



Fall Report

Is camping on concrete in our future?

Special event shows importance of protecting Georgia's greenspace

This summer, as thousands of Georgians enjoyed our parks and forests, Environment Georgia set up camp in a parking lot to highlight the dangers of cuts to conservation funding.

These cuts mean that parks, like the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area in Metro Atlanta, do not have the funds that are needed to protect critical greenspace.

“Concrete camping is no fun,” said Environment Georgia’s State Advocate Jennette Gayer. “But this is the future that Congress is advocating for if they continue to cut funding from critical conservation funds.”

Only major conservation fund raided
The event was part of Environment Georgia’s ongoing effort to build support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the only major national fund for expanding greenspace established in 1963. Unfortunately, the Fund is consistently raided for purposes that have little to do with conservation.

Since 1978, millions of LWCF dollars have been used to buy land and help create parks like the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Unfortunately, the park, which is supposed to be 10,000 acres of greenspace along the Chattahoochee River, has stalled out at 6,500 acres, as funding has been depleted.



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▲ Environment Georgia’s “Camping on Concrete” event

Proposal for dedicated funding

A proposal in the Senate would provide full and dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund—whose funding comes from offshore oil royalties, not taxpayer dollars. Neither Sens. Saxby Chambliss nor Sen. Johnny Isakson has signed onto the legislation. But Environment Georgia is working hard to change that fact.

7,000 signatures delivered

At the end of this summer, we delivered roughly 7,000 petition signatures to our senators.

We also recruited businesses and non-profits, like the Audobon Society, to join us at the meeting and help make the case for saving Georgia’s greenspace.



Staff

take action

To take action to keep our greenspaces protected, visit: www.EnvironmentGeorgia.org

◀ Leigh Bost of Patagonia (right) talking about the economic benefits of funding and preserving our greenspaces with Advocate Jennette Gayer (left)



To our members

This summer, I hiked the Georgia section of the Appalachian Trail. Despite the blisters, there were so many things that made the trip amazing—being surrounded by nothing but wilderness for days, relying only on what I carried on my back, and being able to appreciate the beauty of Georgia’s rolling mountains—even when you didn’t necessarily feel like walking up another one!

The trip was a great cap to a record setting summer of protecting greenspace. Between April and July, we talked to more than 10,000 Georgians about protecting our parks and forests.

I hope that if you don’t already have hiking plans for this fall, you can make some time to get out in our state’s incredible outdoors and be reminded why having people like you and me fighting for greenspace in a state like ours is critical.

Thanks for standing with us and have a great fall.

Jennette Gayer
Advocate

Recent action

Georgia ranks 23rd in solar report

Georgia ranked 23rd in the nation for solar installations per capita, according to “Lighting the Way,” a report released by Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center in July.

The report emphasizes that it is not availability of sunlight that makes states solar leaders, but the degree to which state and local governments have created effective public policy for the development of the solar industry.

But, the Public Service Commission took big steps this summer that will significantly change Georgia’s rankings. In July, a majority of the commission supported a solar amendment offered by Commissioner Lauren McDonald that will add an additional 525 megawatts of solar to Georgia Power’s energy portfolio.

How much of Jekyll is developed? It depends.

In July, Attorney General Sam Olens responded to the Jekyll Island Master Plan Taskforce’s finding that the island was more than 35 percent developed.

While the taskforce’s finding would have meant that the law stating that 65 percent must remain undeveloped had been broken, the Attorney General said this was not the case because marsh adjacent to the island counts in the total landmass. Thankfully, he also recommended that the authority that oversees the island not take steps to develop more land without serious input from the public.

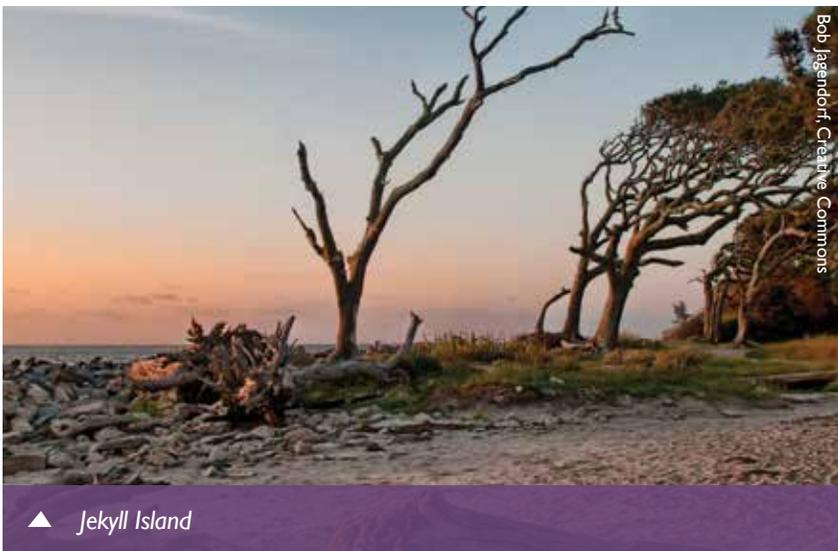
Most visitors to Jekyll Island would not mistake Jekyll’s marsh for land, but the question of whether it is to be counted as land is of utmost importance and could increase the development footprint on the island by more than 600 acres.

Public input will be requested before any action is taken to expand development, and because Environment Georgia’s Jennette Gayer is on the taskforce, we’ll make sure our voice calling for Jekyll to be kept wild is heard.

The climate is changing – are your investments?

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▲ Jekyll Island

What Obama's climate plan means for Georgia

On June 25, President Obama announced a climate plan that will set limits on carbon pollution from power plants, advance energy efficiency, and increase the nation's commitment to renewable energy. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, record drought in many states, and wildfires in Colorado, the president's plan to address global warming was loudly applauded by Environment Georgia and many others.

"All of us who have felt the effects of global warming, or simply worried about what's in store for our kids, can take comfort in knowing that President Obama has put the nation on a path toward a cleaner, healthier and safer future," said Jennette Gayer, Environment Georgia state advocate.

More intense storms, unhealthy air days

Left unchecked, global warming is likely to result in everything from more intense storms to more unhealthy air days here in Georgia. Scientists have warned that time is short to make the necessary cuts in carbon pollution to protect future generations from the worst consequences of global warming. To respond to this threat, the president's plan contains several key components. It will:

- **Limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants.** The president directed the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon pollution from new and existing power plants, which currently lack any such federal limits, despite being the largest single-source of the carbon pollution fueling global warming.
- **Invest in energy efficiency.** New efficiency measures for buildings and new appliances will cut carbon pollution by reducing our overall energy demand.
- **Build more renewable energy.** The plan focuses on expanding production of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar, especially on public lands.

- **Support affected communities.** The president's plan will help ensure that communities are better equipped to prepare for and recover from the impacts of global warming.
- **Rebuild U.S. leadership internationally.** The president's plan calls for the U.S. to actively engage in international efforts to address global warming.

Focus on carbon pollution

Environment Georgia offered special praise for the president's pledge to cut carbon pollution from existing power plants. More than 3.2 million Americans submitted public comments last year in support of the president setting limits on carbon pollution from power plants.

"Carbon pollution from power plants is a huge part of the global warming problem. President Obama acknowledged this and mapped out a plan for cleaning up this pollution," said Gayer. "We also know that this plan is just one important step in a multi-year effort, and that the proof of the plan's success will be in the pudding."



Daniel Borman/Creative Commons

more online

To learn more about our work to curb global warming, visit:
www.EnvironmentGeorgia.org

▲ *President Obama speaks to a group of students about the need for alternative energies.*



U.S. Navy photo by Greg Veltko

No time for cutting back on energy efficiency

When the House Energy and Commerce hearing on the Department of Energy's budget took place, Jennette Gayer, Environment Georgia state advocate, released a statement advocating for funding two important energy efficiency programs.

According to Gayer, the Weatherization Assistance and State Energy Programs help many families and are a step in the right direction in the plan to tackle global warming. However, in the past year, Congress has slashed both budgets.

The Weatherization Assistance Program helps low-income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

The State Energy Program (SEP) provides financial and technical assistance to states for developing strategies to address their energy priorities and adopt energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. SEP also saves \$256 million annually in reduced energy bills.

"Clean energy and energy efficiency programs are vital global warming solutions we need right now," said Gayer. "We're counting on Congress to protect and strengthen these programs, and in so doing, also protect our health and the environment."

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Environment Georgia

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and green spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Georgia. We focus exclusively on protecting Georgia's air, water and green spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

1,300 strong against fracking our forests

This summer, Environment Georgia delivered more than 1,300 signatures opposed to fracking in the Chattahoochee National Forest to Supervisor Betty Mathews, the new forest supervisor of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest.

"The hundreds of Georgians who signed our petition agree that the Chattahoochee National Forest should be off-limits when it comes to the dangers of fracking," said Jennette Gayer, Environment Georgia state advocate.

The oil and gas industry uses fracking to access reserves of gas that are trapped within rock formations underground. Operators pump upwards of 1 million gallons of water, sand and dangerous chemicals into the ground at high pressure to crack open the rock and release the gas. The Conasauga gas field, which spans Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama, has been examined by at least five separate companies.

"We've seen the devastation caused by fracking across the country," said Gayer. "We know what this practice can do to our landscapes and water, and we can't let the same practice scar Georgia."



more inside

Continuing fight for Georgia's greenspaces; President Obama's climate plan a victory for Georgia, and more.

◀ *Fracking rig near homes and forestland in rural Pennsylvania*