Georgia’s population is anticipated to increase by 40% by 2030. With that comes development pressures on our farms, forests, greenspaces, watersheds, and wetlands. As conservationists, how do we meet the challenges?

In his acceptance letter for the Georgia Conservancy’s 2019 Distinguished Conservationist Award, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter wrote: “We must safeguard our land so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy freshwater, clean air, scenic mountains and coasts, fertile agricultural lands, and healthy, safe places to live and thrive.”

In keeping with this vision and the goals of our founding members and today’s board, the Georgia Conservancy has begun a comprehensive study of decades of land-use and development patterns in Georgia, with help from our partners at Georgia Tech. The study will provide an understanding of the ecological impacts of our state’s past land-use.

We anticipate this unprecedented data analysis will present itself as a valuable resource for Georgia and a necessary contribution to discussions about the impacts of Georgia’s future growth on our land and water.

“Future generations of conservation leaders must remember that we are stewards of a precious gift.”

- President Jimmy Carter

Stewards Of A Precious Gift

www.georgiaconservancy.org/donate
In honoring Georgia Conservancy Charter member and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter as our 2019 Distinguished Conservationist, we were reminded not only of the incredible legacy of President Carter’s environmental stewardship, but also the investment of time, knowledge, and resources made by the founders of the Conservancy in 1967. We are so thankful for the foundation that they helped to build.

Today, our statewide conservation efforts continue to be guided by their legacy and early vision for the organization, as many of the issues they faced in their time remain today.

With challenges both familiar, new, and yet to be known, your investment in Georgia is critical to the future of our state’s land and water. Thank you so much for your support. This is your Georgia.

Bart Gobeil, President
Georgia Conservancy
**PROTECTING THE OKEFENOKEE**  
Proposed Mining Threatens the Swamp

During a month-long comment period this summer, more than 20,000 substantive letters and thousands of signatures were submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in response to a proposed mining operation along the Trail Ridge formation on a tract just southeast of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The applicant for the mine is an out-of-state company.

The proximity of the proposed mine to the Okefenokee Swamp, which is one of Georgia’s most precious ecological sites, is of great concern to the Georgia Conservancy.

Mining would impact wetlands on or adjacent to this site and could permanently affect the hydrology of the entire swamp. The Okefenokee’s 438,000-acre biodiverse ecosystem is home to the headwaters of two notable rivers, the Suwannee and the St. Marys.

Thanks to your support, the Georgia Conservancy was able to make essential site-visits, develop and submit comprehensive comments of concern, provide valuable outreach to members and others, meet with local and national partners, as well as attend and/or present at public meetings in Atlanta, Savannah, Folkston, and St. Marys.

As of December 2, 2019, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is awaiting hydrology studies from the applicant and has yet to issue a decision on whether it will proceed with the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA). The development and issuing of an EIS requires several thorough studies of the proposed mine’s potential impacts. Additionally, the EIS will provide the public with new opportunities to issue comment letters. An EA may only offer a brief assessment of potential environmental impacts, with little or no opportunity for public involvement.

For more information and updates on this threat to the Okefenokee, please visit: www.georgiaconservancy.org/okefenokee/mining

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**THE RIGHT WHALE TO SAVE**  
U.S. Senate Supports Conservation Efforts

With an estimated global population of only 400, the majestic North Atlantic right whale is the world’s most endangered large whale species. It is also Georgia’s official marine mammal, as our warm Atlantic waters provide the species with the perfect wintertime calving grounds.

The life of a North Atlantic right whale is fraught with danger. The leading causes of right whale deaths are related to human activities: vessel collisions and fishing gear entanglement. Additionally, successful reproduction is a challenge for the whale, and with less than 100 breeding females worldwide, every birth is a cause for celebration.

To provide some much-needed support, a bipartisan measure from the U.S. Senate, the SAVE Right Whales Act (S.2453), was introduced in September 2019. The bill, co-sponsored by Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), would establish “a grant program to promote collaboration between states, nongovernmental organizations, and members of the fishing and shipping industries to reduce human impacts on right whales and promote the recovery of the population.” S.2453 would authorize up to $5 million annually from 2019 - 2029 to projects that promote or contribute to the sustainability and recovery of the wild population of North Atlantic right whales.

Please encourage your Congressional leaders to support S.2453 - the SAVE Right Whales Act.

To learn more about the SAVE Right Whales Act, visit: www.gaconservancy.org/coast/right-whale

American Alligator in the Okefenokee by William Brawley
HOUSING DIVERSITY IN GEORGIA
Exploring Thoughtful and Intentional Decisions

Housing, precisely its location, and type, has a significant impact on our environment. As Georgia faces both growth in some areas and contraction in others, thoughtful, intentional decisions around housing should be given priority in each community, across all levels of local leadership, and within all demographic groups.

Thanks to your support, our Sustainable Growth Program's Housing Diversity efforts are framing how we work with communities and decision-makers to examine and recommend diverse housing options within a neighborhood, town, or city.

The initiative includes public education and technical services to help identify zoning and subdivision regulations that may hinder housing variety. Additionally, we assist communities in identifying locations appropriate for a mix of housing types through thoughtful infill and incremental development.

We are currently working with the cities of Covington, Porterdale, Oxford, and Forest Park on housing studies, and our housing awareness and education presentations have been provided to audiences at regional meetings in Lavonia, Commerce, Cornelia, East Point, and Duluth.

Learn more about this initiative at: www.gaconservancy.org/housing

SAVE THE DATE!
March 2020 Events

The Oyster Roast
The Georgia Conservancy invites you to join us in celebrating Georgia’s unrivaled coast.

Our annual Oyster Roast at the extraordinary Grove Point in Savannah occurs on Saturday, March 7. Please join us as we highlight the best of our coast’s natural heritage and enjoy some wonderful low-country fare.

Banff Mountain Film Festival
Once a year, a night of film in Atlanta features tales of remote explorations and harrowing adventures by filmmakers from across the globe.

Join us on March 22 for the Banff Mountain Film Festival at the Ferst Center for the Arts at Georgia Tech, in partnership with REI.

Details and tickets available to each event in mid-December.

To learn more visit: www.gaconservancy.org/oysterroast and www.gaconservancy.org/banff

JOIN THE ADVENTURE IN 2020!
Experience Georgia with us as we unveil some brand new Stewardship Trips and return to some of our favorite locations. Some 2020 trips that have our staff buzzing:

- Day paddles on the Savannah, Etowah, Yellow, and Broad Rivers.
- Weekend trips to Blackbeard Island, the Okefenokee, and Cloudland Canyon.
- Weekend paddles on the Flint, Altamaha, and Ocmulgee Rivers.
- Day hikes at Blood Mountain and Proctor Creek.

Check out our full 2020 schedule at: www.gaconservancy.org/calendar

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