



**Georgia Outdoor
Stewardship Program:
2019-2020
Conserve Georgia Manual**

Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program
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Updated 9/9/2019

Preface: 2019-2020 Grant Cycle

Georgia voters made evident their desire for a funding mechanism dedicated to securing the future of our critical natural resources. In 2018, 83% of voters authorized the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act. Since that time, numerous partners, organizations, contributors, and citizens have collaborated with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) to offer the inaugural 2019-2020 funding cycle of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP). This program consists of grants, known as Conserve Georgia Grants, and loans made available to local governments, certain nongovernmental organizations, and state government agencies.

Prospective projects will undergo a web-based, multi-phase, competitive application process submitted to GADNR, which opens September 1, 2019.

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a source of information and guidance for prospective applicants in securing program funding. It details important program fundamentals and goals, while also providing instruction on how to apply for the various project types authorized under Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act.

Note: This booklet does not contain all materials and forms needed to apply for GOSP assistance. Applicants should visit the GOSP Homepage to access all current application materials and forms. These can be accessed at www.gadnr.org/gosp

Funding

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act dedicates 40% of existing sales and use taxes on outdoor sporting goods to fund stewardship projects for existing state and local parks, acquire and develop new state and local parks, and acquire and protect new lands critical to the protection of our wildlife and clean water supplies. Each year's official funding amount will be announced shortly before the funding cycle begins. These funds are available without raising or enacting any new taxes.

Support

GADNR staff is available to help guide applicants through the process associated with successfully submitting a complete grant or loan application. The best source of information in preparing an application is this manual used in conjunction with the resources found at www.gadnr.org/gosp. You may also contact the GOSP Grant Specialist who can explain the program in detail, help determine eligibility, and provide assistance to make an application as competitive as possible.

Quick Facts

Program Name	Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program
Funding Allocation	Dependent on sales and use tax collected by sporting goods stores
Eligible Applicants	Qualified local governments; Constituted recreation authorities; State agencies; and certain nongovernmental entities
Permissible Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stewardship and acquisition projects that support local parks and trails - Stewardship projects that improve and maintain state owned land and facilities - Acquisition projects that protect critical conservation areas
Minimum Conserve Georgia Grant Amount	<p>Local Parks & Trails Projects: \$500,000</p> <p>State Projects: No min. amount</p>
Maximum Conserve Georgia Grant Amount	<p>Local Parks & Trails Projects: \$3,000,000</p> <p>State Projects: No max. amount</p>
Match Requirements	25% Match Required (Minimum)
Retainage	25% held
Grant Term	2 years

Funding Cycle 2019-2020 Timeline

The application process consists of two phases. The Pre-application is an initial submission of projects plans and funding needs. After the project evaluation process, successful Pre-applicants will be invited to a Second-level application which primarily consist of higher level, greater detailed information requirements. All invitees will receive funding pending a fully completed Second-level Application. The application deadline schedule for this cycle is as follows:

Pre-application deadline: Midnight, October 31, 2019

Second-level Application deadline (if invited): Midnight, May 30, 2020

The proposed 2019-2020 annual funding cycle is as follows:

- September 1, 2019: Pre-application period opens
- October 31, 2019: Pre-applications due
- November – December 2019: GADNR staff reviews, evaluates and ranks Pre-applications
- January 2020: Board of Trustees approves proposal of projects; Proposal of projects approved by the Board of Natural Resources and the Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate over GADNR and GEFA
Note: Meeting dates for the January Board of Trustees and Board of Natural Resources meetings will be publicly noticed at www.gadnr.org/qosp.
- February 2020: All Pre-applicants are notified of results, and selected Pre-applicants are invited to submit Second-level applications
- May 30, 2020: Second-level applications due
- May – June 2020: Financial workshops conducted for successful applicants

Contact Information

To better serve Georgia residents in attaining their recreation and conservation goals, the GOSP team is available by the following means during normal business hours. All general information or procedural inquiries should be to the GOSP Grant Specialist.

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Section 1: Overview and Process

1.1 Program Overview

The purpose of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program is to provide support to state parks and trails; to support local parks and trails of state and regional significance; to provide stewardship of conservation land; and to acquire critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, or fishing, for military installation buffering or for natural resource-based outdoor recreation. This mission is accomplished through the distribution of funds through the Conserve Georgia Grant and low interest loans.

1.2 Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund is the body statutorily charged with evaluating and awarding funding for eligible project applications. The Board of Trustees, in coordination with the Board of Natural Resources, shall evaluate the proposals in accordance with priorities established by the Board of Trustees. There shall be 11 Trustees as follows:

- (1) The Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, who shall also serve as chairperson of the board;
- (2) The Director of the State Forestry Commission;
- (3) The Director of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Department of Natural Resources;
- (4) The Commissioner of Transportation;
- (5) The Director of the Coastal Resources Division of the Department of Natural Resources, as an ex officio, nonvoting member;
- (6) The Director of the Wildlife Resources Division of the Department of Natural Resources, as an ex officio, nonvoting member;
- (7) The Director of state parks of the Department of Natural Resources, as an ex officio, nonvoting member; and
- (8) (A) Two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
(B) Two members appointed by the President of the Senate.

2019-2020 Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund Board of Trustees



Mark Williams, Chairman
Commissioner of the Department
of Natural Resources



Richard Dunn
Director of the
Environmental Protection
Division



Russell McMurry
Commissioner of the Department
of Transportation



Chuck Williams
Director of the State Forestry
Commission



Braye Boardman
Lt. Governor Appointee



Eddie Canon
Speaker of the House Appointee



Aaron McWhorter
Lt. Governor Appointee



Carl Riggs
Speaker of the House Appointee

Ex-Officio Nonvoting Members



Jeff Cown
Director of the Parks, Recreation
and Historic Sites Division



Rusty Garrison
Director of the Wildlife Resources
Division



Doug Haymans
Director of the Coastal Resources
Division

Section 2: Policies

2.1 Conserve Georgia Grant Funding Basics

Funding Amount

Conserve Georgia grant and loan requests have a \$500,000 minimum and are limited to a maximum award of \$3,000,000, for local parks and trails projects. There is no minimum or maximum grant request amounts for those projects submitted by State agencies or by entities on behalf of any State agency.

Reimbursement Payments

GOSP functions as a reimbursement program for Conserve Georgia Grant recipients. Grantees must have the financial capacity to pay for project expenses prior to being reimbursed by grant funds. Once project expenses have been incurred and paid for by the Grantee, payment documentation can then be submitted to GOSP for reimbursement, up to the amount of the grant award.

Expenses directly related to the project scope but incurred prior to the Project Agreement effective date are not reimbursible, although appraisals and project planning and environmental compliance service expenses within 18 months of the Project Agreement effective date may be counted **as match only**. These expenses are subject to GADNR approval on a case-by-case basis. See Section 2.3A for eligible expenses that may be reimbursed.

Matching Requirements

Conserve Georgia grant funds can pay up to 75% of a project's total cost. Grantees must provide at least 25% of the total project cost as match, either in the form of cash or in-kind match. The exact match requirement for individual projects will be determined by an approved Project Budget and identified in the Project Agreement (see section 2.3B for eligibility of match and grant expenses).

Retainage

GOSP will retain (i.e. hold back) 25% of the total approved grant amount until the project is complete and all required documentation is submitted and approved by GADNR.

Property Appraisals

Property appraisals are required for all acquisition projects and must be based on current fair market value of the land. Appraisal requirements also apply to any property proposed as match

for acquisition or stewardship projects. Where an appraisal is necessary, two current full narrative appraisals produced by a licensed appraiser, which meets current State guidelines, is required. **Applicants may opt to submit preliminary appraisals during the Pre-application phase, although those Applicants will be required to submit full appraisals during the Second-level Application if invited.**

Current GADNR Appraisal Guidelines are outlined below and should be consulted before initiating the appraisal process:

- 1) The Applicant will complete two appraisals for all acquisitions and donated real property if used as match (either fee-simple, or the acquisition of a conservation easement), and at least one of the two appraisals must be performed by a Member Appraisal Institute (MAI) certified appraiser.
- 2) At least one of the two appraisals will be reviewed and approved by an outside review appraiser assigned by GADNR.
- 3) Costs incurred by the independent appraiser are eligible for GOSP reimbursement, and subject to all GOSP reimbursement policies if awarded.
- 4) All appraisals must be completed to the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) standards.
- 5) All appraisals must be in narrative format.
- 6) For a **donation** of fee-simple property, the Applicant may complete an appraisal, accept an appraisal prepared by the donor, or accept a signed letter of value from the County Tax Assessor.
- 7) For a **donation** of a conservation easement, the Applicant may either complete an appraisal or accept an appraisal prepared by the donor.
- 8) The Applicant and the seller will agree on a sales price within twelve months of the effective date of the appraisal. The Applicant will work to assure the option is signed within twelve months of the effective date of the appraisal acceptance by GADNR.

All appraisals are subject to an independent appraisal review **for Applicants who are invited to the Second-level Application stage only**. This is required by GADNR to ensure compliance to appraisal standards and consistency with current fair market value. GADNR will assign the independent appraisal reviewer and forward the appraisals to the reviewer on behalf of the Applicant.

There is a cost for this service, although independent appraisal reviews are eligible for reimbursement under GOSP. Applicants should expect an invoice directly from the independent reviewer, and in turn, should make payment directly to the reviewer.

Once this review has been concluded, GADNR will update the Applicant on whether each appraisal is accepted or rejected. In the occurrence of a rejected appraisal, the Applicant will receive the reviewer's recommendations on how to bring the appraisal into acceptance. Acceptance of appraisals will be entered into the application by the GOSP Grant Specialist when requirements are met. Notification will be sent to Applicants in the occurrence of a rejected

appraisal, including an explanation of the items which must be addressed in order to achieve acceptance.

Note that appraisals and the independent GADNR review can be quite time consuming. **Ordering your appraisals as early as possible is strongly encouraged.**

2.2 Applicant Eligibility

The following summarizes entities and organizations that are eligible for GOSP assistance. Entities that are not directly eligible for these funds programs are encouraged to consider partnering with eligible entities.

Eligible Project Applicants include:

- Qualified local governments as defined in paragraph 18 of subsection (a) of O.C.G.A. 50-8-2:
 - A county or municipality which:
 - (A) Has a comprehensive plan in conformity with the minimum standards and procedures;
 - (B) Has made its local plan implementation mechanisms consistent with those established in its comprehensive plan and with the minimum standards and procedures; and
 - (C) Has not failed to participate in the department's mediation or other means of resolving conflicts in a manner which, in the judgment of the department, reflects a good faith effort to resolve any conflict.

Note: Applicants may contact the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to verify if they have met these criteria and are thus currently in good standing.

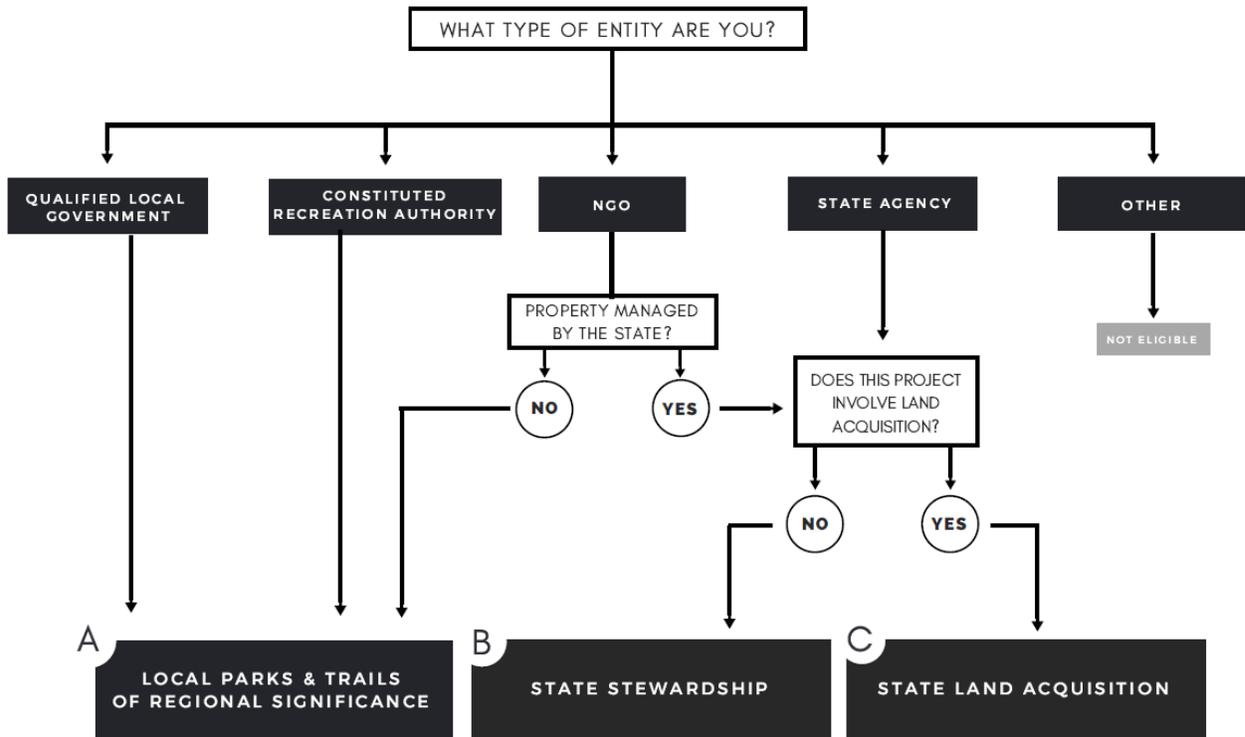
- Any constituted recreation authority registered with DCA
- State agencies
- Nongovernmental entities, defined as any nonprofit organization primarily concerned with the protection and conservation of land and natural resources, as evidenced by its organizational documents.

2.3 Project Eligibility

Since no two projects are exactly alike, GOSP projects will be funneled into one of three distinct project types. This ensures that each project can compete fairly with other closely related

projects, while allowing the Board of Trustees to address the wide array of priorities for any given funding cycle.

The flow chart below is provided to further explain the three GOSP application paths and assist applicants in identifying the proper application to complete:



The three GOSP projects types are:

A. Local Parks and Trails of Regional Significance

These funding opportunities are specially reserved for **local governments, constituted recreation authorities, and nongovernmental entities** to acquire and/or improve **local** parks, trails, and conservation lands. The Local Parks and Trails of Regional Significance Application shall be used to apply for any of the three distinct projects below:

- Acquisitions of property, to include conservation easements
- **Local** stewardship funding for maintenance, restoration or improvement projects

- **Combination projects** that involve both the acquisition of land, either through fee-simple or conservation easement purchase **AND** for maintenance, restoration or improvement for the land or conservation easement acquired

Note: Local governments and constituted recreation authorities MAY NOT apply for state stewardship or state acquisition grants.

B. State Stewardship

State stewardship funding opportunities are available for **State agencies and nongovernmental entities only. Local governments and constituted recreation authorities MAY NOT apply for state stewardship grants.** These entities may apply for maintenance, restoration or improvement projects to enhance public access, use or safe enjoyment of permanently protected conservation land and current state-owned parks.

C. State Land Acquisition

State Land Acquisitions funding opportunities are available for **State agencies and nongovernmental entities only. Local governments and constituted recreation authorities MAY NOT apply for state acquisition grants.** These agencies may apply to acquire critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, for military installation buffering or for natural resource based outdoor recreation. The State Land Acquisition Application shall be used to apply for either of the two distinct projects below:

- Acquisitions of property, to include conservation easements.
- **Combination projects** that involve both the acquisition of land, either through fee-simple or conservation easement purchases, **AND** for the maintenance, restoration or improvement of the lands or conservation easements acquired.

Note: All aspects of prospective projects and acquisitions must completely reside within Georgia's borders. Applications for projects in which any part of it resides in another state other than Georgia, either in part or in whole, will not be considered for funding.

2.3A Items Eligible for Reimbursement

Below are the most typical items which may be submitted for reimbursement. To qualify for reimbursement, an expenditure must be directly related to the project and have occurred after the signed Project Agreement date, but before the maximum 24-month project completion period. Final Reimbursement Requests must be made within 45 days of the project completion date.

- Capital expenditures for acquisition (indirect costs not allowed). For example:
 - Purchase Cost (must not exceed highest appraised fair market value)
 - Appraisals
 - Independent appraisal reviews as required by GADNR
 - Legal fees directly associated with the conveyance of real property or conservation easements
 - Environmental reviews
- Permits
- Equipment cost
- Direct materials
- Contractual services such as:
 - Legal fees directly related to the actual acquisition of a property
 - Appraisals
 - Surveys
 - Engineering and architectural
 - Environmental reviews and/or surveys
 - Contractors and subcontractors directly related to the project scope
- Expenses directly related to the acquisition of real property or conservation easements

If unsure whether an expenditure is eligible for reimbursement, contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for verification prior to submission.

2.3B Items Eligible for Match

Applicants are required to provide matching funds equal to at least 25% of the total project cost, although Applicants are encouraged to provide more. Higher levels of match commitment will yield higher point awards on the Pre-application. All sources of match must be identified in the grant application. To qualify for match, an item must be directly related to the project and have occurred after the agreement effective date, but before the maximum 24-month project completion period expiration. The only exceptions to this are appraisals and project planning and environmental compliance service expenses within 18 months of the Project Agreement effective date, which may be counted **as match only**. The following are common sources of matching funds:

- Available capital from the Applicant
- Funds secured via external grant
- Financial donations from private organizations and individuals
- Consulting Fees for Grant Writing (up to 10% of the applicant's total match commitment) - **Most other consulting services are not eligible. Contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for guidance.**
- In-kind labor, equipment, and materials provided by the Applicant
- In-kind donations of labor, services, materials, and equipment from private organizations and individuals. Professional service donations (e.g. engineering

services, landscape design, etc.) are valued at an hourly rate consistent with similar professionals in the same part of the state. Donations of unskilled labor are calculated at an hourly rate identified on the Donation/In-Kind Tracking Form found at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

- Donation of real property or conservation easements from a third party. Donating property is an excellent way for private organizations and individuals to support public outdoor recreation. The following are several key considerations regarding donated property used as match:
 - To be considered as match, the Applicant must provide official appraisals, per section 2.1, prepared by a licensed appraiser and deemed acceptable for grant purposes by an independent GADNR appraisal review. This process does not apply to other sources of matching funds.
 - Upon completion of the project, the donated property becomes subject to terms of the Project Agreement.
 - Donated property is subject to the same appraisal requirements as property acquired with grant funds.

Note: Material donations must be entered at fair market value. These items shall not be valued based on donor or applicant opinion nor original purchase price by the donor.

The agreement retainage amount will be withheld by GADNR until the Grantee's total match commitment is reconciled per the agreement. Shortfalls in match will be reconciled by means of the project retainage.

2.3C Items Ineligible for Reimbursement or Match

Items that are not directly associated and essential for the completion and execution of a project are generally ineligible for reimbursement or match. Since the number of potentially ineligible items is space-prohibitive to list in this manual, it is recommended to contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for verification prior to incurring such costs. Examples of ineligible costs may include:

- Indirect costs
- Equipment and tools
- Travel
- Incidental costs
- Meals
- Expenditures prior to or after the mutually signed Project Agreement date, except for those items outlined in Section 2.1
- Administrative labor costs of internal staff
- Maintenance of equipment

Note: Most consulting services are not eligible. Contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for guidance.

2.3D Extensions and Scope Revisions

Extension Requests

Grantees may request timeline extensions if the project is expected to exceed the 24-month deadline. Extensions will be limited to an additional 90 days. Extensions in excess of 90 days shall be considered at the discretion of GADNR and the Board of Trustees. All Extension Requests will be submitted at <https://gadnr.org/gosp>. All formal requests will be reviewed by GADNR staff and approved by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Written notice of the project extension shall be immediately provided to the chairperson of the Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate maintaining oversight of GADNR and GEFA. Extension Requests shall be made at least 90 days prior to the project's completion date. If the Extension Request is granted, the Grantee must sign a Project Agreement Amendment.

Change of Scope

Grantees may request to change the scope of the original project. All formal requests will be approved by the Board of Trustees. All change of scope requests will be submitted via a Project Agreement Amendment Request at <https://gadnr.org/gosp>. These shall be made at least 90 days prior to the project's completion date. If the change of scope request is granted, the Grantee must sign an Project Agreement Amendment.

GADNR will make every attempt to submit change of scope requests to the Board of Trustees at the next meeting, although the timing of submitted requests and Board schedules may not allow review until subsequent meetings. For this reason, Grantees should consider heavily the need for such requests in order to minimize project delays.

Note: It is critical that Grantees understand that expenses, donations, or in-kind materials or services may be ineligible for consideration after the original agreement date and before an approved Extension Request or Project Agreement Amendment is mutually signed and tendered by GADNR. Incurring these costs prior to an approved Extension Request will be done at the Grantee's own risk.

2.3E Project Types

Loans

From within the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund, moneys may also be made available in each fiscal year for loans to any qualified applicant to defray the costs of conservation land or of conservation easements placed upon property that ensure its

permanent protection as conservation land. Any such loan shall bear interest at a rate established by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority. Contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for more information concerning loans.

Acquisition Projects

The acquisition of property may be in the form of either fee-simple, donation, lease (of 25 years or more beyond the Project Agreement date), or through conservation easement.

Land acquisitions for local assistance must occur in accordance with state and Federal guidelines for preparation of appraisals and eligible transaction costs (see section 2.1). The following are several highlights regarding grant-funded land acquisition.

- **Condemnation/Eminent Domain:** Acquisitions must be on a willing-seller willing-buyer basis. State law prohibits the expenditure funds for acquisition or development of property acquired via condemnation.
- **Property Value:** Awards for land acquisition (and property used as match) are based on the appraised value or the purchase price and must not exceed fair market value as authenticated by the independent appraisal reviewer.
- **Eligible Costs:** Eligible acquisition costs include the fair market value of the property/actual purchase price and real estate transaction costs (e.g. appraisal costs, land surveys, legal fees, etc.).
- **Pre-Award Acquisition:** No land can be acquired prior to funding unless the Applicant receives a letter of retroactivity from GADNR. This letter is subject to Board of Trustee approval, and schedule. Any Applicants who anticipate acquiring property prior to award should contact the GOSP Grant Specialist prior to applying in order to request a letter of retroactivity. These shall be reviewed and approved on a case by case basis.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements qualify for GOSP funding. Within the application narrative, the following elements should be addressed:

- Accreditation of application and/or easement manager.
- Clear identification of each **specific** conservation need and value.
 - Specific species or attribute to be protected (habitat, species, clean air, water quality/quantity, prevention of sprawl, etc.)
 - Conservation priority (Species or habitat endangered, threatened, or recommended for listing, nationally or local listed, etc.)
 - Amount and frequency of attribute, species or Specific Conservation Areas (SCAs) within the protected property. For example: “100 acres of longleaf

pine and gopher tortoise habitat in the eastern portion of the total 150-acre property, 25 acres of red cockaded woodpecker habitat on the west end of the property, separated by 25 acres of land with no conservation value.”

- A detailed and measurable management plan for each specific conservation need, to include Best Management Practices to be employed. There should be a direct and conspicuous relationship between each conservation need and the associated management plan item.
- How the management plan will maintain its goals into the future.
- Consistency with the Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) priorities, Georgia Historic Preservation Division (HPD) priorities, and/or Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).
- Statewide significance and public benefit of the easement.
- Non-conservation development restrictions.
- How and by whom mineral rights will be held.

Certain elements are not allowed in a conservation easement under GOSP. Those are:

- Subdividing without GADNR or Board of Trustees approval
- Conversion of any part of the easement out of conservation as written in the original easement language
- Amendments to the easement unless it is to expand, protect, or improve the conservation value of the property

Note: In the occurrence of dissolution of the conservation easement trust, manager, or holder, it is important for all parties to understand that the conservation easement shall remain protected in perpetuity.

Stewardship Projects

Funding for stewardship projects is based on costs associated with the activities outlined in the application. For stewardship projects supported by GOSP funding, Applicants must own the property, have secured a conservation easement that provides legal access for the purposes of the project, or have documented landowner authority allowing the development to occur.

Note: All leases and use agreements must have at least 25 years remaining, measured from the mutually signed Project Agreement date, to qualify for GOSP funding.

Combination Projects

A Combination Project is one that funds both the acquisition of a property, as well as a stewardship component of the property once acquired. Both aspects should be clearly outlined in the application narrative criteria.

2.3F Regional Significance

GOSP aims to prioritize projects in such a way as to satisfy the public's desire for conservation lands, improve the outdoor recreation experience, and promote the sustainability of Georgia's natural resources. One of the methods used to achieve this is to evaluate the *regional significance* of each project. This can be satisfied in many ways, although in simple terms, regional significance can be achieved by projects that serve a greater community beyond the local area, add value to neighboring or distant communities, add to or enhances Georgia's state-wide resources, or impact economic growth beyond the project's host community.

2.4 Control

Grantees must maintain adequate control over any land acquired or developed with GOSP funds. Adequate control may be defined as ownership, conservation easement, use agreement, or lease. Leases must have at least 25 years remaining at the time of a mutually signed Project Agreement.

Applications submitted by an entity other than the property owner must include a signed Statement of Landowner Support in the Pre-Application phase. This document is to be procured by the applicant.

The applicant must identify all outstanding rights or interests held by others on subject properties. A signed letter explaining control and tenure or an affidavit proving ownership (this document is to be procured by the applicant) will suffice.

2.5 Long-term Obligations for Grant Recipients

It is important for potential Grantees to understand long-term obligations that are associated with this program. The following are several key requirements.

- **Ownership:** Grantees must retain legal control and oversight of the property (via ownership or lease) and maintain facilities on property acquired or developed with a GOSP funding.
- **Income:** Grantees may charge reasonable user fees. All income received from these user fees must be used towards management and maintenance of the subject property. GOSP funds shall not be awarded to projects aimed at generating general revenue.
- **Perpetuity language for acquisitions** – Real property or conservation easements acquired with GOSP funds shall remain protected as conservation lands into perpetuity. Grantees are required to record a final deed with the local government having jurisdiction containing the GADNR required Protective Language:

“The Property was acquired in part using grant funds provided to the Grantee by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources pursuant to the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act, specifically Conserve Georgia Grant Number _____. The Property shall, from this date forward, be managed for conservation purposes in accordance with the conservation objective of the Grant and in compliance with the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act. The property shall not be used for purposes inconsistent with the conservation objective of the Grant without the approval and conditions set by Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund Board of Trustees.”

Note: This Protective Language is also available at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

Section 3: Application Process

3.1 Grant Application Process

GOSP annual Conserve Georgia Grant and loan opportunities involve a competitive application process by means of three distinct funding pools via a 100% online application. **No paper application submissions will be considered for funding.** The funding levels and priorities of each pool is set by the Board of Trustees and may change year to year. The three funding pools are: Local Parks and Trails of Regional Significance, State Stewardship, and State Land Acquisition.

The road to securing GOSP funding begins with the completion of the Pre-application, available at www.gadnr.org/gosp. It is in this initial phase that the Applicant inputs their demographic data, contact information, project scope, answers administrative and qualitative criteria questions, and supplies required project documentation needed by GADNR to rank each project. After GADNR staff ranks all completed Pre-applications, The Board of Trustees will review the Pre-applications and select projects to move forward to an invitation only **Second-level Application**, also available at www.gadnr.org/gosp. All Applicants receiving this invitation will receive funding, pending a completed and approved Second-level Application. It is in this stage that the Applicants supply more detailed information than what was submitted in the Pre-application. They also submit required environmental reviews, as well as various legal documents required by GADNR.

Second-level Applications must be submitted by midnight on the prescribed deadline date. All Second-level Applications are reviewed by GADNR staff to verify application completeness. Applicants who are unable to meet all requirements for a complete application by the deadline may be granted an extension by GADNR.

Upon completion of the Second-level Application, GADNR will supply Applicants with a list of available dates in which to attend a mandatory Financial Workshop.

After attending a Financial Workshop, Grantees will mutually sign a Project Agreement with GADNR signifying the completion of the application process and may move forward with their project.

3.2 Pre-application Process

Pre-Application

The Pre-Application is the initial stage of the funding application process. Since GOSP is a competitive program, the Pre-application serves as the basis for selecting which projects advance towards approval. It is fundamentally comprised of weighted grading criteria, which shall accumulate a total score reviewable by GADNR and the Board of Trustees. Successful Pre-applications advance to the Second-level Application.

Pre-applications must be submitted by midnight on the prescribed deadline date. All Pre-applications are reviewed by GADNR staff to verify applicant eligibility, application completeness, and are priority ranked based on the project evaluation criteria and funding cycle priorities.

Specific direction on how to satisfy these requirements are contained within the Pre-application itself. The Pre-application can be completed online at www.gadnr.org/gosp. All eligible Pre-applications must include:

- **Responses to each of the Pre-application evaluation criteria**
- **Pre-application Cover Letter** – This official letter is the instrument demonstrating support and authority to submit a Pre-application, signed by a ranking authorizing representative of the entity (Board Chair, Commissioner, Mayor, etc.). It must be on official letterhead.
- **Plat/Parcel map and legal description** – Typically, these can be acquired through the applicant’s County Clerk’s office.
- **Preliminary Site Plan and/or Conceptual Plan** – This may be an artist’s or engineer’s rendering and visual representation of the proposed project. All elements receiving GOSP funding should be conspicuously identifiable on the plan. Any prominent features, such as rivers, streams, roads, densely forested areas, etc., should also be represented.

(This is a document of the Applicant’s own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Property Boundary Map** – This map shall depict the official boundary, as committed to by the Applicant, which shall be considered the Project Site. All GOSP funded elements must reside within the Property Boundary Map. For acquisitions, the Property Boundary must be the entire parcel(s) receiving GOSP funding. For stewardship projects, it may be only that portion of an existing parcel(s) affected by GOSP funding.

(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Project Location Map** – An unofficial map depicting the relative location of the Project Site to local towns and cities. GADNR staff will utilize this map in order to visit the Project Site for GADNR required inspections. Websites such as Google Maps, Rand McNally, etc. will suffice in being the basis for this map.

(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

The following are minimal criteria for an acceptable Project Location Map:

- Project and Applicant names
 - Project Site address (GPS coordinates may be used if no address is assigned)
 - At least one significant town must be depicted
 - Major highway designations and the street names immediately surrounding/leading to the Project Site.
 - North Arrow
- **Photos of the site with photo key (optional)** – Optional photos may be taken of areas receiving GOSP funding. If submitted, an unofficial map of the Project Site must be included showing the relative location of each photograph taken, each location to be numbered corresponding to the photograph's number, and an arrow pointing in the direction of viewing from the photographer's perspective.

(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Generalized Project Budget Worksheet** - This budget shall include all categories of expenditures, modestly detailed enough to reflect the types of materials and expenses anticipated for reimbursement. Only items and values on this budget will be considered for reimbursement.

(This is a downloadable template to be completed, signed by the authorizing officer, and uploaded into the application portal. This can be found at www.qadnr.org/qosp)

- **A resolution adopted by the governing entity of the Applicant authorizing the application and committing all funds required to complete the proposed project.**

(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Current copy of deed, lease, or conservation easement (if applicable)**
- **Signed statement from landowner expressing support (if applicable)** – A legally defensible document that demonstrates the support of the landowner for the project in its entirety *if the Applicant and owner are not the same.*

(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)

- **Letters of financial commitment from sponsors and partners**
(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal)
- **Approvals to cross a public highway or a public utility right-of-way (if applicable)** - Applicants with projects requiring the use of known existing Rights of Way should contact the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for direction on attaining approval for use as needed. Failure to do so may cause delays in the in the execution of the Project Agreement.
- **Appraisals** (Acquisition or real property donation only. See section 2.1 and 2.3E) – Subject to GADNR independent appraisal review. See section 2.1

Note: Pre-applications must be submitted by the deadline stated on the public announcement or they will not be eligible.

3.3 Pre-application Definitions

Applicant Address: The Main Point of Contact's (defined below) address where the Applicant can be contacted regarding application questions.

Applicant Chief Elected Official, Director or President: Lead official who has authorized and will approve this project on behalf of the applying entity.

Applicant Name: Legal name of the agency or organization requesting funding.

County: County in which project will occur. List all applicable counties.

Entity Characterization: Choose the appropriate option best describing your entity. If you have chosen other, please contact the GOSP Grant Specialist for direction and assistance.

Main Point of Contact: This is the individual that represents the Applicant and is tasked with completing the application(s), working directly with GADNR in submitting all necessary documentation, and managing all inbound and outbound communications between the Applicant and GADNR. Duties may be delegated down within the Applicant's organizations, although the Main Point of Contact must remain constant, as practicable as possible, and should be familiar with all aspects of the project scope and progress.

Project Cost Information: Complete the Project Budget Worksheet by adding individual budget items.

Project Description: Provide a detailed description of the proposed project scope as well as all elements that shall receive funding. All narratives are limited to a predetermined word count by the application itself.

Project Title: Unique name placed on your project, which will remain the same throughout the life of the project. This name must stay consistent throughout the process and cannot be changed.

Project Type: Mark the appropriate project type denoting the appropriate funding stream for your application. A project must clearly fit into only **one** option.

Secondary Administrator or secondary point of contact: An alternate point of contact used throughout the life of the grant project in the instance that the Main Point of Contact is unavailable. This individual should be familiar with all aspects of the project scope and progress.

3.4 Pre-application Evaluation Criteria

Criteria Associated with All Projects

All Applicants are to complete this section.

Question 1 – Matching Funds

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Can you provide matching funds greater than 25% of the total project?
<i>Question Details</i>	<p>Applicant must identify the percentage of matching funds by dividing the total match dollars available by the total project cost.</p> <p>All matching funds must be included and highlighted as such in the Project Budget Worksheet. Written documentation of monetary investments or in-kind donations must be provided in the form of letters of contribution.</p>
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	<p>< 25.0% = ineligible 25.0% = 0 points 25.1% - 34.9% = 2 points 35.0% - 49.9% = 4 points 50.0% - 64.9% = 6 points 65.0% - 74.9% = 8 points ≥ 75.0% = 10 points</p>

Question 2 – Project Need

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Does this project satisfy priority needs, as identified in a formalized planning document?

<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must list the name of the current planning document in which the project need is identified and upload the cover page and sections applicable to the project.
<i>Required Documents</i>	Current, formalized planning document; expectable forms of documentation include but are not limited to: comprehensive plan; recreation master plan; county or regional master plan; trail system plan; capital improvements plan; regional water plan or land/use management plan.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will receive the full 10 points if project need is addressed in the current, formalized planning document provided.

Question 3 – Pre-Project Planning

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Has any pre-project planning occurred and is the project ready to proceed?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must detail any steps taken in project planning and describe how the project is ready to proceed. Applicant may upload any project plans and drawings, proposed project timeline, required permits, etc.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will receive the full 10 points if the pre-planning phase is complete and the project is ready to mobilize.

Question 4 – Leveraging Funds

<i>Max Points</i>	5 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will these funds be used as leverage when applying for an external grant outside of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program? If so, will the project associated with the external grant be completed within two years of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program award, if successful?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the external grant

- Name of the organization making the grant available
- The core mission of the secondary grant
- How the secondary grant directly relates to any or all of the following:
 - Support of local parks and trails of state and regional significance
 - Provides stewardship of conservation land
 - The acquisition of critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, fishing, military installation buffering, or for natural resource-based outdoor recreation
- Have you already been awarded the external grant?
- If you have not already been awarded the external grant, when do you anticipate notification, or what date do you plan to apply? (Conditional GOSP approval may apply subsequent to this section)

Scoring Metric

Applicant will receive the full 5 points if the GOSP funds are being used as leverage to secure an external grant.

Question 5 – Recreational Opportunity

Max Points

25 points

Criteria Question

Will this project provide nature-based recreational opportunities?

Criteria Details

Applicant must list all nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities provided by the acquisition or development of this property.

Acceptable nature-based outdoor recreation activities: hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, boating/canoeing/kayaking, camping, and wildlife viewing. Other activities may be considered, but the Applicant must demonstrate how the activity is nature-based.

Required Documents

Map or other document showing the availability of all listed activities. (i.e. If applicant lists “biking” as an activity, applicant should mark the bike trail on the property; If the Applicant lists “camping” as an activity, the Applicant should mark the campsite on the property).

Scoring Metric

Applicant will receive 5 points for each activity, for up to 25 points total.

Question 6 – Water Quality and Quantity Protection – Location

Max Points

10 points

Criteria Question

Is this project located in one of the following areas? (Select all that apply)

- A. The project is located in a Hydrologic Unit Code HUC-12 watershed, identified by Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) as a priority watershed for water quality purposes.
- B. The project is located in a HUC-12 or equivalent size area as impacted by or sensitive to hydrologic alteration.
- C. The project is located in a HUC-12 watershed identified by GAEPD as a healthy watershed.
- D. The project is located in a HUC-12 watershed with waters identified by GAEPD as impaired and with any of the following criteria: algae, biota impacted (fish community), biota impacted (macroinvertebrate community), bacteria, and dissolved oxygen.
- E. The project is located in one of the most significant groundwater recharge areas in Georgia.
- F. None of the above.

Criteria Details

Using the Watershed Technical Appendix (found at www.gadnr.org/gosp) provided as a reference, the Applicant must select each applicable technical area. For each location characteristic selected, Applicant must describe the specific ways in which the project will contribute to improving water quality or water quantity in the specific area. Specific sources of information used to identify applicable characteristics of the project area should be referenced.

Required Documents

Map identifying property and specific watershed with clear labels.

Scoring Metric

Applicant may score up to 10 total points.

A – 7 points

B – 7 points

- C – 3 points
 - D – 3 points
 - E – 3 points
-

Question 7 – Water Quality and Quantity Protection – Best Management Practices

Max Points 5 points

Criteria Question Will this project protect or restore lands that will improve the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater and flow of springs through the use of Best Management Practices?

- A. Protection of restoration of vegetated riparian buffers in a condition appropriate for the region.
- B. Restoration of streambanks and natural hydrologic processes.
- C. Protection of wetlands and riparian zones, with minimization of impacts from improvements and management activities.
- D. Use of green infrastructure (bioretention areas, grass swales, and trails constructed with mulch, gravel or other pervious materials rather than concrete or asphalt.)

Criteria Details Using the Watershed Technical Appendix (found at www.gadnr.org/gosp) provided as a reference, the Applicant must select each applicable Best Management Practice used. For each practice selected, the Applicant must describe how the project design will implement this practice and how it will contribute to the improvement of the quality and quantity of surface water, groundwater or the flow of springs.

Scoring Metric Applicant will receive the full 5 points for successfully demonstrating how the project will protect or restore lands through the use of Best Management Practices.

Question 8 – Cultural and Historical Value

Max Points 10 points

Criteria Question Does this project include the acquisition or stewardship of land with a cultural or historical value?

Criteria Details

Applicant must demonstrate how the property has local, regional or state-wide cultural and/or historical value and describe how this project adds to or enriches that value.

The property must be formally recognized through DNR Historic Preservation Division documents, Georgia/National Register of Historic Places, etc. Applicant must provide support showing how the property is formally recognized.

Scoring Metric

Applicant will be awarded points based off the property's historical and cultural value, supported by provided documentation.

Question 9 – Ecological Value

Max Points

15 points

Criteria Question

Does this project include the acquisition or stewardship of land with a significant ecological value?

Criteria Details

Applicant must demonstrate the significant ecological value of the project including, but not limited to, scenic features present and visibility of such; the openness and accessibility to the public; the unique natural features present and the visibility of such; native plant and animal species of a conservation concern; and/or the increased access in habitat connectivity/connection to other greenspaces, particularly those that include a stream buffer.

Required Documents

Applicant must provide supporting documentation, such as, but not limited to: Copies of pertinent sections of the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), documentation provided by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, GAEPD Watershed Technical Appendix support, photographs, maps, publications news/magazine articles, etc.

Scoring Metric

Applicant will be awarded points based off the property's ecological value, supported by provided documentation.

Question 10 – Maintenance and Management Plan

<i>Max Points</i>	15 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Do you have an existing plan and budget to maintain and manage this property after the project is complete?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must provide an approved management plan, detailing hours of operation, fees, staffing, etc. Applicant must also provide proof of dedicated funding for ongoing operations, including funding for staffing, operation and maintenance.
<i>Required Documents</i>	Management Plan; Proof of approved funding; Resolution of support for long-term maintenance.,
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded the full 15 points if a management plan, approved funding and a resolution stating support for long-term maintenance from the governing body are in place.

Additional Criteria for Local Parks and Trails of Regional Significance

Complete this section ONLY if you are applying for a Conserve Georgia grant or loan to fund Local Parks and Trails, otherwise skip this section.

Question 11 – Project Completion

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will this project be completed within a two-year timeline?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must demonstrate how the project will be completed within the maximum 24-month project period, measured from the mutually signed Project Agreement date. Applicant should detail all phases of work that will be completed during the two-year timeline. Applicant may provide engineering plans, letters of awarded contracts/vendors, as well as a narrative of public involvement, if applicable.

<i>Required Documents</i>	Detailed two-year project timeline.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded the full 10 points if a detailed project timeline is provided and shows the project will be completed in two years.

Question 12 – Project Impact

<i>Max Points</i>	15 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Is this project regionally significant?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must demonstrate how this project serves a greater community beyond the local area; provides value to neighboring or distant communities; or adds or enhances Georgia’s state-wide resources beyond the host community.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded points based off the project’s regional significance as demonstrated through the provided narrative.

Question 13 – Economic Development

<i>Max Points</i>	15 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will this project create opportunities to enhance the local economy?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must demonstrate how the project will create growth in the local economy. To support this claim the Applicant may provide the following to show the positive impact of this project: current comprehensive plan; current recreation master plan; current county or regional master plan; current trail system plan; State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; current capital improvements plan, current regional water plant and or land/use management plan; recorded public hearing minutes; supporting documentation from the Chamber of Commerce; letters from local business(es) or economic development organizations; etc.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded points based off the economic impact provided by the project as supported through the provided material.

Question 14 – Recreational Connectivity

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will this project provide access or a connection to other outdoor recreation facilities or areas?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must describe all connections made possible by this project.
<i>Required Documents</i>	Conceptual map of the proposed project, highlighting the outdoor recreation facilities connected and/or access created.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded points based on the number of facilities connected as supported by the provided conceptual map.

Question 15 – Stewardship

<i>Max Points</i>	20 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will this project promote the stewardship of natural resources?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must demonstrate how this project will promote effective conservation and sustainable practices, assist the property remaining relevant to the community and encourage visitation and participation by providing a safe recreational experience for future generations.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded points based on level of stewardship identified.

Question 16 – Water Access

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will this project improve or expand existing water access or provide access where none is currently available?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must demonstrate how the project will improve water access.
<i>Required Documents</i>	Conceptual map of the proposed project, detailing the location of the new or expanded water access.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded the full 10 points if new water access is provided and documentation is provided.

Question 17 – Outdoor Recreation Demand

<i>Max Points</i>	10 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will this project fill a void for a specific nature-based recreation opportunity in the area?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	<p>Applicant must describe how the project will offer a specific nature-based recreation opportunity that currently does not exist in the area.</p> <p>Acceptable nature-based outdoor recreation activities: hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, boating/canoeing/kayaking, camping, and wildlife viewing. Other activities may be considered, but applicant must demonstrate how the activity is nature-based.</p>
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded the full 10 points if the project provides a new nature-based recreation opportunity.

Question 18 – Interagency Cooperation

<i>Max Points</i>	15 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Is this project being developed by two or more governmental entities or in conjunction with a nongovernmental entity with a core mission of conservation?

Criteria Details

Applicant must describe the partnership and provide documentation of close participation of all entities. Applicant must identify the scope and participation level of each entity, including donations, cash or materials, volunteer/staff hours or professional services provided. To be considered a governmental or nongovernmental entity partner, the entity must provide a monetary value of some kind to the project.

Note: Only partnerships between governmental entities or nongovernmental entities with a core mission for conservation will be considered for this criteria question. Any cash, donations, etc. detailed in commitment letters must be included in the Project Budget Worksheet.

Required Documents

Letters of commitment from partner government agency/nongovernmental entity detailing level of commitment.

Scoring Metric

Applicant will be awarded the full 15 points if they have partnered with another governmental entity or nongovernmental entity with a core mission of conservation and supporting documentation is provided. The partner must provide a monetary value of some kind to receive points.

Question 19 – Partnerships

Max Points

10 points

Criteria Question

Will this project receive support from partners?

Criteria Details

Applicant must describe the partnership and provide documentation of close participation. Partners must identify the scope and participation level of each entity, including donations, cash or materials, volunteer/staff hours or professional services provided. To be considered a partner, the entity must provide a monetary value of some kind to the project.

Note: Partnerships between governmental entities or nongovernmental entities with a core mission for conservation will not be considered for this criteria question. Any cash, donations, etc. detailed in commitment letters must be included in the Project Budget Worksheet.

Required Documents

Letters of commitment from partners detailing level of commitment.

Scoring Metric Applicant will be awarded the full 10 points if they have partnered with three or more organizations, groups, etc. and provided letters of commitment from each group. The partner must provide a monetary value of some kind to receive points.

Question 20 – Public Support

Max Points 5 points

Criteria Question Is there documented public support for the project?

Criteria Details Applicant must demonstrate public support of the project.

Required Documents Documentation may include but is not limited to: letters of support from elected officials, citizens, or user groups; public meeting minutes; proof of a public comment period posting; petitions that articulate this specific project as a needed or supported project.

Scoring Metric Applicant will be awarded the full 5 points if documentation shows public support of the specific project.

Question 21 – Security

Max Points 15 points

Criteria Question Do you have a plan to keep this area protected and secured?

Criteria Details Applicant must describe the plan to keep this property secure from vandalism, loiterers, crime, etc. Plan should include the methodology in which you plan to achieve this (i.e. video surveillance, patrols, enforcement on site, smart lights, controlled access at night, etc.). Applicant may upload formal security plan if it has been developed.

Scoring Metric Applicant will be awarded the full 15 points if a formalized security plan has been created and is ready to implement.

Question 22 – State Goals

<i>Max Points</i>	15 points
<i>Criteria Question</i>	Does this project overlap with the goals and strategies included in Georgia’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) or Georgia’s State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	Applicant must describe how the proposed project overlaps with the goals and plans included in Georgia’s SWAP and/or SCORP. Note: A copy of the SWAP and SCORP can be found on at www.gadnr.org/gosp.
<i>Required Documents</i>	Copy of the pages of the SWAP and/or SCORP that support this finding.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded the full 15 points if the proposed project overlaps with goals and strategies in the SWAP and/or SCORP and documentation is provided.

Point Potential for Local Parks and Trails of Regional Significance Applications

	Ranking Criteria	Max Points
1	Matching Funds	10
2	Project Need	10
3	Pre-Project Planning	10
4	Leveraging Funds	5
5	Recreational Opportunity	25
6	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - Location	10
7	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - BMPs	5
8	Historical and Culture Value	10
9	Ecological Value	15
10	Maintenance and Management Plan	15
11	Project Completion	10
12	Project Impact	15
13	Economic Development	15
14	Recreational Connectivity	10
15	Stewardship	20
16	Water Access	10
17	Outdoor Recreation Demand	10
18	Interagency Cooperation	15
19	Partnerships	10

20	Public Support	5
21	Security	15
22	State Goals	15
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		265

Additional Criteria for State Stewardship Grants

Complete this section ONLY if you are applying for a Conserve Georgia grant to fund State Stewardship, otherwise skip this section.

Question 11 – Project Completion

Max Points 10 points

Criteria Question Will this project be completed within a two-year timeframe?

Criteria Details Applicant must demonstrate that the project will be completed within the two-year timeframe providing a project timeline starting from the date of the award (“Day 1”) to the project completion date. Applicant should detail all phases of work that will be completed during the two-year timeline. Applicant may provide engineering plans, letters of awarded contracts/vendors, as well as a narrative of public involvement, if applicable.

Required Documents Detailed two-year project timeline.

Scoring Metric Applicant will be awarded the full 10 points if a detailed project timeline is provided and shows the project will be completed in two years.

Question 12 – Stewardship

Max Points 20 points

Criteria Question Will this project promote the stewardship of natural resources?

Criteria Details

Applicant must demonstrate how this project will improve, rehabilitate and/or maintain an existing property, increase use at an existing property; or make significant improvements to the safety of an existing property.

Scoring Metric

Applicant will be awarded points based on level of stewardship identified.

Point Potential for State Stewardship Applications

	Ranking Criteria	Max Points
1	Matching Funds	10
2	Project Need	10
3	Pre-Project Planning	10
4	Leveraging Funds	5
5	Recreational Opportunity	25
6	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - Location	10
7	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - BMPs	5
8	Historical and Culture Value	10
9	Ecological Value	15
10	Maintenance and Management Plan	15
11	Project Completion	10
12	Stewardship	20
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		145

Additional Criteria for State Land Acquisitions Grants

Complete this section ONLY if you are applying for a Conserve Georgia grant or loan for State Land Acquisition, otherwise skip this section.

Question 11 – U.S. Military Protection

Max Points 10 points

<i>Criteria Question</i>	Will the acquisition of this property help to protect lands, water and/or habitat as to ensure the sustainability of U.S. Military missions?
<i>Criteria Details</i>	<p>Applicant must select project characteristics that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Acquisition of land surrounding any military base or military installation B. Acquisition will protect habitat on non-military land that is designated as threatened or endangered candidate C. Acquisition will protect underlying low-level U.S. Military air corridors or operating areas D. Acquisition will protect clear zones, accident potential zones or air installation compatible use buffer zones
<i>Required Documents</i>	Supporting documentation, such as but not limited to maps or a narrative to show specific examples.
<i>Scoring Metric</i>	Applicant will be awarded the full 10 points if property supports the sustainability of U.S. Military missions and documentation is provided.

Point Potential for State Stewardship Applications

	Ranking Criteria	Max Points
1	Matching Funds	10
2	Project Need	10
3	Pre-Project Planning	10
4	Leveraging Funds	5
5	Recreational Opportunity	25
6	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - Location	10
7	Water Quality and Quantity Protection - BMPs	5
8	Historical and Culture Value	10
9	Ecological Value	15
10	Maintenance and Management Plan	15
11	U.S. Military Protection	10
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		125

Consistency with Georgia’s State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and State Wildlife Action Plan

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is developed by GADNR and typically contains an inventory of existing outdoor recreation facilities, an analysis of outdoor recreation needs, and projects that may be implemented to address unmet recreation needs.

Georgia’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is a statewide strategy to conserve populations of native wildlife species and the natural habitats they need before these animals, plants, and places become rarer and more costly to conserve or restore.

The Georgia’s SCORP and SWAP are extremely important documents which have great relevance to the GOSP review and ranking process. Since nature-based outdoor recreation, protection of our critical areas, and preservation of our cultural and historical resources are the cornerstones of the program. These publications play a critical part in understanding the priorities, needs, and direction of our efforts in conservation.

3.5 Second-level Application Process

Applicants who are selected as potential Grantees through the Pre-application process will be invited to submit a Second-level Application. Applicants who submit a complete and accurate Second-level Application will receive funding. The Second-level Application can be completed online at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

Second-level Application:

The Second-level Application serves as a mechanism in gathering more detailed project elements, detailed surveys and reviews, and items that only apply to Applicants who qualify for funding.

Items submitted in the Pre-application may not be updated or amended without contacting the GOSP Grant Specialist, due to the competitive nature of the program. If an item must be revised, the GOSP Grant Specialist will determine if a Project Agreement Amendment or a resubmission of a new Pre-application would be required.

Second-level Applications shall contain the following additional items. Specific direction on how to satisfy these requirements are contained within the Second-level Application itself.

- **Responses to each of the Second-level evaluation criteria**
- **Second-Level Application Cover Letter** – This official letter is the instrument denoting support and authority to submit a Second-level Application, signed by a ranking authorizing

representative of the entity (Board Chair, Commissioner, Mayor, etc.). It must be on official letter head.

- **Detailed Project Budget Worksheet**– This budget shall include all items depicted in the Project Budget Worksheet submitted during the Pre-application stage, although a higher level of detail is required. It should show units of measure/piece count estimates, cost per unit, proper names of materials, etc. Only items and values depicted on this budget will be considered for reimbursement.

(This is a downloadable template to be completed, signed by the authorizing representative, and uploaded into the application portal. This can be found at www.gadnr.org/gosp)

- **Project Description and Plans** – This is a detailed narrative describing the entire scope of the project, including location, acreage, purpose, need, and all GOSP funded project elements. Stewardship projects require an electronic version of site engineering plans, depicting locations of elements within the site and distances to scale, and uploaded to the application where requested.

*(This is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application portal. **Note: All plans must be submitted in .pdf format**)*

- **Project Implementation Schedule** – A schedule outlining the timeline and occurrence of each major project milestone and limited to an allowable 24-month project period.

(This is a downloadable template to be completed, signed by the authorizing representative, and uploaded into the application portal. This can be found at www.gadnr.org/gosp)

- **Environmental Review Documents** –The environmental review ensures that any impact upon any GOSP assisted site is in accordance with GOSP good stewardship principles. The complete environmental requirements are referenced in section 3.6 of this manual.

3.6 Environmental Review Requirements

The environmental review process is a key component of this program. It requires that all Applicants consider the impact that their project may have upon Georgia's natural resources.

All applicants will be required to submit the following documentation during the Second-level Application stage, if invited:

- Georgia Environmental Policy Act (GEPA) Environmental Checklist available at www.gadnr.org/gosp

- Phase 1 Environmental Assessment by a qualified and licenced contractor. This function is not provided by GADNR and should be sought after by the Applicant.

State agency reviews to be completed by GADNR on behalf of the Applicant:

- Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) Review
- Historic Preservation Division (HPD) Review
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Review
- Floodplain Encroachment Review

3.7 Maps

Project Location Map – A unofficial map depicting the relative location of the Project Site to local towns and cities. GADNR staff will utilize this map in order to visit the Project Site for GADNR required inspections. Websites such as Google Maps, Rand McNally, etc. will suffice in being the basis for this map.

Property Boundary Map – This map shall depict the official boundary, as committed to by the applicant, that shall be considered the Project Site. All GOSP funded elements must reside within the Property Boundary Map. For acquisitions, it is the entire parcel(s) receiving GOSP funding. For Stewardship projects, it may be only that portion of an existing parcel(s) in which GOSP funding is awarded.

Preliminary Site Plan and/or Conceptual Plan – This may be an artist’s or engineer’s rendering and visual representation of the proposed project. All elements receiving GOSP funding should be conspicuously identifiable on the plan. Any prominent features, such as rivers, streams, roads, densely forested areas, etc., should also be represented as practicable as possible.

Photos and Photo Key (optional) indicating: Applicants may take various photos of the key components of the project receiving funding. An unofficial map of the Project Site must be included showing the relative location of each photograph taken, each location to be numbered corresponding to the photograph’s number, and an arrow pointing in the direction of viewing from the photographer’s perspective.

Section 4: Grant Recipient Requirements

4.1 Grant Term

Grant recipients will have 24 months to complete the project from the date of the mutually signed project agreement.

Note: Any variance or extensions must be requested via a Project Agreement Amendment, Extension Request, or project resubmission (see section 2.3D). All formal requests will be reviewed by GADNR staff and approved by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Written notice of the project extension shall be immediately provided to the chairperson of the Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate maintaining oversight of GADNR and GEFA. Project dates may be subject to alteration by GADNR due to fund availability.

Start Date: Once an executed Project Agreement is in place, Grantees are authorized to begin work. This marks “Day 1” of the project timeline/timeframe.

End Date: Projects must be completed within 24 months of the signed Project Agreement. No additional costs may be incurred after the project end date.

4.2 Reporting Requirements

The following reports are required for projects:

- Quarterly Progress Reports
- Reimbursement Requests
- Final report once the project is completed

4.2A Quarterly Progress Reports

Once a Project Agreement is signed, the Grantee shall report to GADNR on the progress of the project, on a quarterly basis as follows:

- Period beginning January 1, ending March 31: Report is due April 30.
- Period beginning April 1, ending June 30: Report is due July 31.
- Period beginning July 1, ending September 30: Report is due October 31.
- Period beginning October 1, ending December 31: Report is due January 31.

Grantees are required to submit Quarterly Progress Reports to GADNR to ensure that GADNR is aware of the project’s progress. Quarterly Progress Reports can be found at www.gadnr.org/gosp. The progress report summarizes the work accomplished to date, any issues that may be arising with the project, an estimated percentage of project completion, and an estimate of funds to be expended over the next quarter. Photos or other documents are required in communicating the status of your project.

4.2B Reimbursement Requests

Payment of grant funds is on a reimbursement basis. Accurate and comprehensive documentation of project costs is critical. Applicants will be required to submit to GADNR a Reimbursement Request as well as detailed documentation (e.g. proof-of-purchase, proof-of-payment, force account details, etc.) prior to reimbursement.

Costs eligible for reimbursement vary by grant program and project type. Refer to sections 2.3A through 2.3C for further instruction.

Prior to final reimbursement, Grantees also need to demonstrate that the property title does not contain any issues which may impact the legal authority of the Applicant to conduct the proposed stewardship project or acquire the property. Applicants are encouraged to conduct a title search as early as possible in the project development process.

Grantees may request reimbursements at any time, although it is recommended that requests are submitted at least quarterly. The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) will generally make payment in less than 30 days after a Reimbursement Request has been approved. Reimbursement Requests are based on actual project expenditures that align with the Grantee's Project Agreement, including the approved project application scope and budget.

Adequate supporting documentation for all expenses is required with each request, including but not limited to:

- Proof of payment, including payment for match items
- Invoices
- Donation and in-kind documentation
- Eligible equipment purchase documentation
- Documentation of procurement/bidding process
- Photos (optional)

GADNR or GEFA may request additional supporting documentation to process a reimbursement as needed.

Note: Quarterly Progress Reports must be up to date to submit Reimbursement Requests.

Partial Billings

A partial billing is considered to be a request made before the project is completed. **Total partial billings may not exceed 75% of the total grant amount.** The final 25% is held as retainage and will be released after a GADNR end of project audit.

Final Billing

A final billing is made when the project's scope of work is complete, all required documentation has been submitted and approved, and the project is open to the public, if applicable. Grantees must submit a final Reimbursement Request and identify any remaining unneeded surplus balance via an attached memo.

Project Agreement Amendment Requests submitted to GADNR in an effort to utilize surplus funds shall not be considered for approval. Only those items as submitted in the original budget and scope are eligible for reimbursement, per the Project Agreement.

Once a project has been closed, remaining funds are no longer obligated and GADNR cannot make additional payments.

Public Information

All information and documentation submitted to GADNR is open to public review. GADNR requires that confidential or sensitive information, including home addresses, social security numbers, and personal bank account numbers, be removed or redacted from documents submitted to GADNR. **This applies to bank account numbers included on copies of checks.**

Proof of Payment

Payments are made on a reimbursement basis. Grantees must use a verifiable payment method and submit proof of payment for all project expenses with each request. Proof of payment may include a ledger or transaction report generated by the Grantee's accounting system, a bank statement, or a cancelled check. GADNR will not reimburse for payments made in cash, as this method does not provide a verifiable audit trail.

Documenting Goods and Services

Grantees must retain and submit a copy of the original invoice or receipt for all goods and services purchased for the project. All goods and services must be directly related to the approved scope of work.

Documenting Payroll (Force Account)

Work performed by many internal departments, such as Corrections, Public Works, etc. may be counted towards match for time worked directly on the project. An applicant's direct administrative staff are not eligible for reimbursement or match.

Time directly related to the approved scope of work and conducted on the Project Site may be reported as a project cost. Refer to 2.3B for requirements around eligibility of force account expense for reimbursement or match.

All payroll related costs must be documented on a timesheet that meets the following standards. Alternative reports generated by the Grantee's accounting system may be considered sufficient supporting documentation.

- Reflect an after-the-fact determination of the actual activity of each employee.
- Account for the total activity for which employees are compensated.
- Signed or authorized electronically by the individual employee or by a responsible supervisor having firsthand knowledge of the activities performed by the employee.
- Prepared at least monthly and coincide with one or more pay periods.
- Not be budget estimates or other distributions based on a percentage before the work was performed.

Documenting Donation of Items or Services

Donations are third party contributions provided at no cost. Items and services are considered donated when they are provided by a third-party organization at either a reduced or cost-free basis. Some examples include surveys, appraisals, and engineering services. You must retain a copy of the invoice and/or a letter from the organization acknowledging the donation and its value.

The value of donated items or services must be included in the Project Budget Worksheet. The value of donations cannot be reimbursed, cannot include items previously purchased with GOSP funds, and cannot be reported on more than one grant, even if it is unassociated to the GOSP project. To be counted towards a project's match, donations must be documented on the **Donation / In-Kind Tracking Form**.

Documenting Donated or Volunteer Labor

Donated labor is time provided by a person without compensation. Labor donations are valued at an hourly rate of pay, excluding taxes, benefits and overtime. Refer to policy 2.3B for volunteer or donated labor rates. Use the **Volunteer Labor Tracking Form** available at www.gadnr.org/gosp to account for donated labor.

Alternate documentation may be accepted at GADNR's discretion and must include the following:

- Individual's name
- Contact information
- Dates of service
- Worksite or location name
- Description of work performed
- Hours worked

- Individual or crew leader signature

Costs associated with food or beverages are not allowable for volunteers.

Documenting Donated Materials and Supplies

Materials and supplies are considered donated when they are given to the project at no cost. The reported value of donated materials is the fair market value of the materials or supplies at the time entered into the application. To document donated materials and supplied, submit the **Donated Materials Tracking Form** along with information to support the valuation determination.

Documenting Vendor Discounts

Normal vendor discounts and items “on sale” cannot be counted towards the match. However, discounts can be counted when provided to you from a vendor specifically for the GOSP project and documented as a donation. Discounts can be used as match if the following is provided:

- Invoice that clearly shows the retail price and discount provided **and/or**
- Letter from the vendor that states they have provided a discount as a donation and including the valuation of the discount.

Documenting Donated Real Property

Property acquired at less than its appraised market value may be considered donated real property. To be considered as donated real property, a statement of donation from the donor must be submitted for each property acquired. Appraisals from the time of donation must be provided.

4.2C Final Report

Grantees inform GADNR that their project is complete by submitting a Final Report and marking it as “final” within 45 days of the project completion date or expiration of the 24-month project period, whichever comes first. The final report serves as notice that the Grantee has completed the project in compliance with applicable regulations and should include:

- Indication that the project is complete, accessible, and open to the public, if applicable.
- Photos of the completed work
- “As built” site map in .pdf format only

- A final Reimbursement Request, submitted to GADNR, that shows a full account of all expenditures and match
- Authorizing officer's signature

GADNR staff will inspect all completed projects. Final payments will not be made until final documentation is received and approved, and the project has been inspected and verified as complete.

4.2D Publicity

Grantees must make every effort to acknowledge and publicize that GOSP assisted in funding. Acknowledgement of participation in GOSP via a successful Conserve Georgia grant or loan shall be conspicuously placed at the project location for public viewing. Grantees may incorporate acknowledgements onto existing or new signage at the project location. For projects which have received a Conserve Georgia grant, its logo, which shall be included in this signage, is available at www.gadnr.org/gosp.

Additionally, any property receiving GOSP funding shall post the program's participation on the Grantee's web page.

4.2E Procurement

Grantees must follow their own internal required vendor/contractor bid and procurement policies currently in place.

4.2F Retention Requirements

Grantees are subject to a GADNR audit of their project file. Grantees must retain and keep accessible all books, documents, papers, and records that are directly related to the GOSP project **for a minimum of five years** following the close of the program agreement. These documents include but are not limited to:

- Invoices and receipts
- Timesheets
- Copies of payments
- Copies of internal transactions
- Procurement documentation
- Donation logs and statements
- All books, records, documents, data, and other materials relevant to the grant agreement.

The records must support all project-related costs reported to GADNR and be made available upon request. If any litigation, claim, or audit is started before the end of the five years, Grantees must keep the records until all litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records have been resolved.

4.3 GOSP Rules and Regulations

The **Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program Rule 391-5-13-.11**. can be accessed at: <http://rules.sos.state.ga.us>

Section 5: Grant Closeout

Grant closeout signifies the completion of the project. GADNR must ensure all agreed-upon work, as described in the Project Agreement, is completed by the project expiration date. GADNR will determine that all required work and applicable administrative actions have been accomplished. Any discrepancies will be returned to the Grantee to be remedied. Final payment will not occur until all required final reports and documents have been approved by GADNR to assure all aspects of the Project Agreement have been met.

No later than 45 days after work is completed or the project end date, whichever comes first, Grantees must submit a Final Report and final Reimbursement Request and denote them as such. Within 45 days of receiving the Final Report, GADNR staff will complete a final audit of all project requirements and submissions.

During this period, the following documents are due to GADNR before it can approve and process final payment of retainage and closeout:

- A Final Report attesting to the completion of the project in accordance with the approved Project Agreement (refer to Section 4.2C for guidance).
- Documentation that all corrective items identified during the GADNR final on-site inspection have been completed. This may require an additional GADNR final inspection prior to close out
- Digital images of all completed project elements which received funding
- Official As-built drawings in .pdf format
- For acquisitions only - An updated property deed with required Protective Language and recording stamp from the local jurisdiction's County Clerk's office.
- GADNR Final Project Audit, which may include but not be limited to:
 - Audit of all paperwork submitted by the grantee for accuracy and completion

- Audit of all expenditures against the total project budget amount
- Audit of all previous reimbursements and requests
- Verification of a total match submitted by the grantee
- Final site inspection conducted by GADNR staff

Once GADNR deems that all requirements of the Project Agreement have been satisfied, retainage will be dispersed to the Grantee per the Project Agreement. If total expenditures are less than anticipated, and payment of the full retainage amount would create a shortfall of the applicant's match, GADNR will adjust the payable retainage amount accordingly. In any instance where an overpayment of either reimbursement or retainage is realized, the Grantee is required to refund an amount back to GEFA equivalent to the overage.

Note: The information in this manual is subject to change without notice and should not be construed as the only source of information governing the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP). Potential changes to the policies and procedures herein may be necessary to properly administer the program during any particular funding cycle. GADNR staff will make every effort to assist Applicants in satisfying changes in criteria and requirements as they occur.