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Following is a news release from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Release can be found online at <https://gadnr.org/recent-press-release-dnr>.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DNR Announces Nine Grants Through the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program

Over \$20 million in conservation and outdoor recreation funding for projects across Georgia

ATLANTA, GA (March 11, 2021) – The Georgia Department of Natural Resources announced the selection of the 2020-2021 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program “Conserve Georgia” grants for conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Selected applicants will now be invited to the Second Level Application, marking the final level of the application process for their proposals. This cycle will commit \$20.58 million in funding to support local parks and trails systems and state-owned lands. These Grantees have also committed an estimated \$40 million to match grant dollars.

“It has never been more important than here in 2021 for Georgia to preserve and expand conservation efforts as millions of Georgians head outdoors for mental and physical health during these trying times. These grants go a long way to support this vitally important mission,” shares DNR Commissioner Mark Williams.

This notable program is Georgia’s first source of dedicated funding for the conservation of priority lands, the stewardship of state parks and wildlife management areas, and the support of local parks and trails. The competitive 2020-2021 grant cycle produced 51 submitted applications requesting a total of \$81 million dollars in funding. Eligible applicants included local governments, recreation authorities, state agencies, and certain non-profit organizations. The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund Board of Trustees reviewed all projects and selected a slate of proposals, which was subsequently approved by the Board of Natural Resources and the Appropriations Subcommittees of the State House of Representatives and State Senate over DNR.

Of the nine selected, five projects are by local governments or nonprofit organizations for the acquisition, development or stewardship of local parks or trail systems. Additionally, one proposal is for the acquisition of conservation land by DNR, and three are for stewardship projects on state lands. The full list of Conserve Georgia grant awards is below. For more information about the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program and these grants, please visit www.gadnr.org/gosp.

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia’s natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices.

For more information, please visit www.GADNR.org.

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2020-2021 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program Selections

Chattahoochee Nature Center

Piedmont Riparian River Boardwalk and Connection Bridge; \$997,501

The Chattahoochee Nature Center plans to replace an aging boardwalk, remove invasive species, and re-vegetate the surrounding wetlands. This project will improve outdoor recreation opportunities such as canoeing, hiking, fishing, and wildlife viewing in the wetlands of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA). Construction of a pedestrian bridge will improve safety and ease of access for the community connecting visitors with the City of Roswell's and Cobb County's trail systems.

Greene County

Firefly Trail Southern Segment (Phase I); \$2,109,375

Greene County, in partnership with the cities of Maxeys, Woodville, and Union Point, Firefly Trail, Inc., and the Southern Off-Road Bicycling Association's Athens chapter, plans to construct 6.78 miles of rail-trail. This project is a segment of the 39-mile Firefly Trail connecting Athens and Union Point. As an upland greenway, the Firefly Trail represents an opportunity to conserve a long stretch of linear habitat, unique within the region. This addition will add to a much larger trail system, expanding the outdoor recreational experience to a continuously growing community.

North Georgia Mountains Authority

Amicalola Falls State Park Visitor Center / Approach Trail entrance; \$2,596,434

The North Georgia Mountains Authority plans to replace the visitor center at Amicalola Falls State Park and renovate the outdoor education area at the Approach Trail to the Appalachian Trail. This visitor center is one of the most heavily utilized and most recognized visitor centers in the state park system, which also supports the daily operation of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club.

Tall Timbers Research Inc.

Birdsong Nature Center Conservation Easement Purchase; \$635,620

Tall Timbers Research Inc. plans to purchase a 444-acre conservation easement on Birdsong Nature Center in Grady County. This project will protect the entirety of the property which is a habitat for many Georgia high priority wildlife species, including the gopher tortoise, and will offer hiking, birding, and wildlife viewing opportunities to the public.

The Nature Conservancy

Dugdown Corridor Acquisition and Restoration, Haralson, Paulding and Polk Counties; \$1,989,895

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) plans to acquire and perform initial restoration work on a 2,351-acre addition to the Dugdown Corridor. The Dugdown Corridor is a high priority conservation corridor for TNC and DNR, which harbors multiple threatened and endangered species. This project also builds on the successful land protection and restoration work done by TNC, DNR, and other partners at the Sheffield-Paulding Wildlife Management Area.



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Troup County

Oakfuskee Conservation Center at West Point Lake; \$1,800,000

Troup County plans to construct the Oakfuskee Conservation Center, a multi-use conservation facility located at Pyne Road Park. The facility will consist of classroom and lab space for Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, as well as space to be utilized by the public for events including tournaments hosted at West Point Lake. This project will result in increased economic activity, access to the lake and other nature based recreational activities and provide enhanced cultural and environmental educational programming.

Department of Natural Resources, Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division

Campground Renovation - Vogel State Park; \$2,609,859

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources plans to upgrade and modernize ninety campsites in Vogel State Park, one of the oldest, most popular parks in the Georgia State Parks System. This project would enhance accessibility through addressing all erosion and compaction issues. This also includes the dredging of Lake Trahlyta, significantly enhancing the Site, while encouraging more visitation and improving outdoor recreation opportunities.

Department of Natural Resources, Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division

Visitor Center Reconstruction - Wormsloe State Historic Site; \$3,241,616

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources plans to relocate and reconstruct a new visitor center at Wormsloe State Historic Site. This project would preserve the historic oak lined avenue, while encouraging more outdoor recreational activities such as walking, biking, and guided tours.

Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division

Ceylon Acquisition (Phase 2), Camden County; \$4,596,000

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources plans to acquire 11,600 acres in Camden County. This property, which will be managed as a Wildlife Management Area, borders the lower Satilla River and connecting tributaries for nearly 19 miles, and offers great opportunities for hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, camping, and wildlife observation. (Phase 1 of Ceylon acquisition has closed).