

Oconee River Land Trust

Preserving Natural Areas in our region since 1993



Spring 2007 News

SPIRIT OF THE LAND

Please plan on attending the Third Annual Spirit of the Land, which will be held on Saturday, March 31 from 7- 10 pm. This is our major annual event, and is conducted with our partners in conservation, the Athens Land Trust. Proceeds from this event provide essential operating funds, enabling both non-profits to continue and expand their conservation work.

Spirit of the Land combines a curated art exhibit and sale, with live music, a wine tasting hosted by Gosford wine featuring wines that evoke a sense of place, hors d'oeuvres by 5&10, and a silent auction of assorted items and gift certificates. These items will include the original album cover photograph, taken by Michael Stipe, for R.E.M.'s 1995 "New Adventures in Hi-Fi".

The art show this year is curated by Rene Shoemaker, Director of UGA's School of Environment and Design's Owens Library and Circle Gallery and will feature the work of 26 local artists. Nationally known artist Allen Campbell will provide our signature piece. According to Ms. Shoemaker, "The 2007 Spirit of the Land exhibition showcases the natural heritage of the southeast. We live in a beautiful part of the world, and I'm sure that you will agree with me that the participating artists honor the treasures of this region." The carefully crafted art exhibit is one of the distinct features of our event, as the proceeds of the sale of the art are shared between the artist and the two land trusts.

PHOTO

Photo

367 acres in Oglethorpe County

Robert and Carol Winthrop have donated a conservation easement on their 367 acre property in Oglethorpe County. This beautiful and well-cared-for parcel borders Beaverdam Creek, and contains over thirty four acres of wetlands. The land has been managed to enhance the forest and wildlife habitat. The Winthrops have carefully located a home and trails on their land, maximizing their ability to enjoy the beauty and quiet. The goals of the conservation easement are to ensure that this beauty and quiet is not disturbed.

This is a significant parcel, which provides a wonderful buffer for Beaverdam Creek, protects a large and functioning wetlands, and ensures that there will be habitat for plants and animals in a portion of the county that is experiencing significant development pressures.

Rob Winthrop comes from a family that has a long history of appreciating natural land and its bounty. According to Rob, this year was the right time to protect their property, something they have long contemplated. This conservation easement will be the first one that ORLT has participated in that will seek to qualify for the new Georgia State Conservation Credit. The landowners are also seeking to qualify for the enhanced Federal Tax deduction as well.

GEORGIA LAND UNDER EASEMENT INCREASING RAPIDLY

ORLT now holds 21 conservation easements and protects 1,622 acres of land from development. We are part of a larger and growing land conservation effort in the state and region. According to the National Land Trust Census conducted by the Land Trust Alliance, there are 1,667 non-profit land trusts in the United States, with 24 in Georgia. This number does not include national land trusts such as The Nature Conservancy or Ducks Unlimited. The number of acres protected by conservation easements nation wide has increased 54% from 2000 to 2005, reaching a total of 37 million acres, an area approximately the size of Georgia. Local and statewide land trusts in Georgia have placed 87,643 acres under easement.

The availability of the new Georgia Conservation Tax Credit is encouraging even more land conservation. The Federal tax incentives, enhanced for easements in 2006 and 2007, may become permanent. Under the federal scheme, qualifying landowners who place a qualifying easement may deduct the value of the easement as a charitable deduction up to 50% of their adjusted gross income per year (this is an increase from the previous limit of 30%). If the landowner's income is too low to deduct the full value of the easement in the first year, he can carry forward the deduction for 15 more years (previously only could carry forward 5 years). This, too, should provide an incentive for landowners to permanently protect their land.

HELP ORLT MONITOR OUR EASEMENTS MARCH 10

With all our conservation easements comes responsibility. ORLT must monitor each easement annually and ensure that is being followed. We try to monitor in the late winter, when the leaves are still off the trees, the humidity is low, and the bugs are sleeping! This year, like last, **we are calling on volunteers to help us walk our easements**. This is a great opportunity to see how the land trust works, and hike the land we have worked to protect.

We will gather on Saturday, March 10 at 8:30 am at ORLT's office at 380 Meigs St., Athens. The day will begin with a brief overview of the monitoring process and then new volunteers will be paired with experienced ones. The monitoring pairs will receive a packet for their particular property, and then will go walk that property. We will have coffee in the morning and send you off with a sack lunch to eat on the visit. If you have a compass, GPS device, and/or a cell phone, please bring it. Please let Steffney Thompson

know if you can come by either calling 706-552-3138 or emailing to thompsonsteffney@bellsouth.net.

**Oconee River
Land Trust**



The Oconee River Land Trust is a private, nonprofit organization based in Athens, Georgia. Our mission is to conserve natural lands to protect water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, and enhance the quality of our lives and those of future generations.

Incorporated in 1993, the Oconee River Land Trust protects land in many ways, most importantly through the use of conservation easements. We currently hold eighteen conservation easements, protecting more than 1,300 acres of open space.

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380 Meigs Street
Athens, GA 30601
706-552-3138
www.orlt.com

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The land trust is seeking a development director to oversee fundraising, grant writing, and membership activities. This position will be ten flexible hours a week. We are looking for someone with experience to help us become sustainable and grow. If interested, please contact the land trust at 706-552-3138 or at info@orlt.com.

BLUEGRASS ON THE BRIDGE

Come listen to blue grass music outdoors while supporting the land trust! On Saturday, March 24 from 6 to 10 pm, Galis Properties, partnering with Mercury Art Works and Terrapin Brewery, is hosting "Bluegrass on the Bridge" with proceeds to benefit ORLT. There will be bluegrass music, artisan beer from Terrapin Brewery, and wonderful art provided by Mercury Art Works. The celebration will be at Galis' new development, the Seasons, located off of Research Drive on the east side of Athens. The Seasons, a town home development, will provide a beautiful woods and two creeks as the backdrop for the event. All proceeds from the event will go to the land trust to help us continue our mission of protecting land in our region. We welcome the opportunity to get our message out, and hope that you will join us at this event.

Yes! I want to help protect open space and wildlife habitat in our region. Please enroll me as a member in the Oconee River Land Trust!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Membership Level:

_____ Land Saver (\$30) _____ Land Steward (\$50) _____ Land Protector (\$100)

_____ Land Conservator (\$500) _____ Trustee of the Land (\$1,000+)

Thank you for your support!

Please cut out and mail this form with your check to:

The Oconee River Land Trust

380 Meigs Street

Athens, GA 30601



The Oconee River Land Trust
380 Meigs St., Athens GA 30601