

GEORGIA COMMUNITY GREENSPACE PROGRAM
Report of Progress for Fiscal Year 2003
Prepared by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources
January 31, 2003

Overview of the Georgia Community Greenspace Program

The State of Georgia is experiencing a period of unprecedented growth. Georgia's population has grown by 23%, to almost 8.4 million, since 1990. Georgia is one of just six states to grow by more than 1.5 million people during this time. We trail only California, Texas, and Florida in population growth. Unfortunately, this rapid growth presents new challenges to the quality of life of Georgia residents. These include more traffic, declining air and water quality, and decreasing wildlife habitat and historic resources. Too little greenspace is currently being protected to help protect water quality, provide recreation near homes and offer transportation alternatives to the automobile. In order to help tackle these problems, the Georgia General Assembly created the Georgia Community Greenspace Program during the 2000 legislative session by enacting Senate Bill 399 (codified as *Official Code of Georgia Annotated* § 36-22-1 *et seq.*).

The Georgia Community Greenspace Program establishes a framework within which developed and rapidly developing counties, and their municipalities, can voluntarily preserve community greenspace. The statute promotes the adoption, by such counties and cities, of policies and rules that will enable the county to preserve at least 20 percent of its land area as connected and open greenspace, which can be used for informal recreation and natural resource protection. To qualify for the program, a county must have a population of at least 60,000 or an average annual growth rate of 800 people. The counties' grant shares are proportional to their tax digests of residential real property.

The program provides state grant funds to help defray the costs of acquiring real property or conservation easements that qualify as greenspace. Fifty-nine counties, containing 80 percent of the state's population, are eligible to participate during fiscal year 2003 (FY-03). The attached map identifies these counties.

Each participating county has developed an individual program specific to its greenspace needs. These programs provide for the acquisition of lands to help protect water quality, wildlife habitat and scenic areas, as well as historic and archaeological resources. They also present plans for the creation of passive recreation areas and alternative transportation corridors such as trailways and greenbelts. Preserving greenspace keeps communities livable. These developed and rapidly developing counties have made a commitment to improving their quality of life and economic competitiveness.

Actions of the Georgia General Assembly

The General Assembly created the Georgia Community Greenspace Program by statute and has appropriated \$90 million to the program to date: \$30 million in each of fiscal years 2001-2003. These monies are reserved for grants to eligible counties and cities to defray the costs of acquiring real property or conservation easements that protect greenspace. The statute defines greenspace as permanently protected land and water, including agricultural and forestry land, that is in its undeveloped, natural state or that has been developed only to the extent consistent with, or is restored to be consistent with, one or more of nine stated goals of the program for natural resource protection or informal recreation.

The State has granted to eligible counties and cities all but \$1,555 of the FY-01 funds, and all of the FY-02 funds. However, general tax revenues for FY-03 have declined well below early forecasts. For this reason, the FY-03 appropriated funds have not yet been allocated to the Georgia Greenspace Trust Fund for greenspace grant awards to local governments. The State cannot make FY-03 grant awards unless and until the appropriated funds are allocated to the Trust Fund. Table 1 summarizes the sources and uses of appropriated funds during the life of the program to date.

Table 1. Sources and Uses of Appropriated Funds, by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Counties		Greenspace Funds		
	Eligible	Grantee	Appropriated	Awarded	Lapsed
2001	40	39	\$30,000,000	\$29,998,445	\$1,555
2002	89	55	\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$0
2003	59	Max. 54	\$30,000,000	To be determined	To be determined

Actions of Governor Sonny Perdue

In his supplemental budget for FY-03, Governor Perdue continued the request for the \$30 million already appropriated. In his budget request for FY-04, Governor Perdue requested \$15 million to provide funding for a new greenspace land acquisition and protection program designed to expand the local governments eligible to participate and to maximize available funds from all public sources—local, state, and federal.

Actions of the Georgia Greenspace Commission

The Commission approved community greenspace programs for 55 of 89 eligible counties during FY-02 (July 1, 2001-June 30, 2002). Every county that submitted a progress report for FY-01 or a new greenspace program for FY-02 received its grant award. At the Commission's direction, the Department of Natural Resources (the Department) distributed all of the \$30 million appropriated by the General Assembly.

The following 59 counties are eligible for FY-03 grants from appropriated funds: Baldwin, Barrow, Bartow, Bibb, Bryan, Bulloch, Butts, Carroll, Catoosa, Chatham, Cherokee, Clarke, Clayton, Cobb, Coffee, Columbia, Coweta, Crawford, Dawson, DeKalb, Dougherty, Douglas, Effingham, Fannin, Fayette, Floyd, Forsyth, Fulton, Gilmer, Glynn, Gordon, Gwinnett, Habersham, Hall, Harris, Henry, Houston, Jackson, Lee, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, Lumpkin, Monroe, Murray, Muscogee, Newton, Oconee,

Oglethorpe, Paulding, Pickens, Pulaski, Richmond, Rockdale, Tift, Walker, Walton, White, and Whitfield. The attached map shows their locations.

Fifty-four of these counties have notified the Georgia Greenspace Commission of their intent to participate in the program during FY-03. Clarke, Dawson, Fannin, Harris and White counties did not submit any of the required documents by November 30, 2002, and cannot receive appropriated fund awards during FY-03. Camden County participated during FY-01 and FY-02 but has become ineligible in FY-03 because its average annual population growth rate has declined below 800 persons.

- During FY-03, the Commission has:
- Approved a policy that describes what types of forestry land uses and management practices on a permanently protected tract will allow the property to qualify as greenspace;
 - Directed the Department to develop rules to guide local governments in applying this policy;
 - Directed the Department to draft a similar policy regarding agricultural land uses and management practices for the Commission to review; and
 - Recommended rules to guide awards of discretionary grants from non-appropriated funds on deposit in the Georgia Greenspace Trust Fund. The Board of Natural Resources has adopted these and amendments to the general program rules, all of which took effect in December 2002.

Actions of the Department of Natural Resources

The Department reviews each program submittal, to ensure that it meets all statutory and regulatory requirements. Agency staff works closely with local officials to correct any deficiencies in a submittal, so the program can be revised for approval.

The staff provides technical support to local government officials through personal contact with individuals and the program's Web site, at:

www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/greenspace

The Web site provides general information about the program as well as technical tools such as other funding sources for greenspace. The staff also developed program and progress report templates, which are available on the Web site, to help counties prepare their program reports.

During the past year, program officers have attended a variety of public and civic meetings to brief local officials and the public on the program. The Department has awarded FY-01 and FY-02 grants to approved counties and will administer all FY-03 grants for which funds are made available. Table 2 details the final grant awards for FY-02. Table 3 shows the projected grant awards for FY-03, before reallocating the funds from non-participating counties.

Table 2. Final Grant Awards for FY-02

Grantee	Grant Award
Baldwin County	\$ 93,839
Barrow County	\$ 92,815
Bethlehem	2,302
Statham	7,211
Winder	36,334
Bartow County	\$ 273,508
Bibb County	\$ 112,335
Macon	303,718
Bryan County	\$ 80,153
Richmond Hill	28,163
Bulloch County	\$ 69,899
Statesboro	52,729
Butts County	\$ 73,308
Camden County	\$ 58,560
Kingsland	32,922
St. Marys	39,263
Woodbine	4,184
Carroll County	\$ 212,016
Carrollton	60,327
Villa Rica	24,593
Catoosa County	\$ 149,727
Fort Oglethorpe	33,056
Ringgold	11,667
Chatham County	\$1,093,104
Cherokee County	\$ 819,342
Clarke County	\$ 336,680
Clayton County	\$ 572,644
Forest Park	53,517
Riverdale	32,124
Cobb County	\$2,639,513
Acworth	76,945
Kennesaw	124,257
Marietta	336,788
Powder Springs	71,551
Smyrna	235,038
Coffee County	\$ 52,114
Douglas	23,414
Columbia County	\$ 486,310
Coweta County	\$ 301,370
Newnan	58,862
Senoia	6,349
Crawford County	\$ 34,453
DeKalb County	\$3,067,915
Atlanta	149,335
Decatur	90,137
Dougherty County	\$ 236,327
Douglas County	\$ 311,617
Douglasville	69,034
Villa Rica	5,014
Effingham County	\$ 135,254
Fayette County	\$ 364,255
Fayetteville	77,528
Peachtree City	257,938
Tyrone	30,981
Floyd County	\$ 309,308
Forsyth County	\$ 876,375
Fulton County	\$1,413,413
Alpharetta	214,299
Atlanta	2,377,611

Grantee	Grant Award
College Park	115,653
East Point	243,449
Fairburn	33,596
Hapeville	37,998
Mountain Park	3,049
Palmetto	18,894
Roswell	487,783
Union City	71,451
Gilmer County	\$ 103,455
Glynn County	\$ 425,517
Brunswick	145,416
Gordon County	\$ 133,236
Gwinnett County	\$2,609,697
Berkeley Lake	21,127
Buford	56,440
Dacula	20,554
Duluth	118,167
Lilburn	60,397
Norcross	44,923
Snellville	86,022
Sugar Hill	64,488
Suwanee	60,911
Hall County	\$ 680,513
Henry County	\$ 672,537
Houston County	\$ 368,204
Jackson County	\$ 138,403
Commerce	22,630
Jefferson	15,369
Lee County	\$ 90,480
Liberty County	\$ 113,350
Long County	\$ 15,848
Lowndes County	\$ 281,256
Lumpkin County	\$ 73,455
Monroe County	\$ 81,603
Murray County	\$ 83,333
Muscogee County	\$ 530,768
Newton County	\$ 270,178
Oconee County	\$ 164,435
Oglethorpe County	\$ 38,213
Paulding County	\$ 378,245
Pickens County	\$ 142,967
Jasper	14,883
Pulaski County	\$ 18,457
Richmond County	\$ 518,314
Rockdale County	\$ 288,486
Conyers	35,656
Tift County	\$ 98,655
Walker County	\$ 199,470
Walton County	\$ 233,506
Monroe	44,739
Whitfield County	\$ 163,807
Dalton	66,572
TOTAL	\$30,000,000

Table 3. Projected Grant Awards for FY-03

Grantee	Grant Award	Grantee	Grant Award
Baldwin County	\$ 84,641	Habersham County	\$ 152,756
Barrow County	\$ 169,486	Hall County	\$ 635,127
Bartow County	\$ 267,306	Harris County	\$ 105,485
Bibb County	\$ 493,435	Henry County	\$ 701,445
Bryan County	\$ 108,852	Houston County	\$ 368,868
Bulloch County	\$ 133,046	Jackson County	\$ 167,583
Butts County	\$ 68,132	Lee County	\$ 84,420
Carroll County	\$ 285,030	Liberty County	\$ 106,489
Catoosa County	\$ 175,720	Long County	\$ 14,173
Chatham County	\$1,044,656	Lowndes County	\$ 253,656
Cherokee County	\$ 812,174	Lumpkin County	\$ 71,779
Clarke County	\$ 283,602	Monroe County	\$ 95,445
Clayton County	\$ 703,125	Murray County	\$ 76,893
Cobb County	\$3,433,026	Muscogee County	\$ 483,215
Coffee County	\$ 69,107	Newton County	\$ 274,809
Columbia County	\$ 449,216	Oconee County	\$ 158,964
Coweta County	\$ 486,374	Oglethorpe County	\$ 44,186
Crawford County	\$ 31,017	Paulding County	\$ 366,539
DeKalb County	\$3,325,332	Pickens County	\$ 149,917
Dougherty County	\$ 210,733	Pulaski County	\$ 22,731
Douglas County	\$ 372,515	Richmond County	\$ 459,918
Effingham County	\$ 134,835	Rockdale County	\$ 309,206
Fannin County	\$ 110,208	Tift County	\$ 88,887
Fayette County	\$ 704,977	Walker County	\$ 179,864
Floyd County	\$ 300,489	Walton County	\$ 291,548
Forsyth County	\$ 855,684	White County	\$ 114,551
Fulton County	\$4,848,134	Whitfield County	\$ 211,787
Gilmer County	\$ 135,961	TOTAL	\$30,000,000
Glynn County	\$ 507,478		
Gordon County	\$ 134,199		
Gwinnett County	\$3,139,159		

Actions of Individual County Governments

The Georgia Community Greenspace Program is a locally driven program. The State of Georgia is responsible for developing greenspace program guidelines, approving county programs and administering state grants to qualified recipients. Each county is responsible for developing its own greenspace program and administering that program. Only the individual county can decide what eligible greenspace to purchase with its state grant award. Therefore, the yearly results of protecting greenspace can differ dramatically from county to county.

To date, 55 counties and 54 municipalities have received state grants to protect greenspace. Grantees that received awards during FY-01 must obligate these funds by June 30, 2003, receive an extension of time from the Department, or return the funds and any interest earned thereon to the State for deposit in the General Fund. The grantees must obligate funds awarded in FY-02 and later years within 24 calendar months, under the same conditions. Any awards that are returned to the General Fund are lost to the Georgia Community Greenspace Program.

The State has awarded \$60 million to local governments to date. Of the grantees, 24 different counties and 16 different municipalities report they have spent \$10.3 million of FY-01 funds and \$4.0 million of FY-02 funds to protect permanently 2,717 acres. These local governments have leveraged their greenspace funds with about \$5.5 million of federal, state, local, and private funds. Eight counties and 13 municipalities report they have spent nearly all the greenspace funds they received for FY-01 and FY-02.

Six grantees have about 432 acres under contract, obligating an additional \$4.3 million of greenspace funds. Twenty-three grantees have another 2,823 acres under negotiation, with \$13.6 million programmed for acquisition. Table 4 details the money spent, and the acreage and type of land protected, as local officials reported these accomplishments.

Table 4. Summary of Land Acquisition By Participating Counties Using Greenspace Appropriated Funds, Reported Through December 2002

Activity	Number of Counties	Number of Cities	Greenspace Funds Spent or Programmed	Other Funds Leveraged	Acres
Acquisition with FY-01 funds	22	15	\$ 10,331,919	\$ 2,285,305	1,517
Acquisition with FY-02 funds	15	5	\$ 4,003,277	\$ 3,218,354	1,200
Properties under contract	5	1	\$ 4,282,065	Not available	432
Properties under negotiation	16	9	\$ 13,639,662	Not available	2,823
Properties under evaluation	2	3	\$ 3,043,542	Not available	650
Properties under consideration	3	0	\$ 12,196,000	Not available	374
TOTALS	Not cumulative	Not cumulative	\$ 47,496,465	\$ 5,503,659	6,996

County progress reports for FY-03 include information about the change in greenspace protection during FY-02. Most counties do not show a major change in protected acreage, for several reasons. First, many of them are still identifying or negotiating suitable tracts of land but have not acquired land. Second, because the grant amounts are small, relative to the need for greenspace protection, some counties are accumulating two years' funds to undertake more significant projects. Third, the acreage acquired to date by individual counties is relatively small. These purchases may not noticeably affect the percentage rate of permanently protected greenspace. Table 5 details the percentage of greenspace permanently protected at the beginning and end of FY-02 within each county, including land protected by federal and state agencies and the private sector.

Table 5. Permanently Protected Greenspace in Participating Counties, Reported Through June 2002

County (*No FY-02 report)	Percentage of County		Federal, State, Local & Private Greenspace Acreage		
	Goal	End of FY-02	Goal	End of FY-02	Increase, FY-02
Baldwin	20%	0.0%	33,571	0	0
Barrow	20%	1.8%	20,740	1,824	0
Bartow	20%	2.5%	59,380	7,526	0
Bibb	20%	3.2%	32,437	5,214	588
Bryan	20%	7.2%	31,451	11,261	0

County (*No FY-02 report)	Percentage of County		Federal, State, Local & Private Greenspace Acreage		
	Goal	End of FY-02	Goal	End of FY-02	Increase, FY-02
Bulloch	20%	0.2%	88,628	878	0
Butts	20%	0.5%	23,947	571	0
Camden*	20%	7.5%	63,937	24,053	0
Carroll	20%	0.3%	64,263	1,101	0
Catoosa	20%	3.7%	20,854	3,908	0
Chatham	20%	10.5%	37,734	19,871	109
Cherokee	20%	6.0%	54,963	16,715	0
Clarke*	20%	1.2%	15,587	954	0
Clayton	20%	0.3%	18,886	254	0
Cobb	20%	4.5%	43,365	9,854	575
Coffee	20%	3.8%	77,131	2,899	50
Columbia	21%	6.7%	36,889	12,338	20
Coweta	20%	1.1%	56,823	3,112	891
Crawford	20%	0.0%	44,038	0	0
DeKalb	22%	0.7%	37,775	1,319	7
Dougherty	20%	2.3%	42,000	4,902	4,464
Douglas*	20%	1.4%	25,800	1,769	0
Effingham	20%	2.4%	61,718	7,364	0
Fayette	20%	0.7%	25,466	889	49
Floyd	20%	0.7%	25,466	889	49
Forsyth	20%	37.4%	28,786	10,770	0
Fulton	20%	1.5%	68,527	5,120	198
Gilmer	21%	19.9%	60,490	54,718	0
Glynn	20%	10.2%	43,186	4,404	20
Gordon	20%	3.7%	45,440	8,782	0
Gwinnett	20%	1.2%	55,501	3,283	352
Habersham	24%	22.0%	41,963	40,177	0
Hall	20%	17.9%	51,022	9,122	100
Henry	20%	0.2%	41,157	81	0
Houston	20%	1.1%	47,591	2,533	20
Jackson	20%	0.4%	43,692	891	41
Lee	20%	0.1%	45,542	186	63
Liberty	20%	4.8%	43,211	10,383	0
Long	20%	4.0%	46,512	10,383	0
Lowndes	20%	1.0%	64,361	2,422	122
Lumpkin*	33%	31.0%	36,574	56,700	0
Monroe	20%	0.5%	44,038	1,046	0
Murray	27%	24.7%	59,303	54,860	0
Muscogee	24%	1.6%	21,302	1,446	0
Newton*	20%	0.6%	35,707	1,083	0
Oconee	20%	0.3%	23,894	337	0
Oglethorpe	20%	1.5%	56,909	4,279	0
Paulding	20%	2.2%	40,243	4,432	25
Pickens	20%	1.4%	29,917	2,101	376
Pulaski	20%	3.2%	33,571	5,328	0
Richmond	20%	0.4%	33,269	649	415
Rockdale	20%	1.1%	16,704	895	0
Tift	20%	0.0%	34,048	0	0
Walker	20%	14.7%	57,423	42,204	0
Walton	20%	0.2%	42,240	469	0
Whitfield	22%	6.7%	40,679	12,359	659
AVG./TOTALS	21%	4.1%	2,403,907	490,908	9,193

Funds Status for Fiscal Year 2003

The statute created the Georgia Greenspace Trust Fund (the Fund), which may include appropriated state funds, federal funds, donated funds, and any interest income. The Department administers the Fund. The balance in the account as of December 31, 2002, was \$2,010,994, all of it consisting of earned interest.

As of the date of this report, no FY-03 appropriated funds have been obligated for approved programs, because they have not been allocated to the Georgia Greenspace Trust Fund. By statute, all appropriated funds must by the end of FY-03 be expended as greenspace grants to counties with approved programs. The statute also provides that non-appropriated moneys in the Fund be used as competitive discretionary grants to any county or municipal government in Georgia, for emergency greenspace acquisition or for the acquisition of trail corridor lands. The accumulated interest in the Fund will be released for such grants, as provided by the statute.

Additional Information About the Georgia Community Greenspace Program

For further information about the Georgia Community Greenspace Program, please visit the program's web site at:

www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/greenspace

or contact program staff at 404-656-5165.