the Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA) in 1991, Qualified Timberland Property (Amendment 3) in 2018 and the Increased Legal Weight Limit for Log Trucks of 88,000 pounds (House Bill 189) in 2023. Other benefits include access to outdoor insurance products, including hunt lease, timberland and prescribed burn coverage.

LANDOWNER COSTS

GFA membership fees vary based on a member's occupation in the timber industry and acres managed. See gflagrow.org for details.

TERM

Memberships are renewed yearly.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Anyone "with an interest in keeping Georgia the No. 1 forestry state" can join.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit gflagrow.org.
- ↳ Contact the Georgia Forestry Association by phone at 478-992-8110 or by email at info@gflagrow.org.



Skidder at work (GA DNR/Allison Colter)

Georgia Forestry Commission



The Georgia Forestry Commission provides many services to private landowners throughout the state. In the Rural Forestry Assistance or “General Advice” program, GFC provides technical assistance to private forest landowners with specific guidance on timber harvesting, stand maintenance, reforestation, prescribed burning, forest health and water quality. GFC nurseries also offer tree seedlings for sale, and county units provide prescribed burn and firebreak assistance at competitive rates. GFC provides resources, as well, for landowners navigating timber sales, taxes and estate planning at <https://gatrees.org/forest-management-conservation>.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners can receive technical assistance on a variety of subjects, plus assistance conducting prescribed burns and installing firebreaks and access to tree seedlings through GFC nurseries.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Some financial cost is associated with buying tree seedlings or using GFC services for firebreaks or prescribed burning. Check with your local unit for updated pricing.

TERM

None.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

None.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

This is a technical assistance-based program and does not cover the cost of conservation practices.

FOR MORE

- ↳ To schedule a site visit for technical assistance, please visit <https://gatrees.org/forest-management-conservation/management-plans-advice>.
- ↳ For details on nurseries and tree seedlings, see <https://gatrees.org/forest-management-conservation/tree-seedlings>.
- ↳ GFC county unit and local contacts for prescribed burn and firebreak assistance are available at <https://gatrees.org/gfc-contacts-2/county-contacts>.



Interagency burn (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

GFC Cogongrass Taskforce

Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) is considered the seventh-worst weed in the world and is listed as a federal noxious weed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. In 2004, the Georgia Forestry Commission formed the Cogongrass Taskforce for the purpose of eradicating this invasive plant in Georgia. When cogongrass is reported, the GFC will do an inspection and initiate a chemical eradication program on all positive sites at no cost to the landowner.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners may receive free treatment of cogongrass on their property as a service provided by the program.

LANDOWNER COSTS

No cost to landowners.

TERM

Enrollment lasts until a cogongrass infestation is controlled, which can typically take up to three years.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Any landowner with cogongrass on their property in Georgia is eligible.



Cogongrass (Paul Miles/Quail Forever)

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Herbicide application for the control of cogongrass.

FOR MORE

- ↳ To learn more about this program, cogongrass and to report a sighting, visit gatrees.org/cogongrass-in-georgia.

GFC Conservation Woodland Program

The Georgia Forestry Commission's Conservation Woodland Program is designed to provide educational guidance and step-by-step technical support to landowners with 20 acres or less who wish to manage their property for timber; forest health; invasive species control; riparian habitat; wildlife management and habitat; pollinators; aesthetics; growing vegetables, fruit and mushrooms; creating biochar; and wildfire prevention. Using <https://gatrees.org>, landowners are guided in developing a self-directed forest management plan and map based on management goals they choose. These plans are tailored to the needs of the landowner with activities and prescriptions developed by foresters and wildlife professionals to help them reach management objectives. The results are printable for the landowner to use and provide to their county tax assessor's office to apply for Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA) tax breaks.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners receive technical assistance and a custom management plan which they help develop. Successful enrollment of a property in CUVA can result in significant tax savings.

LANDOWNER COSTS

This service is provided to Georgia landowners at no charge.

TERM

Participation in the Conservation Woodland Program is ongoing, with no term or enrollment periods.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

The program is self-directed and open to all, but the materials are specifically geared toward landowners with 20 acres or less.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

This program provides technical assistance only and is not a financial program for conservation practices.

FOR MORE

↳ To learn more or begin a plan, visit gatrees.org/forest-management-conservation/conservation-woodland-program.



Pollinator field burn (GA DNR/Diana McGrath)

Forest Legacy Program

The Forest Legacy Program is a conservation program administered by the U.S. Forest Service in partnership with state agencies, including the Georgia Forestry Commission, to encourage the protection of privately owned forest lands through conservation easements or land purchases. Protection of private forests through the program maintains a multitude of public benefits, including opportunities to hunt, fish and camp; clean and abundant drinking water; habitat for fish and wildlife; and sustainable timber, fuel wood and other forest products.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Properties in conservation easements are protected from development. Landowners who donate a conservation easement are eligible for certain federal and state income tax credits.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Landowners may participate in the Forest Legacy Program by either selling their property outright or retaining ownership and selling only a portion of the property's development rights. Both are held by state agencies or another unit of government.

TERM

Forest Legacy Program easements are perpetual easements.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

None.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

This is a conservation easement-based program. While it provides financial benefits to the landowner, it does not pay for conservation practices.

FOR MORE

↳ For more information, please visit gatrees.org/forest-management-conservation/forest-legacy-conservation-easements.



Stand of young longleaf pines (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

GFC Forest Stewardship Program

The Georgia Forestry Commission's Forest Stewardship Program helps private landowners manage their natural resources to achieve their desired objectives and outcomes. The 10-year management plans produced focus on and integrate the landowner's desires for sustaining quality timber production, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, aesthetics, and recreation. If wildlife is the primary objective, GFC foresters use current standards and recommendations from Georgia DNR wildlife biologists to incorporate those practices into the stewardship plan to achieve the landowner's goals.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Plans prescribe selected conservation practices for specific areas of land. Professional natural resource managers with expertise in soil and water conservation, forestry and wildlife biology will tour a property with the landowner at no charge to check forest health, discuss the landowner's objectives, plan options for the next 10 years, explain available conservation incentive programs and point out specific areas that need attention. After follow-up fieldwork is completed, the landowner will receive a tailored plan.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There are no direct costs to the landowner, but the implementation of recommended conservation practices may have associated costs.

TERM

10 years.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Properties must be 20 or more acres.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

This is a technical assistance-driven program and financial benefits are not offered.

FOR MORE

- ↳ To apply, visit gatrees.org/forest-management-conservation/forest-stewardship-program or contact your local GFC forester.



GFC forester and a landowner discuss timber management (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

Georgia Heirs Property Law Center

Georgia Heirs Property Law Center is a not-for-profit law firm that helps heirs property owners, nonprofits and municipalities remediate fractured title, increase equity and transfer wealth to the next generation through title clearing, wills creation, estate planning and facilitating access to government, private sector and nonprofit land management/home improvement programs. The phrase “heirs property” refers to property passed down through a family without formal, legal documentation of ownership, such as a will. The center has served Georgia since 2015. Staff work throughout the state with targeted outreach in Atlanta and south Georgia.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Heirs property and tangled title block families from using the best land management practices and establishing conservation easements. While this may not be an issue for some families, it is for low- to moderate-income families. The center helps low- and moderate-income heirs property owners with title clearing and estate planning services.

LANDOWNER COSTS

The center’s services are either free or discounted, depending on a client’s qualifications.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Anyone with heirs property or who suspects their property may be heirs property is eligible to apply. However, priority is given to clients in Atlanta and south Georgia.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Title clearing, wills creation, estate planning and education.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit gaheirsproperty.org.
- ↳ Email info@guheirsproperty.org.



Taking part in a Learn & Burn prescribed fire workshop (GA DNR/Diana McGrath)

Georgia Wildlife Federation Private Lands Program

Georgia Wildlife Federation wildlife biologists are available to provide free forestry and wildlife habitat management assistance to Georgia landowners. The federation's team will perform one-on-one property visits with landowners to assess conditions, objectives and natural history. Biologists will then provide management recommendations for wildlife species and habitats.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

As noted, property visits will include on-site wildlife habitat recommendations. Biologists will also provide landowners with a wildlife habitat management plan, including recommendations for the establishment of new forest stands, prescribed fire planning, identification of plant species valuable for wildlife and methods for promotion, identification of problematic invasive species and methods for control, general silvicultural suggestions for stand management that will enhance wildlife habitat quality, and a regional and site-specific natural history. Georgia Wildlife Federation also typically has a small portion of cost-share for longleaf pine planting and management.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Technical assistance with wildlife habitat recommendations is free to landowners and land managers. Any cost-share programs provided by the federation are reimbursement-based.

TERM

Enrollment in the program is ongoing on a rolling basis.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Landowners in all Georgia counties are eligible to enroll.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Technical assistance is provided to landowners and land managers. Other conservation practices may be eligible for cost-share, depending on the federation programs available.

FOR MORE

↳ Visit gwf.org/privatelands.



Sandhill milkweed (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

Natural Resources Conservation Service: Agricultural Land Easements

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has streamlined its Agricultural Conservation Easement Program to better help farmers and other private landowners conserve wetlands, farmlands and at-risk grasslands with financial and technical assistance. The program has two components: Agricultural Land Easements and Wetlands Reserve Easements. Applications for the Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) component are accepted from eligible entities such as land trusts and local governments to conserve agricultural lands. This is a matching program that can provide up to 50 percent of the cost to buy a permanent conservation easement which can be matched with funds from a local sponsor, government agency or conservation group. NRCS provides financial assistance to partners for buying Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. For working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture while also protecting grazing uses and other conservation values by conserving grassland such as rangeland and pasture.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Easements protect the long-term viability of America's food and fiber supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. Additional public benefits including environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat and protection of open space. Landowners are paid for placing the easement on their land. The owner continues to own and work the land, but the easement ensures it will never be developed.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There are few costs to the landowner except for costs associated with legal and financial counsel and due diligence. If seeking income tax benefits, landowners must pay for a different appraisal than what is needed for the program.

TERM

Agricultural Land Easements must be permanent, remaining with the tract in perpetuity.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Eligible lands include cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland and non-industrial private forestland that either has prime, unique or statewide-important soils or meets a state or local priority. NRCS will prioritize applications that protect agricultural uses and related conservation values, as well as those that maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use.

To be considered for the program, lands meet the following criteria: be of sufficient size (10-acre minimum) and have properly configured boundaries; 2) contain at least 50 percent prime agricultural soils or soils of statewide importance; 3) have a minimum of one-third of the acreage in cropland or pasture; 4) have a pending offer with the easement buyer; 5) be privately owned; 6) be covered by a conservation plan for highly erodible lands; 7) be large enough to sustain agricultural production; 8) be accessible to markets; and 9) be surrounded by parcels that can support long-term agricultural production. Forestland may not exceed two-thirds of the acreage. Each easement is required to have an ALE plan for any highly-erodible cropland.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Depends on the property and conservation needs.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact your local USDA Service Center or visit the NRCS website, nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ale-agricultural-land-easements. Contact information and the address for the service center in your county can be found at farmers.gov.

NRCS: Conservation Stewardship Program

The Conservation Stewardship Program, or CSP, is a Farm Bill program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service that provides financial and technical assistance promoting conservation and improvement of natural resources on private lands. CSP encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain and enhance existing efforts through adoption of additional activities and practices (i.e., enhancements or bundles). CSP provides opportunities both to recognize excellent stewards and implement new conservation practices.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

CSP provides participants with an annual payment for installing new conservation enhancements and maintaining existing practices.

LANDOWNER COSTS

CSP is an annual payment program; therefore, there are no costs outside of installation and maintenance of the conservation practices. However, landowners self-certify their completed practices and are responsible for completing appropriate implementation requirements, forms and documentation for the practice or practices, as well as photo-documenting their implementation.

TERM

Contracts are for five years and may be renewed an additional five years. Re-enrollments must continue to meet the conservation objectives of the original contract and implement additional conservation practices. Landowners must renew in the first half of the fifth year on their first five-year contract.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

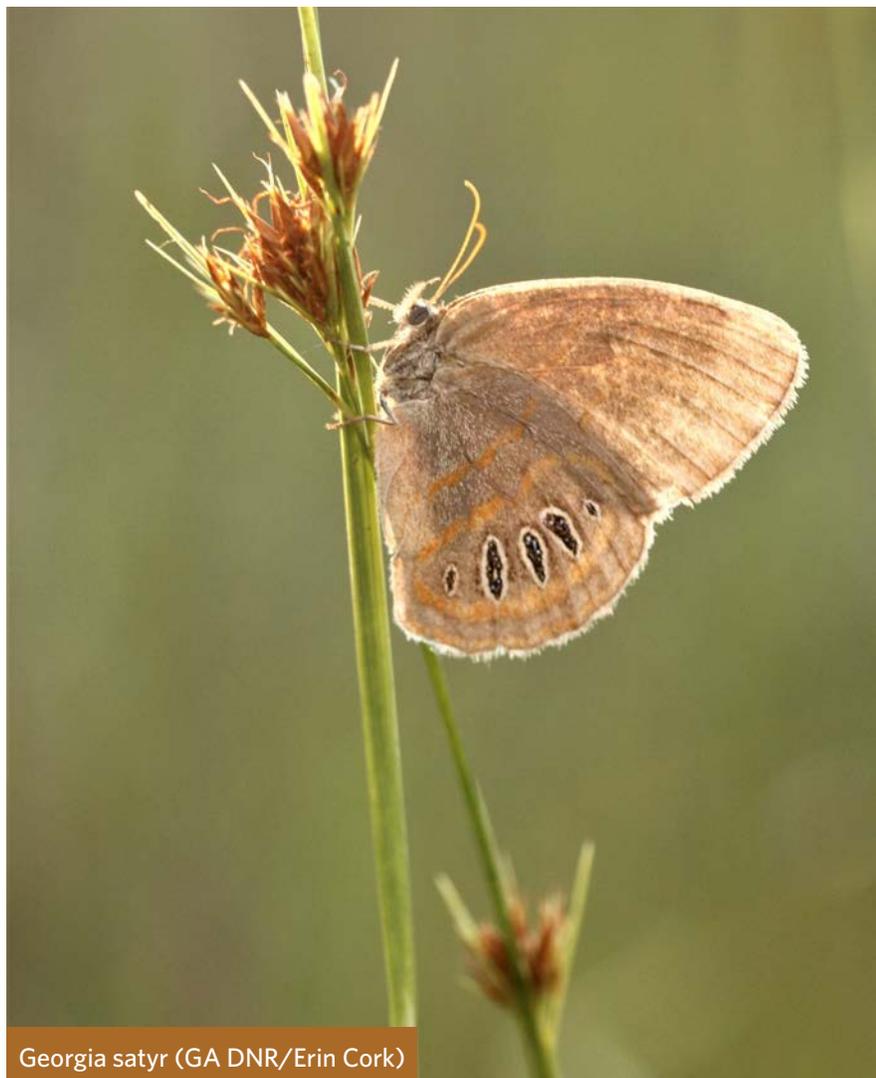
CSP is available on private agricultural lands and nonindustrial private forestlands. For all contracts, CSP payments to a person or legal entity may not exceed \$200,000 over the term of the initial contract period, except for joint operations, where the limit is \$400,000.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Applications in Georgia are ranked based on priority natural resource concerns: water quality, water quantity, soil quality, soil erosion, air quality, wildlife habitat, degraded plant conditions and energy. Eligible practices include forest stand improvement, prescribed burning, tree planting, riparian buffers, forest openings, pollinator habitat and many more agriculture and forest management practices.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office. Contact information and the location of the service center for your county are available at farmers.gov. Visit nrcs.usda.gov/state-offices/georgia for further details.



Georgia satyr (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

NRCS: Environmental Quality Incentive Program

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program, called EQIP, is a Farm Bill program providing financial and technical assistance to agricultural and nonindustrial private forest landowners concerning management practices to protect soil, water, forest and wildlife resources. For forest and wildlife resources, practices that develop, restore and enhance wildlife habitat and promote the recovery of rare species are prioritized.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners who receive technical assistance may receive financial cost-share assistance for implementing conservation practices. Payment rates are based on the costs associated with implementing the practice and not on actual cost to the landowner. Most contracts will cover 75% of the cost. For beginning, socially disadvantaged or limited-resource farmers, EQIP may cover up to 90% of the estimated cost of implementing practices.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Landowners typically pay the difference in the cost-share for implementing conservation practices, ranging from 25%-50% out of pocket. The landowner often pays the full cost and then receives payment for implementing them. For beginning, socially disadvantaged or limited-resource farmers, advance payments of at least 50% may be available.

TERM

The minimum contract is one year; the maximum is 10 years. EQIP contracts in Georgia are typically for two years.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Agricultural producers and owners of nonindustrial private forestland are eligible to apply. Land enrolled in other conservation programs (e.g., CRP, WRE) may be ineligible. An adjusted gross income limit of \$900,000 a year applies. The maximum payment an individual or entity can receive is \$450,000 over six years.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

EQIP practices most beneficial for wildlife include prescribed fire, forest stand improvement, brush management, invasive plant control, native plant establishment, field borders, longleaf site prep and planting, hedgerows, and early successional habitat creation. Other practices include fencing out streams, filter strips, cover crops and more.

Working Lands for Wildlife Gopher Tortoise: This program, a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to combat the need to federally list species, provides technical and financial assistance to voluntarily implement practices to improve gopher tortoise habitat, while managing properties as working lands. Sites must have gopher tortoises or be predominantly covered by soil types designated as appropriate habitat. Eligible practices include prescribed burning, establishing longleaf pine and others.

Working Lands for Wildlife Northern Bobwhite/Pine Savanna: This program provides technical and financial assistance to voluntarily implement practices to improve quail habitat, while managing properties as working lands. Restoring pine savanna landscapes benefits quail and other species. Eligible practices include developing/managing early successional habitat, prescribed burning, herbaceous weed control and others.

Longleaf Pine Initiative: EQIP special-initiatives funding includes cost-share for planting and enhancing longleaf pine forests within the historical range in Georgia. Practices include improving stands, preparing tree and shrub sites, managing brush, prescribed fire and others. Practices must be consistent with an approved forest management plan.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Applications for the EQIP program are available through local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offices. Call for sign-up dates. Contact information and the location of the service center for your county are available at farmers.gov. Visit nrcs.usda.gov/state-offices/georgia for further details.

NRCS: Wetland Reserve Easements

Wetland reserve easements are implemented to restore, protect and enhance the function and value of wetlands ecosystems on eligible private or tribal lands while maximizing wildlife habitat benefits. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) purchases easements from landowners to restore, protect and enhance wetlands and associated lands that have been degraded by farming or draining. Improving water quality, enhancing wildlife habitat and reducing soil erosion are accomplished through financial assistance agreements. To ensure the protection of these wetlands, conservation easements that restrict certain uses are placed on the property. Up to 50% of associated lands can include upland habitat adjacent to wetlands.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners can receive financial and technical assistance for restoring and protecting wetland values and functions. NRCS pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office. As with all easements, the landowner retains ownership of the land.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Landowners receive financial assistance for restoration activities. However, the cost of establishing any compatible uses, such as food plots, are the landowner's responsibility. The landowner retains ownership, controls access and is responsible for taxes.

TERM

NRCS may enroll eligible land through permanent and 30-year easements. Permanent easements are conservation easements in perpetuity. NRCS pays 100% of the purchase value and 75-100% of restoration costs. 30-year easements expire after 30 years. NRCS pays 50-75% of the purchase value and 50-75% of restoration costs. NRCS continues to help landowners after a site has been restored, reviewing restoration measures, providing biological and engineering advice, and clarifying technical and administrative aspects.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Eligible lands include farmed or converted wetlands that can be restored. NRCS prioritizes applications based on the potential for hydrological restoration and for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. To be considered for the program:

1. landowners must have owned the property for two years or more;
2. the land must be restorable;
3. it must consist of hydric soils;
4. and it must contain wetlands that have been or are farmed or degraded. Riparian areas and limited adjacent uplands may be eligible.

There is no federal limitation on the number of acres that can be offered for the program, but the state may impose limitations. Landowners control access to the land and may lease it for noncommercial recreational activities (e.g., hunting or fishing). At any time, landowners can request that additional activities be considered if they are compatible with the protection and enhancement of the wetland or improve wildlife habitat.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Depends on the property.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact your local USDA Service Center or visit the NRCS website, nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/wetland-reserve-easements. Contact information and the address of the service center in your county can be found at farmers.gov

Project WINGS

Project WINGS (Wildlife Incentives for Nongame and Game Species) is a rights-of-way management campaign funded by Georgia Power, the Georgia Transmission Corp., the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia and Atlanta Gas Light Resources. The program, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Services, is designed to improve wildlife habitat along gas and electrical transmission lines by establishing healthy wildlife habitat while ensuring that tall or woody vegetation does not encroach on utility rights-of-way, potentially damaging power and gas lines.

PARTICIPANT BENEFITS

The program provides cash grants and professional wildlife management advice to convert woody growth to preferred wildlife habitat along electrical or gas transmission rights-of-way.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Participants pay for the initial costs of implementing management practices and are reimbursed up to the dollar amount awarded, but not to exceed \$2,250 per utility. Participants are not required to provide receipts for work, but must contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) once the work is completed. Grants are usually paid within 60 days following the completion of work as certified by NRCS.

TERM

Participants must maintain the practices for three years. Former WINGS acreage can be re-enrolled, provided the original contract was completed and three years have passed since its completion. This re-enrollment is referred to as the “in three years, out three years rule.”

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Landowners, leaseholders, hunting clubs, wildlife organizations, government entities and others committed to managing rights-of-way for wildlife may apply for a grant. Applications can only be accepted by NRCS from May 15-July 15 each year. The payment rate is \$75 an acre per year and per utility for each of the three years. Participants can either implement the management practices themselves or hire someone for the work.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Eligible wildlife management practices include mowing, fallow disking, annual plantings and permanent plantings.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Call 706-885-0101 or visit tworiversrcd.org/programs. Contact your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office. Contact information and the location of the service center for your county are available at <https://www.farmers.gov>. Visit nrcs.usda.gov/state-offices/georgia for further details.



Native blazing star flowering under a powerline (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

NRCS: Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, often referred to as VPA-HIP, is a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service program that provides financial assistance to state and tribal governments to expand the amount of public access lands in their states or regions. Governments apply for competitive grants, which are then used to provide financial incentives to landowners to create new or expand existing public access on their lands. If available, funding can also be used to improve wildlife habitat quality on lands enrolled in the program.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Grant funds are used to annually lease forest and agricultural lands in the state as part of DNR's Wildlife Management Area Public Access Program. For enrolled landowners, funding may be available to receive incentives for performing conservation practices. Landowners also receive landowner liability protection under Georgia law for hunting and other recreation use on enrolled lands, wildlife technical assistance from state biologists, and flexibility in setting access dates and types of use within the agreement.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There are no associated costs for landowners who enroll their lands in the program.

TERM

Contracts can vary in length and include multiple years – subject to the availability of grant funds.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Landowners must have full ownership and control over lands they want to enroll.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Enrolled lands may be eligible for assistance implementing Natural Resource Conservation Service conservation practices that improve wildlife habitat. Practices and funding are determined based on land needs, public access type and available funds.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact DNR's Matthew Goode (Matthew.Goode@dnr.ga.gov) to discuss eligibility.
- ↳ Visit georgiawildlife.com/VPA-HIP or nracs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/voluntary-public-access-and-habitat-incentive-program.



Scotland Road VPA in Laurens County (GA DNR/Tony Kroeger)

Quail Forever



Quail Forever (QF) is dedicated to the conservation of quail, pheasants and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs. QF wildlife biologists help private landowners design and develop management plans to improve wildlife habitat in alignment with landowner goals and conservation priorities. Biologists work to conserve habitats for a variety of species, including quail, deer, turkey, pollinators, songbirds, gopher tortoises and many others. In partnership with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, QF biologists work to implement the conservation provisions of the federal Farm Bill and related wildlife conservation programs such as the Bobwhite Quail Initiative. Many conservation practices that benefit wildlife are compatible with working lands, including agriculture, forestry and grazing. QF biologists also advocate for good land stewardship through outreach and education, hosting field days, seminars and workshops for landowners, natural resources agencies, conservation organizations and local residents.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

QF biologists serve as a liaison between program applicants and agencies, helping with conservation planning and the application process for local, state and federal conservation cost-share programs. When followed, recommended practices will not only create habitat for quail and other wildlife, they will improve forest health, reduce erosion and increase the conservation of soil and water.

LANDOWNER COSTS

All services are at no-cost. These include but are not limited to onsite consultations, technical assistance, development of property-specific management recommendations and guidance on financial cost-share assistance programs.

TERM

None.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

None. There is no acreage minimum or maximum to receive assistance from QF biologists.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Recommendations for cost-share programs are provided to landowners through onsite visits and detailed management plans.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit quailforever.org to find an area's biologist or connect with a local QF chapter.



Northern bobwhite (GA DNR/Brian Romm)

Quail Forever Precision Agriculture and Conservation Specialist

The role of Quail Forever's Precision Agriculture and Conservation Specialist is to evaluate field profitability relative to crop yields, soil type and health, water usage, and overall input costs to help achieve on-farm sustainability goals. In general, sustainability goals often include multi-focus mechanisms including economic, ecological, educational and social/cultural. The specialist helps producers focus on return on investment at a sub-field level using Precision Agriculture data-layering technology merged with available crop budgets. When the consistently low-yielding areas in a production field are identified, the specialist can help address these areas by working with the farmer or a farm's crop consultant to initiate agronomic solutions or mitigate losses by cutting production costs and implementing quail and other wildlife habitat management strategies, which can often be substantially supplemented by cost-share programs.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

When followed, recommended practices will not only create quail habitat but also improve on-farm profitability and sustainability through decreased inputs, and water conservation, and improved soil biology.

LANDOWNER COSTS

All services are at no-cost. These include but are not limited to onsite consultations, technical support in analyzing yield data, development of on-farm management recommendations and guidance on financial cost-share assistance programs.

TERM

None.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

None, and yield data is not a requirement to receive technical assistance.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Recommendations for cost-share programs are provided to landowners through onsite visits and detailed management plans, often focused on underperforming areas of fields such as field borders, dryland pivot corners and filter strips.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit quailforever.org to find your area's local precision ag and conservation specialist for assistance or connect with a local QF chapter.



Field border (Ethan Howell/Quail Forever)

Savannah River Prescribed Burn Association



The Savannah River Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) promotes the safe use of prescribed fire as a land management tool for private landowners. This is done through trainings, educational events, and technical support. The effort is supported by the Savannah River PBA's coordinator and partnering agencies. Workshops provide hands-on training to help landowners gain a better understanding of how to safely apply prescribed fire on their property. Site visits are offered as an opportunity to make sure the landowner's property is prepared and ready to receive fire. Last but not least, fire will be applied on a person's property by the association's team of landowners and state-certified burners.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners gain a stronger understanding of prescribed fire and its benefits in land management. The Savannah River PBA provides technical burning assistance to private landowners with little to no out-of-pocket expenses; however, the landowner must participate in the burn in some capacity. For a small fee, landowners will also have access to a burn trailer stocked with all equipment needed to conduct a safe burn.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There is a one-time \$100 initiation fee for regular members, plus a \$100 fee per property for a two-year term. Landowners also can join as an honorary member, which is free and available to those who may only want to take part in meetings and training.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Participants must be in southeast Georgia, north of the Altamaha River (see map).

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit savannahriverpba.org.
- ↳ Email savannahriverpba@gmail.com.
- ↳ If on Facebook, follow the Savannah River Prescribed Burn Association facebook.com/profile.php?id=61555523787555.



Prescribed burn on a south Georgia tract (GA DNR/Ash Curtis)

Southwest Georgia Prescribed Burn Association



The Southwest Georgia Prescribed Burn Association is a landowner driven organization that promotes the culture and application of prescribed fire in southwest Georgia. Supported by a coordinator and forestry specialist, this PBA operates in three facets:

- ↳ Education and certification regarding the application of prescribed fire.
- ↳ Site visits to help landowners prepare for a burn through knowledge shared about the specific site.
- ↳ The application of prescribed fire on a landowner's property by the PBA's team of landowners and state-certified burners.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Landowners and conservation advocates gain a stronger conceptual understanding of natural resources management with the support of PBA staff. For a small fee, landowners also have access to trailers stocked with every piece of equipment needed to conduct a burn. Dues-paying members receive assistance with prescribed burns on their property, with little or no out-of-pocket costs.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Membership dues are \$100 every two years. Meetings and events are open to all.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Limited to lands in southwest Georgia.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit swgapba.org.
- ↳ Email gjensen@talltimbers.org or Mbradley@goldentrianglercd.org.



Learn & Burn at Red Oaks Plantation (George Jensen)

Tall Timbers



Tall Timbers works with private landowners in southwest Georgia and north Florida and continues to develop programs that fulfill its mission to foster exemplary land stewardship through research, conservation and education. Founded as a research station in 1958, Tall Timbers has been developing and implementing science-based approaches to land stewardship, with an emphasis on prescribed fire and fire-dependent plant communities and wildlife, especially northern bobwhites. As an accredited land trust since 1990, Tall Timbers holds and stewards conservation easements on more than 160,000 acres of private land in southwest Georgia and north Florida.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

- ↳ Conservation easements: These keep land in private ownership while limiting future development and land conversion, ensuring that the property's conservation values are protected. Tall Timbers staff guide landowners through the process of protecting their property with perpetual conservation easements, while also helping connect landowners to available financial assistance.
- ↳ Technical assistance: Staff have expertise in many topics, including prescribed burning and wildlife habitat management. Tall Timbers works with landowners to provide technical assistance for healthy forests and improved wildlife habitat, as well as connections to state and federal financial assistance programs.
- ↳ Prescribed burning: Tall Timbers' Private Lands Prescribed Fire Initiative delivers science-based technical guidance to private landowners in the areas of risk management, prescribed fire planning and implementation, smoke management, and burn prioritization. Prescribed burn associations are organized and supported by Tall Timbers.
- ↳ Education: The biennial Red Hills Fire Festival, held in late January or early February of even-numbered years, is Tall Timbers' signature public event. This festival focused on prescribed fire typically draws hundreds of visitors for a day of educational activities and vendors, including live prescribed fire demonstrations as the weather allows.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Depends on the program.

TERM

Depends on the program.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

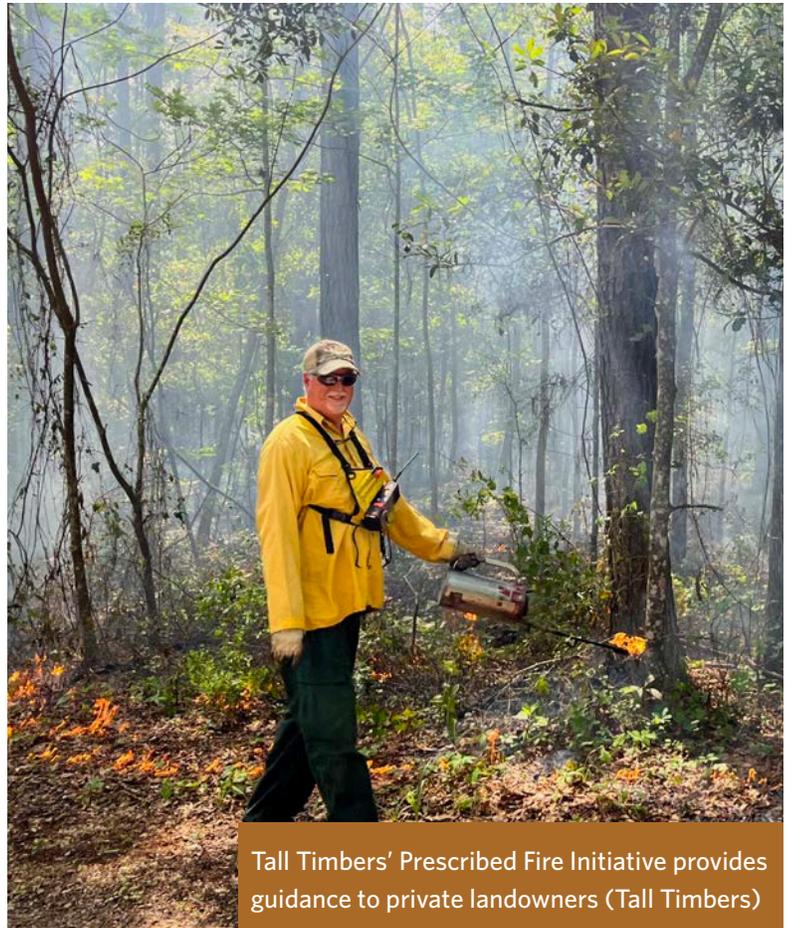
Depends on the program.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Depends on the program.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit talltimbers.org.



Tall Timbers' Prescribed Fire Initiative provides guidance to private landowners (Tall Timbers)

The Longleaf Alliance



THE
LONGLEAF
ALLIANCE

The Longleaf Alliance is the only organization focused solely on the restoration, stewardship and conservation of longleaf pine forests. Established 1995, The Longleaf Alliance works throughout the range of longleaf pine using science-based outreach, education, partnership engagement and on-the-ground assistance.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Benefits come in the following forms:

- ↳ Longleaf Alliance Planting Funds: Many incentives exist to encourage landowners to plant, grow and manage forests. This is especially true with longleaf pine because of its superior environmental benefits. The Longleaf Alliance works with multiple partners to provide longleaf pine seedling funds to landowners. Typically, the online application period opens in the spring for landowners to submit applications for financial assistance. Visit longleafalliance.org/what-we-do/longleaf-assistance.
- ↳ Technical Assistance: Alliance staff are available to assist with information and recommendations about longleaf and the establishment, restoration and management of longleaf ecosystems. Our team works to respond by phone, email or – when possible – a technical-assistance site visit. We also work with our conservation partners to provide additional resources to meet landowners’ needs.
- ↳ The Longleaf Academy Program: The Academy Program offers natural resource professionals, landowners and land managers science-based information to establish, restore and manage longleaf pine ecosystems. Topics include prescribed fire, herbicide, understory management, groundcover and management for gopher tortoises. The program has expanded its content to include emerging and relevant topics such as heirs’ property issues, estate planning and climate-smart forestry practices. For course offerings, visit longleafalliance.org/what-we-do/education-outreach/longleaf-academy-program.
- ↳ Biennial Conferences: Organized by the alliance, the Longleaf Biennial Conference is the largest and longest-running regional conference focused on the restoration and conservation of the longleaf ecosystem that once dominated the southeastern U.S. Conferences are held in conjunction with meetings of the Longleaf Partnership Council of the Americas Longleaf Restoration Initiative.

LANDOWNER COSTS

Depends on the program.

TERM

Depends on the program.

ELIGIBILITY LIMITATIONS

Depends on the program.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit longleafalliance.org.
- ↳ Contact longleafalliance.org/contact.



Young longleaf after a burn (GA DNR/Buck Marchinton)

The Orianne Society



The Orianne Society is a 501(c)(3) organization based out of Tiger, Ga., that focuses its efforts to conserve critical ecosystems for imperiled reptiles and amphibians using science, applied conservation and education. The Orianne Society has three focal initiatives: the Longleaf Savannas Initiative, Appalachian Highland Initiative and the Great Northern Forests Initiative. The Longleaf Savannas Initiative works to conserve and restore the longleaf pine ecosystem through restoration, land protection, research, inventory, monitoring and education/outreach. The longleaf pine ecosystem supports 170 species of reptiles and amphibians, many of which are considered to be iconic species that have declined due to the reduction and degradation of this once vast ecosystem. Orianne's focal species are the gopher tortoise, the eastern indigo snake and the spotted turtle. In order to conserve these species, the organization works closely with private landowners and other partners to counter population declines.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

The Orianne Society's Private Lands Program is based at the Orianne Indigo Snake Preserve in Telfair County, Ga. Staff work with conservation-minded landowners throughout the Altamaha River corridor to conserve the three focal species noted above. This includes working with landowners who have gopher tortoises or eastern indigo snakes on their properties and have an interest in conserving these species, as well as working with landowners who have an extensive amount of mature longleaf pine. The goal is to help landowners implement and restore prescribed fire to the landscape.

LANDOWNER COSTS

There is little to no cost in most cases.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Orianne Society focuses primarily on Telfair, Wheeler, Ben Hill, Irwin, Montgomery, Toombs, Tattnall, Long, Candler, Emanuel, Coffee, Appling and Wayne counties. Outside of these counties, properties with significant gopher tortoise or eastern indigo snake populations may be considered.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Prescribed burning assistance.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Contact Caleb Goldsmith, director of Fire Ecology and Management, at 540-750-6319 or cgoldsmith@oriantnesociety.org.
- ↳ Visit oriantnesociety.org.



Eastern indigo snake (GA DNR/Matthew Moore)

Tax Incentives for Land Conservation

Several tax benefits are associated with conservation easement donations. To be eligible for federal and state income tax reductions, the easement must be permanent, donated to a qualifying organization and meet conservation purposes requirements. An appraisal (at the landowner's expense) is needed to establish the donation value to receive income tax benefits. Consulting a tax professional or attorney for advice specific to a landowner's financial situation is strongly recommended before donating. Federal Farm Bill programs that pay landowners for permanent conservation easements are not eligible for these tax incentives.

GEORGIA CONSERVATION TAX CREDIT

Georgia provides a state income tax credit for the permanent protection of conservation land. The credit is worth up to 25 percent of the value of the donated property or easement and is capped at \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for corporations and partnerships. Any unused credit can be used over the next 10 years. The credit is available for the fee-simple donation of permanently protected property or the donation of a permanent conservation easement on property made after Jan. 1, 2006. Donations must be made to a land trust accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (<https://www.landtrustaccreditation.org>) or to a state or local governmental agency. Bargain sales of property or easements below fair market value also qualify. After making a qualifying donation, the landowner must submit an application to DNR for certification along with a \$5,000 nonrefundable fee. A certification letter by GA DNR and an appraisal review by the State Properties Commission (gspc.georgia.gov/services/state-conservation-easement-qualified-donation-appraisal-reviews) are required to receive the credit. Information on the Georgia Conservation Tax Credit can be found at gadnr.org/GCTC or by calling 706-557-3213.

GEORGIA TAX CREDIT TRANSFERABILITY

In 2011, the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation that allows any awarded tax credit to be sold or transferred to another Georgia taxpayer. The Georgia Department of Revenue allows the transfer of any unused portion of the credit within the 10-year period the credit is valid. If a landowner has donated a conservation easement in the last 10 years and has not used all of the tax credit, the landowner may transfer the unused portion. If a landowner would like to sell the tax credit, consulting a tax professional is recommended.

FEDERAL INCOME TAX BENEFITS

The IRS recognizes conservation easement donations as charitable contributions; thus, landowners can receive significant federal income tax deductions for donating property or conservation easements. The Land Trust Alliance provides detailed information on seeking these benefits: landtrustalliance.org/resources/learn/explore/income-tax-incentives-for-land-conservation.

ESTATE TAXES

Conservation easements can be an important estate-planning tool that can help keep land in a family's control by lowering the amount of estate taxes due from heirs. A landowner may be able to exclude from the taxable estate up to 40 percent of the value of land under an easement. There is another estate tax exclusion of up to \$500,000 for donated easements. Tax codes frequently change: Consult a tax professional about current incentives.



Zebra swallowtail on milkweed (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

USFWS Habitat Conservation Plan



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Habitat Conservation Plan program is for landowners who have federally listed wildlife species on their property or habitat that would likely support such species. Because the Endangered Species Act prohibits activities that would be harmful to listed species, how landowners use their property may be affected. As a compromise, Habitat Conservation Plans can be developed that allow landowners to conduct activities that might be detrimental to listed species if the landowners have an approved plan for mitigating those impacts.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

These plans, often called HCPs, are highly variable and reflect a landowner's interests, the needs of the species and the recommendations of the Fish and Wildlife Service. HCPs can be written for one or several species, valid for short or long periods and designed for small or large areas.

LANDOWNER COSTS

No direct costs.

TERM

The terms for Habitat Conservation Plans are variable.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

Any non-federal entity (such as private companies, local or state governments, etc.) may pursue an incidental take permit for their otherwise lawful activity.

FOR MORE

↳ Visit fws.gov/service/habitat-conservation-plans.



Zebra longwing on ironweed (GA DNR/Erin Cork)



Bluestem groundcover (GA DNR/Erin Cork)

USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife

This U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program encourages private landowners to restore and enhance ecosystems to improve habitat for fish and wildlife. Priorities for funding in Georgia include longleaf pine habitat restoration, riparian and stream habitat restoration, and threatened, endangered and at-risk species habitat restoration.

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

Through Partners for Fish and Wildlife, landowners receive technical assistance for appropriate management and stewardship of priority resources, as well as financial support to implement restoration activities. Landowners may receive up to 100% of the costs of implementing wildlife habitat restoration activities.

LANDOWNER COSTS

The landowner or other partner is usually asked to cover half the cost of habitat restoration. However, this ratio is flexible, and the Fish and Wildlife Service can elect to pay all costs.

TERM

Landowners agree to maintain management practices and restored habitats for at least 10 years. Some projects may require a longer-term agreement.

ELIGIBILITY/LIMITATIONS

All private landowners are eligible. There are no restrictions on project size. Eligible projects are wide-ranging and include farms, pastures and forestry sites. However, USFWS gives special consideration to projects that: 1) are on permanently protected private lands; 2) are identified as high priority by state fish and wildlife agencies or other partners; 3) are near permanently protected areas such as national wildlife refuges, military lands and state-owned wildlife management areas; 4) reduce habitat fragmentation; 5) conserve or restore natural communities designated as globally or nationally imperiled by the state's natural heritage program; and 6) are self-sustaining systems that are not dependent on artificial structures.

USFWS prioritizes projects that have longer duration agreements, involve greater non-USFWS partnerships or cost sharing, and are considered the most cost effective.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Project examples include stream restoration, livestock exclusion and upland native vegetation restoration (the latter can include planting longleaf pines and establishing native ground cover).

FOR MORE

- ↳ Visit fws.gov/project/georgia-partners-fish-and-wildlife.



Gopher tortoise at its burrow (GA DNR)

Working With Land Trusts

A land trust is a nonprofit organization that actively works to conserve land by undertaking or helping direct land transactions. Such organizations often have “land trust” as part of their name (e.g., Ocmulgee Land Trust) or they may be known as a “conservancy” (e.g., Chattooga Conservancy). Still others function as a land trust – in addition to other mission purposes – under a variety of titles.

FINDING A LAND TRUST PARTNER

Landowners seeking to permanently conserve their land while continuing to own, manage and use it in traditional ways can do so with a conservation easement that is held by a land trust. Finding an appropriate land trust to partner with is an important early step in the land conservation process. For more see findalandtrust.org.

QUALIFIED ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE GEORGIA CONSERVATION TAX CREDIT

All conservation donations completed after Jan. 1, 2014, must be for the benefit of Georgia local governments, Georgia state agencies, federal agencies or accredited land trusts to be eligible for the Georgia Conservation Tax Credit. Donations to non-accredited land trusts completed before Jan. 1, 2014, may qualify for the tax credit.

FOR MORE

- ↳ Accredited land trusts have earned national certification through the Land Trust Alliance. For details on accreditation and a list of accredited land trusts that may receive tax credit-eligible conservation donations, visit landtrustaccreditation.org/storage/downloads/AccreditedLandTrusts.pdf.
- ↳ Other land trusts operating in Georgia can be found at georgiaconservancy.org/aglt.



Endangered Canby's dropwort (GA DNR/Lisa Kruse)

In Memory



In 2008, **James Woodward** of Vienna and his family began working with Georgia DNR to restore and conserve a wetland on the family's south Georgia farm that featured Canby's dropwort, a federally endangered plant. Ten years later, that collaboration resulted in an easement permanently protecting the site, part of which had been in the Woodward family for more than 160 years.

James Woodward III died at age 87 in May 2025. Beyond his interest in Canby's dropwort, his commitment to conservation and stewardship earned him the Georgia Forestry Commission's Forest Stewardship Award in 1993. The Ocmulgee River Soil and Water Conservation District named him Dooly County Conservationist of the Year in 2002.

Woodward's family is continuing the habitat restoration he started, helping sustain the largest population of Canby's dropwort found in Georgia and the unique wetland ecology this rare plant depends on.



Drive Georgia Wild Support Native Wildlife



In Georgia, there's a critical connection between wildlife conservation and your car or truck — the back bumper.

That's because sales and annual renewals of Georgia DNR wildlife license plates provide vital support for saving rare species such as bald eagles, restoring bobwhite quail, enhancing our fisheries — including bass and trout — and conserving wetlands and other natural habitats.

Wildlife tags are a leading source of non-federal funds for DNR work dedicated to nongame wildlife and bobwhite quail. That means much of this work depends on license plate purchases and renewals. A 2022 U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey revealed there are over 4.7 million wildlife viewers, 1.2 million anglers and 400,000-plus hunters in our state. Wildlife is important to Georgians!

Do your part to drive our state wild: Buy or renew a DNR wildlife plate for your car, truck or trailer. These sharp-looking designs cost only \$25 more than a standard peach plate.

Purchase Today



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