



News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Public-Private Partnership Permanently Protects 3,597 Acres in Georgia's South Coastal Plain

Flat Tub Wildlife Management Area Established in Georgia's Coffee and Jeff Davis Counties

ATLANTA — Georgia natural resources leaders today recognized an innovative public and private partnership between the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), The Nature Conservancy and Plum Creek Timber Company that has resulted in the establishment of the 3,597-acre Flat Tub Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Georgia's Coffee and Jeff Davis Counties. This property represents the most recent effort to protect the natural diversity and heritage of Georgia's unique Broxton Rocks region.

To establish the Flat Tub WMA, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) purchased 1,935 acres of the land from The Nature Conservancy, which had previously acquired the property from Plum Creek.

"With a long-time interest in protecting the ecological value of the Broxton Rocks region, The Nature Conservancy was pleased to have the opportunity to work with Plum Creek and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to ensure the long-term protection of this special place," said Tavia McCuean, vice president and Georgia state director of The Nature Conservancy. "Through innovative public and private partnerships such as this, we are able to combine our resources to advance conservation efforts throughout Georgia."

"Plum Creek has a history of engaging in conservation partnerships across the country," said Rick Holley, Plum Creek president and chief executive officer. "We are pleased to coordinate with our partners to permanently protect this unique property, so that visitors can continue to benefit from its unique ecological and recreational attributes for years to come."

Georgia DNR purchased the 1,935 acres with \$1,481,000 in federal Forest Legacy funding granted in 2005 and administered through the Georgia Forestry Commission. Additional monies supporting the purchase included approximately \$520,000 in state bond funds and \$450,000 contributed by The Nature Conservancy.

"The Forest Legacy program brings together federal, state and private partners, making it possible to accomplish large scale conservation projects, such as the Flat Tub WMA," said Ken Stewart, director of the Georgia Forestry Commission. "When forests are professionally managed, they contribute greatly to our quality of life, which this property will do for decades to come."

U.S. Rep. Jack Kingston has been a long-time supporter of efforts to protect the Broxton Rocks region and was a vital partner in securing the Forest Legacy funding.

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“The Broxton Rocks area is a natural treasure for all Georgians, one that should be preserved for the future enjoyment of our children and grandchildren,” said Kingston. “By supporting the Forest Legacy funding which made this purchase possible, I am proud to have played a role in the protection of this unique landscape.”

“The Broxton Rocks region is one of Georgia’s most important ecological assets, which is why this project was among the first to be recommended for approval by the Georgia Land Conservation Council,” said DNR Commissioner Noel Holcomb.

DNR will manage the new WMA for public recreation in conjunction with the restoration of the natural habitat. Working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Georgia Forestry Commission, DNR will restore the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem, establish a prescribed fire regime and re-introduce native rare species to the area, such as the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

Wetland Management

DNR will also manage an additional 1,661 acres still owned by Plum Creek as part of the WMA. On this land, Plum Creek will restore the natural hydrology and habitat of the area by removing hydrological impediments and replanting native species. There will be a monitoring period during which time DNR will manage the land as part of the Flat Tub WMA. Once the monitoring is complete, DNR has an option to accept this area as a donation from Plum Creek. This agreement could save the State of Georgia more than \$2 million in acquisition costs.

About Broxton Rocks

The acquisition of the Flat Tub WMA is part of an ongoing effort by the DNR, The Nature Conservancy, the Georgia Forestry Commission, Coffee County, and other partners to protect one of the state’s most ecologically diverse regions.

The property is part of the greater Broxton Rocks Conservation Area, which includes the largest example of a sandstone outcrop, along with varied habitats such as a black water stream, longleaf pine-wiregrass woodlands, pitcher plant seepage bogs, and more than 525 species of plants, 22 of which are considered imperiled.

The Nature Conservancy currently owns the 1,073-acre Broxton Rocks Preserve and has protected another 493 acres, which were recently transferred to Coffee County and the Georgia Forestry Commission. Additionally, Georgia DNR owns and manages the 8,400-acre Horse Creek WMA adjacent to the Broxton Rocks Conservation Area. The purchase of the 1,935 acres and the management agreement with Plum Creek for the additional 1,661 acres is key to connecting all of the protected properties within the conservation area, bringing the total protected acreage to 13,466.

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The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division works to protect, conserve, manage and improve Georgia's wildlife and freshwater fishery resources and manage and conserve protected and endangered wildlife and plants.

The Georgia Forestry Commission provides leadership, service and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. The Governor has designated the Commission as the lead state agency for the Forest Legacy Program.

The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), state governments, and private landowners that identifies and protects environmentally important forest habitat that is threatened by conversion to non-forest use. The program objectives are met through land acquisition or the use of conservation easements, which protect working forests while meeting important conservation goals.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States (including more than 241,000 acres in Georgia) and have helped preserve more than 100 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at nature.org/georgia.

Plum Creek is the largest and most geographically diverse private landowner in the nation, with more than 8 million acres of timberland in major timber producing regions of the United States and 10 wood products manufacturing facilities in the Northwest. Since 1989, the company has participated in conservation transactions on nearly half a million acres of its land across the country. Plum Creek owns and manages more than 876,000 acres of timberland in Georgia.