

Oconee River Land Trust

Preserving Natural Areas in our region since 1993



Autumn 2006 News

PLAN TO ATTEND MEMBERSHIP EVENT NOV. 12

Mark your calendars! We invite you to join us for our 5th annual Celebration of the Land, to be held on November 12, 2006 from 3-5 pm. Our fall membership event will be held at Smith Wilson's Farm at 580 Morton Road in southeast Clarke County. We will have live music, homemade cookies, hot cider, a bonfire and hay rides pulled by Smith's beautiful mules, Kit and Bird. This casual event has become a fun ORLT tradition and we encourage you to bring your family and friends. We will have a few guest lectures for those who want to learn more about Smith's famous mules, or how to take a better nature photograph (bring your camera!) with Stephen Humphreys, or to learn more about the plants that we typically pass as we hike along with Walt Cook. Come enjoy some time outside and be reminded of why we work together to protect land in our region. Look for a postcard with directions in early November.

NEW STATE AND FEDERAL TAX INCENTIVES

By Hans Neuhauser

If you are a landowner considering future options for conservation of your land – or if you know someone who should be, now – this year and next- is the time to consider a voluntary land conservation agreement (also known as a conservation easement). The State of Georgia has created a new tax credit to promote land conservation and the Federal government has significantly increased its incentives as well. The increased Federal incentives, however, are only available for 2006 and 2007.

A new Federal law, signed in August, enhances the existing tax benefits available for protecting your land by donating a conservation easement to a land conservation organization such as the Oconee River Land Trust. If the agreement benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, the donor may qualify for a tax deduction. The amount of the donation is

the difference between the land's value as restricted by the agreement and its value without the agreement. This value must be carefully determined by a competent, qualified appraiser following IRS guidelines.

The new law provides that a donor who gives a qualified conservation easement to a qualified organization such as ORLT, may deduct the value of the easement up to 50% of their adjusted gross income, with a carry forward period of 15 years (previously, the percent was 30% and the carry forward period was 5 years). Qualifying farmers – those who earn more than half of their income from farming - may deduct the value of the easement up to 100% of their adjusted gross income, with a carry forward period of 15 years. Remember, though, that these new incentives only apply to conservation easements donated in 2006 and 2007. (cont. on p.2)

**Oconee River
Land Trust**



The Oconee River Land Trust is a private, nonprofit organization based in Athens, Georgia. Our mission is to conserve natural lands to protect water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, and enhance the quality of our lives and those of future generations.

Incorporated in 1993, the Oconee River Land Trust protects land in many ways, most importantly through the use of conservation easements. We currently hold eighteen conservation easements, protecting more than 1,300 acres of open space.

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(Tax incentives, cont. p. 1)

Georgia also has a new state tax incentive for voluntary land conservation. The law creates a tax credit to promote the donation of conservation land or conservation easements to qualified land trusts or governmental agencies for permanent protection.

The tax credit allows taxpayers to claim a credit against their income tax liability equal to 25% of the fair market value of a conservation easement, up to a maximum credit of \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for corporations. The allowed tax credit may not exceed the amount of tax owed that year, but any unused portion of the credit may be carried forward for the next five years.

In order to be eligible for the tax credit, the donated land must be certified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as "conservation land". Conservation land includes land that is in its undeveloped, natural state and that protects at least one of the following: water quality, flood plains, wetlands, steep slopes, areas with erodible soils, stream banks, stream buffers, natural habitat and corridors for native plants and animals, prime agricultural and forestry lands, cultural sites, heritage corridors, archaeological/historic resources, scenic vistas, recreation land (for boating, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, biking, and similar outdoor activities) and connection of existing or planned natural areas.

As a landowner considering conservation options, you should be aware of the need to match your goals with the requirements of both the Federal and State tax incentives. Requirements for both incentives are slightly different, but with care, both can be met. ORLT can help you understand these differences. As always, landowners should seek guidance from their own financial and legal advisors in order to determine how the new tax laws will affect their particular situation.

Spirit of the Land

Last Spring's Spirit of the Land was an invigorating success, generating much needed funds for both the Athens Land Trust and ORLT. Over 175 land trust supporters enjoyed the hors d'oeuvres from 5&10, wine from Gosford Wine, and the music of the Hyde, Lindberg, Patton trio. Thank you to those who sponsored and attended our event.

ORLT and ALT will again partner to host our third Spirit of the Land wine and art event in March, 2007. Watch for an invitation in spring. All proceeds from the event will be put toward land conservation efforts within our region

NEW MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS!

Thanks to a grant from a local foundation, ORLT was able to mount an ambitious campaign to increase our membership and increase ORLT's visibility. We conducted a print and radio campaign for a number of weeks, and sent out a letter with our revised brochure to a large number of recipients. Thank you to all those folks who took the time to read the letter we sent and then actually join! The support and generosity of our members, both new and existing, is absolutely essential to keeping our doors open and our staff working. ORLT would like to warmly welcome the following new and renewing members and donors.

This listing includes those joining or renewing memberships or making contributions between January 1 and September 30, 2006.

Trustee of the Land

Joan Hoffman
Albert & Ruth Ike

Land Conservators

M. Barton & W. Emerson
Marianne Brumby
Walter & Susan Wellman
Robert & Carol Winthrop

Land Protectors

Jane & Nicholas Bath
Mary Case
Sally & Dan Coenen
Celeste Condit
Jack and Ann Crowley
Charlotte & William Crozier
O.C. & Manita Dean
Cindy Fetch
Lesley Maggiore
Liz McGhee
Clint Moore
Thomas Nemetz
Jim & Dorothy Newland
Dorothy O'Niell
Davin Welter
John and Judy Willis
Kathy Wright

Land Steward

Gilles Allard
Carolyn Admas
Diane Adams
J. E. Bowden
Charles Carter
Mike and Liz Conroy
Walt Cook
Steve & Meg Cramer
Grace Davis
Larry Dendy
Ron & Cindy Evans
Dick & Susan Field
Linda Ford
John Gould
Nina Hellerstein
Julie Knowlton
Jim and Linda Kundell
Susan Kreher
Trina Lawrence
Jim & Lane Norton
Jan & David Nichols
Hugh & Carol Nourse
Maureen O'Brien
Kathy & Al Parker
Laura Patterson
Ed & Dianne Ralph
Robert Repass
E. Robertson-Thompson
Natalie Russo
Edward Simpson
Pamela Nesmith
Ed & Susan Wilde
Richard Zimdars

Land Savers

Valette Adkins
Wesley Allen
Richard Anderson
Ralph & Diana Askren
Jorge Atilas
Brian Brodrick
Tom Chasteen
Mary Devartanian
Wayne & Jean Eddowes
Mary Everitt
Marlene Gillette
Bruce & Anne Hammonds
Mark & Peggy Johnson
Richard King
John Kohler
Elizabeth Little
H. McAlexander
Dorothy Macaulay
Robert & Janice Matthews
Louise McBee
J. Meyer & G. Hoffman
Berkeley & Dan Minor
Cindy Mitchell
Bill & Sally Peters
Lawrence & Janet Pomeroy
Daniel Promislow
Brenda Rashleigh
P. Shilton & D. Anderson
Nathan Tartak
Andrew Sornborger
Natalie Wellman
Richard Westmacott

Web Site Changes

Check out our improved website, orlt.com. We hope that you will find it more up to date and informative, thanks to the creative efforts of web designer, Jenny Yearwood.

2006 Stewardship

Volunteers from ORLT and the Upper Oconee Watershed Network worked together to complete our annual monitoring in late winter of this year. ORLT must monitor the easements it holds in order to make sure that each easement is being complied with. Monitoring 1,300 acres of protected land is no small task. The volunteers' help was invaluable. With little more than the promise of cookies and our gratitude as reward, these hardy folks ventured out and walked the properties, looking for changes. Walt Cook, stewardship chair, observed "Monitoring is a great excuse to get outside and hike. The land trust has an obligation to make sure the easement is protected as the donor wished, and the only way to do this is to get out there and look." Cook invites members who might be interested in monitoring in 2007 to contact ORLT.

Yes! I want to help protect open space and wildlife habitat in our region. Please enroll me as a member in the Oconee River Land Trust!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Membership Level:

_____ Land Saver (\$30) _____ Land Steward (\$50) _____ Land Protector (\$100)

_____ Land Conservator (\$500) _____ Trustee of the Land (\$1,000+)

Thank you for your support!

Please cut out and mail this form with your check to:

The Oconee River Land Trust

380 Meigs Street

Athens, GA 30601



The Oconee River Land Trust
380 Meigs St., Athens GA 30601