

**Minutes
Land Committee
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S. E.
Suite 1252 East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334**

**Tuesday, September 26, 2023
9:00 a.m.**

Committee Members

Tim Lowe, Chair
Charles DePriest, Vice Chair
Nancy Addison
Randy Dellinger
Patrick Denney
Penn Hodge
Kevin Jackson
Lesley Reynolds
Bodine Sinyard
Gary Vowell
Dwight Davis, Board Chair, Ex-officio

Board Members

Joe Hatfield
Mark Hennessy
Duncan Johnson
Ray Lambert
Paul Shailendra
Harley Yancey

Guests

Trevor Santos, National Shooting Sports Foundation
Debbie Phillips, GA Industry Environmental Coalition
Mark Woodall, Sierra Club
Alex Muir, GSU Law Student
Drew Kann, Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Rena Peck, Georgia River Network
Beth Findlay, GA DNR Human Resources
Cassandra Jones, GA DNR Accounting
Michelle Egan, State Parks and Historic Sites Division
Matt Elliott, Wildlife Resources Division
Anna Edmondson, Robbins Governmental Relations

Staff Members

Walter Rabon, Commissioner
Thomas Barnard
Kyle Pearson
Kate Iannuzzi
Cathy Barnette
Artica Gaston
Steve Friedman
Doug Haymans
Angie Johnson
Ted Will
Carolyn Belcher
Amy Knight
Brent Vendola

Jeff Cown, Director
John Eunice
James Boylan
Chuck Mueller
Anna Truszczynski

The September 26, 2023 meeting of the Land Committee was called to order by Dwight Davis, Chairman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairman Davis called on Charles DePriest, Vice Chairman of the Land Committee. Mr. DePriest called on Steve Friedman, Chief of Real Estate.

Mr. Friedman stated the first item on the agenda, Item A, is requesting approval to purchase 180± acres from the McConnell family as an addition to Smithgall Woods WMA, in White County. He further stated that Dukes Creek is managed by the Department as a trophy trout stream, and it flows through Smithgall Woods. He added that in addition, the park and WMA are managed for the high conservation values found on the land, such as cove hardwood forests, eastern hemlocks, and rich riparian zones. He further added that this property is very popular with the public for all types of recreation.

Mr. Friedman stated the McConnell land is an inholding that, if not protected would be subdivided and developed, is located directly within the viewshed of the visitor center. He further stated this inquisition includes over 1,600 feet of frontage on Dukes Creek and will improve the ability to manage the WMA, and it creates more opportunities for the public to recreate. He added the land will be acquired, along with the access easement which is the primary entry road into the tract.

Mr. Friedman stated the department will acquire this tract with a federal USFWS Pittman-Robertson Grant (USFWS) in the amount of \$1,419,930, and a donation from the Knobloch Family Foundation (KFF) in the amount of \$500,000, with a total purchase price of \$1,919,930. He further stated that as a condition of receiving the grant and donation, an affidavit will be recorded against the tract stating it may not be disposed of or used for purposes inconsistent with the program it was acquired for without the prior approval of the USFWS and KFF.

A motion was made by Mr. Hodge, seconded by Mr. Sinyard, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to purchase from the McConnell family 180± acres as an addition to Smithgall Woods WMA, White County.

Mr. Friedman stated the second item on the agenda, Item B, is requesting approval to purchase 234± acres from J.F. Alexander Lumber Company, as an addition to Sprewell Bluff WMA, in Meriwether County. He further stated the department will acquire this Sprewell Bluff WMA edge holding from the J. F. Alexander Lumber Company, at a bargain sale price. He added the acquisition will improve management, allow the department to restore the montane longleaf pine community on it, protect the hardwood slope forests, and add more public recreation opportunities.

Mr. Friedman stated the department will acquire the property with a federal USFWS Pittman-Robertson Grant (PR) in the amount of \$502,466, and donations from the Knobloch Family Foundation (KFF) in the amount of \$200,000 and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) via Stone Mountain Industrial Park in the amount of \$67,337, with a total purchase price of \$769,803. He further stated that as a condition of receiving the grant and funding, an affidavit will be recorded against the J. F. Alexander Lumber Company tract stating it may not be disposed of in any manner or used for purposes inconsistent with the programs it was acquired for without the prior approval of the USFWS, KFF, and TNC.

A motion was made by Mr. Dellinger, seconded by Mr. Denney, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to purchase 234± acres from J.F. Alexander Lumber Company, as an addition to Sprewell Bluff WMA, in Meriwether County.

Mr. Friedman stated the third item on the agenda, Item C, is requesting approval to purchase 758± acres from Timberlands II, LLC, as an addition to Sprewell Bluff WMA, in Meriwether and Talbot Counties. He further stated the department will acquire these two Sprewell Bluff WMA edge holdings from the Timberlands II, subject to a two-year timer reservation over limited planted pine stands, which will lower the purchase price. He added that the acquisition will improve management, allow the department to restore the montane longleaf pine community on it, protect the hardwood slope forests, and add more public recreation opportunities.

Mr. Friedman stated the department will acquire the property with a federal USFWS Pittman-Robertson Grant (PR) in the amount of \$1,584,500, and donations from the Knobloch Family Foundation (KFF) in the amount of \$500,000, with a total purchase price of \$2,084,500. He further stated that as a condition of receiving the grant and funding, an affidavit will be recorded against the J. F. Alexander Lumber Company tract stating it may not be disposed of in any manner or used for purposes inconsistent with the programs it was acquired for without the prior approval of the USFWS and KFF.

A motion was made by Mr. Dellinger, seconded by Mr. Denney, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to purchase 758± acres from Timberlands II, LLC, as an addition to Sprewell Bluff WMA, in Meriwether and Talbot Counties.

Mr. Friedman stated the fourth item on the agenda, Item D, is requesting approval to purchase 372± acres from Christopher Edward Nabors as an addition to Crockford Pigeon Mountain WMA, in Walker County. He further stated that Crockford Pigeon WMA is one of the

top conservation priorities for the department. He added that with just over 20,000 acres, this WMA is managed for wildlife and recreation, and is heavily used by the public for multiple types of recreation. He further added that the Nabors tract, located next to The Nature Conservancy proposed tract, is located on the northern end of Pigeon Mountain with good road frontage and multiple tributaries to West Chickamauga Creek, a conservancy priority for the WMA. He stated that this acquisition will allow the department to preserve the woodlands on the tract and add more public recreation opportunities.

Mr. Friedman stated the department will acquire the property with a federal USFWS Pittman-Robertson Grant (PR) in the amount of \$852,300, a grant from the Open Space Institute Appalachian Landscapes Protection Fund (OSI) in the amount of \$175,000, and a donation from the Knobloch Family Foundation (KFF) in the amount of \$237,500, with a total purchase price of \$1,264,800.

A motion was made by Mr. Dellinger, seconded by Mr. Sinyard, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to purchase 372+ acres from Christopher Edward Nabors as an addition to Crockford Pigeon Mountain WMA, in Walker County.

Mr. Friedman stated the last item on the agenda, Item E, is requesting approval to purchase 687± acres from The Nature Conservancy as an addition to Crockford Pigeon Mountain WMA, in Walker County. He further stated the department will acquire the property with a federal USFWS Pittman-Robertson Grant (PR) in the amount of \$1,496,800, a grant from the Open Space Institute Appalachian Landscapes Protection Fund (OSI) in the amount of \$175,000, and a donation from the Knobloch Family Foundation (KFF) in the amount of \$485,000, with a total purchase price of \$2,156,800. He added that as a condition of receiving the grants and funding, an affidavit will be recorded against the TNC tract stating it may not be disposed of in any manner or used for purposes inconsistent with the programs it was acquired for without the prior approval of the USFWS, OSI and KFF.

A motion was made by Mr. Dellinger, seconded by Ms. Addison, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to purchase 687± acres from The Nature Conservancy as an addition to Crockford Pigeon Mountain WMA, in Walker County.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.