



# MADISON-MORGAN CONSERVANCY

Creating a Culture of Conservation

NEWSLETTER  
SUMMER, 2012

## WORKING TO PROTECT OUR NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Madison-Morgan Conservancy has been busy this year. We've expanded FARMeander, worked with Hard Labor Creek State Park helping them examine their best management practices, researched and supported the idea of a regional food hub in Morgan County, seen one of our projects receive the State Preservation Award for Excellence in Restoration (Wallace Grove School), hosted a fun and gospel-filled Annual Membership Supper, launched our new website, and successfully met our fundraising goal at the Preakness Party. Needless to say, it's been a nice way to enter into my new role here.

I am pleased and honored to be serving as president of the Conservancy, and I will work very hard to ensure the continued success of our organization. I have served on and off the board of the Conservancy since its inception in 2001 and am very proud of our accomplishments. Conservation and land stewardship is a personal priority of mine. Growing up on a Decatur County, Georgia row crop and timber farm, the land has been very close to my heart. The farm remains in our family, and in 2009 we put 698 acres under permanent conservation easement.

Conservation easements are a hot topic right now in the state. There are changes to the GA Conservation Tax Credit program taking effect in just a few months (January 1, 2013). As a donor of a conservation easement myself, I see the benefits this tool provides to the public, to the land, and to the landowner. Clean water, clean air, prime agricultural soils, and wildlife habitat are among some of the precious resources protected by conservation easements here in Morgan County. A real benefit for the public is that these lands stay on the tax rolls, unlike land that is bought and managed by the local, state, or federal government, and the landowners can continue to farm, timber and enjoy the land. Given my experience on my own farm, I see that the conservation easement is an efficient and cost-effective tool, and I hope our legislators will continue to work to make GA's Conservation Tax Credit a robust incentive for land conservation.

Knowing that things change, the Conservancy Board of Directors gathered in June for an all day strategic planning session, looking to 2015 and 2020 as we set new goals and planned our work. I have said on many occasions over the years that we need to consider our mission statement in all our decisions (you can read the mission statement on the bottom of page two and three), and we feel very good about how we've been able to stick to that mission over the years. We will continue to do so, and I welcome your ideas and suggestions on how to make our conservancy a better one. Please feel free to contact me or any of the other board members or staff with your comments and/or suggestions.

I would like to thank Bob Beauchamp, Elizabeth Branch, Gay Morris, and Dan Rather, who have rolled off the board this year - their years of dedication and hard work have grown the Conservancy into an effective and influential organization in Georgia. A special thanks is due to Bob Beauchamp for his leadership last year as the Board President and for his passion for land conservation and agriculture. His experience in raising cattle has proven invaluable to us in understanding the benefits of a regional food hub in Morgan County.

In closing, I would like to thank all our members and supporters for their moral and financial support over the years. You keep us up and running, growing, and accountable, and we are all so thankful for each of you.

Sincerely,

Robert Trulock

*Right: Vason Conservation Easement,  
permanently protecting water quality.*



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## MEET THE CONSERVANCY'S NEW BOARD MEMBERS



BEN CARTER

For the last 40 years Ben Carter has had the pleasure of working on his farm, raising a family there, and being a steward of their forestland and wildlife. He says, "The rewards are many as you patiently adjust to mother nature." As a real estate developer,

Mr. Carter brings to the Board of Directors expertise in sound development practices, which is balanced by his passion for wildlife management and conservation. "I am sure the Madison-Morgan Conservancy can prompt best land use and conservation practices in Morgan County, which should enrich the lives of residents and visitors for years to come."



JULIE DAVIE

Until her retirement in 2011, Julie Davie was the director of the Meals-On-Wheels program at First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta. Finally, having free time enables Julie to

volunteer as a Georgia Master Gardener, with the Meals on Main lunch program in Madison, and with the Conservancy as the need arises. Julie and Jim Davie moved to the "real" Buckhead in 1990. They joined the Conservancy in 2006 after having been involved with discussions about the Greenprint program.



LANE DENNARD

Prior to his retirement from King & Spalding in 2003, Lane Dennard represented management in the field of Labor & Employment Law for over 30 years. Since retirement, Lane has served as an adjunct professor, teaching courses in his field at both

Emory and Georgia Law Schools. He has also done considerable pro bono work, including work for the Georgia Justice Project and, more recently, the representation of veterans in cases before the VA. Rita and Lane Dennard moved to Madison in 2008 and joined the Conservancy that same year. Lane also manages a family farm in south Georgia, part of which is a tree farm—his experience in this realm has been invaluable in our discussions about sustainable forest management.

*"Find your place on the planet.  
Dig in and take responsibility from there."  
~ Gary Snyder*

## GEORGIA TIGHTENS STATE TAX CREDIT INCENTIVES

*By Kevin McGorty, Director, Tall Timbers Land Conservancy*

The Georgia General Assembly recently passed a major bill, HB 386, (<http://www.house.ga.gov/Documents/HB386-LC343484S.pdf>) tinkering with Georgia's tax code. The Governor [has signed] the legislation. Buried deep within the pages of the bill are major reforms to Georgia's popular tax credit incentives administered by the Georgia Land Conservation Program.

Since 2007, the Tax Credit Program has protected over 116,000 acres through the certification of 343 conservation donations. Last year the program got a boost when the Georgia General Assembly passed a bill that allowed the tax credits to be transferred from their original donors to any third parties with state income tax liabilities. It was anticipated that the transfer of tax credits would encourage small farm and forest land owners to consider conservation of their properties as they could sell the tax credits they could not use. Now with some of the tightening provisions, the success of the program is unclear. A highlight of a few of those provisions include:

- ❑ Starting January 1, 2014, qualified nonprofit organizations must be accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Currently, only five of the 29 land trusts in the state are accredited. Tall Timbers is a fully accredited land trust.
- ❑ The cap on the tax credit is \$250,000 for individuals and a total of \$500,000 for all parties in a partnership (reduced from previous \$1 million).
- ❑ Subdivision is prohibited for a donated easement of less than 500 acres and limited to one subdivision for a donated easement of 500 acres or more.
- ❑ There is a \$5,000 non-refundable application fee.
- ❑ Landowners must submit an appraisal to be reviewed by the State Properties Commission.
- ❑ Any tax credits earned by the taxpayer in the taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2013 may be transferred or sold only once.
- ❑ No credit shall be allowed with respect to any amount deducted from taxable net income by the taxpayer as a charitable contribution.

There are a number of other provisions that ensure that the conservation values on a property are protected, thus upholding the public interest in the program.

While other states such as Colorado and Virginia offer more flexible programs, hopefully, Georgia's attempt at offering a transferable tax credit will be a work in progress and—eventually—a success.

## HARD LABOR CREEK STATE PARK - WHAT TO EXPECT

You may have noticed that Hard Labor Creek State Park has been quieter lately... the chain saws and bulldozers have been silenced for now. What can we expect in the future? We're not sure, but the Conservancy has been working with Park and DNR staff to encourage a balance between the park's existing forestry management practices with the patron's desire for a beautiful and useful park.

The Park's Resource Management Team, which is in the process of developing a long term plan for HLCSP's diverse resources, intends to hold a public meeting in August to share a draft of that plan. We are hopeful they will recommend no further clear cutting in HLCSP, but rather selective cutting and forest transition from planted pine to hardwood forest near public areas. Look for an email from us soon about the date of that meeting. We hope you will attend and support sound resource management at this [gem](#) that is HLCSP.

The mission of the Madison-Morgan Conservancy is to provide public education and to protect and enhance the heritage and...

## I'LL HAVE ANOTHER DERBY DAY - THE PREAKNESS



**THANK YOU** to all the Sponsors, Contributors, Hosts, and Volunteers who made the Preakness Fundraiser a great success! It wouldn't have happened without you. A special thank you to Stephen Cooke who hosted us again this year.

The fundraising goal of our second ever fundraiser was met (even surpassed by a few hundred dollars), and we are so grateful for everyone's support of our mission. Your generosity is inspiring! Thank you Sponsors and Contributors:

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## SAVE THE DATE

### CONSERVATION EASEMENT WORKSHOP

Thursday, August 30, 2012  
8:00 a.m.—4:45 p.m. @ Burge Plantation  
CLE and CPE credit available

### ABANDONED RURAL AMERICA

Thursday, August 30, 2012  
6pm @ Steffen Thomas Museum

### GREENPRINT RAMBLE—THE FINALE

A Saturday in October, 2013

In and around Dorsey, Rutledge, Reese, and ???  
We have over a year to research, plan, and execute this amazing event, and we've already started researching the area. If you have interesting history about the west side of Morgan County, please contact us!!!

### MEMBERSHIP SUPPER AT MALCOM'S CROSSROADS

**THANK YOU:** Ginny and Dan Rather for hosting us again for the Annual Membership Supper; Wallace Grove Baptist Church for blessing us with your music; All of you who made it happen;

Members  
for your  
continued  
support!



## WATER WORKS, BY MATT JENKINS

Partially reprinted from *The Nature Conservancy Magazine*, <http://magazine.nature.org/features/water-works.xml>

Drought and rapid growth threaten San Antonio's water source in nearby Texas Hill Country. But a new kind of conservation partnership aims to keep the taps running pure.

Tom and Marcy Rothe ease their Ford Super Duty pickup down a Texas ranch road under a wide mackerel sky. Both Tom's and Marcy's families have run cattle here on the edge of the state's Hill Country since the late 1800s, and the ranch, studded with rock, live oak and Ashe juniper, has a rough-hewn beauty. But the past year has been tough, and a headline-making drought killed many of the oaks in the region.

"I THINK SAN ANTONIO REALIZED HOW MUCH ITS ECONOMY—AND REALLY, ITS LIFE—WAS DEPENDENT ON CLEAN WATER COMING OUT OF THE GROUND. AND THE DIRTIER THE WATER GOING INTO THE AQUIFER IS, THE MORE MONEY THEY HAVE TO SPEND TREATING IT."

Although the ranch lies an hour's drive west of San Antonio, it is a critical component of the water supply for the city and its suburbs. That's because the TMR Ranch sits astride part of a swath of land known by just about everybody in west-central Texas as the recharge zone. This area is what keeps the Edwards Aquifer—the underground source of drinking water for more than 2 million people living in San Antonio and the surrounding region—from running dry. Rain falling across some 4,400 square miles, primarily in the Hill Country, drains toward the recharge zone, where cracks, fissures and sinkholes funnel water down into a 500-foot-thick, 3,600-square-mile honey-combed karst limestone aquifer lying just below the surface. Once the water swirls into the aquifer, it slowly flows south and east through faults and fractures toward San Antonio. There it fills people's taps, waters gardens and feeds the Comal and San Marcos springs. Those springs, in turn, feed the Guadalupe River, which provides critical flows of fresh water into San Antonio Bay, a vital wintering spot for endangered whooping cranes and other birds on the Gulf Coast.

The very characteristics that make the Edwards Aquifer a natural reservoir also make it extremely vulnerable to contamination. Development pressure on the outskirts of San Antonio has threatened to destroy the natural permeability of the landscape—reducing the amount of land available to catch rain and recharge the aquifer, and increasing the volume of pollutants.

Since 1999, The Nature Conservancy has been helping the city of San Antonio broker a series of deals to protect the area's ranches and ultimately safeguard the source and quality of the water in the aquifer. Facing droughts and a rapidly growing population (San Antonio is now the seventh-largest city in the United States), voters agreed to tax themselves to try to protect their constrained source of water dozens of miles away.

The city worked out a strategy with the Conservancy to negotiate conservation easements—under which ranchers are given a payment in exchange for a binding agreement never to subdivide and develop their properties—to protect the recharge zone while keeping land in private hands. The Rothes began considering a conservation easement on their ranch about five years ago. An easement would have brought welcome cash, but it also would have prohibited any future development on the property, reducing the value of the land by an estimated 40 percent. It was a big choice to make.

"It was not a snap decision. We looked at it for two or three years," says Marcy. "We had too many unanswered questions in our minds about what we wanted to do with the ranch." But in 2010, they decided to put 2,000 acres under easement. In doing so, they joined more than two dozen other ranch owners in a program that has now protected nearly 100,000 acres of land over the Edwards Aquifer's recharge zone, funded by more than a million people in the San Antonio area who depend on the aquifer's water. They are united by the recognition that a healthy recharge zone is a natural water-quality protection system that can't be fixed if it's ever cut up and developed. "If you screw that up," says Jeff Francell, the Conservancy's Texas land protection director, "you lose it for all time."

One of the biggest threats to water quality is suburban sprawl in the recharge zone. All that paved area can greatly increase the amount of pollution that percolates into the aquifer—pollutants that can get pumped straight back up into San Antonians' faucets. Back in the 1990s, San Antonio began a serious growth spurt, and developers started snapping up land along the city's northern edge, in the middle of the recharge zone, clearing the brush from it, and covering it with houses and malls. It didn't take long to recognize that runaway development would greatly increase the risk that water going into the aquifer would be contaminated. Dirty water could, of course, always be cleaned in a water-treatment plant before it was delivered to people's homes. But such plants cost hundreds of millions of dollars, says Scott Halty, the San Antonio Water System's director of resource protection and compliance.

Conservation work in Texas has always been a delicate proposition: Roughly 95 percent of the land in the state is privately owned, and there has always been a strong property-rights bent to the collective thinking here. San Antonio's program got a huge boost in 2000 when city voters approved a one-eighth-cent sales tax increase that raised \$38 million to protect critical land in the recharge zone on the city's fringes. The public funding provided a stream of money for conservation—money that the city wouldn't have to spend on expensive infrastructure projects like water-treatment plants. "I think San Antonio realized how much its economy—and really, its life—was dependent on clean water coming out of the ground," says Francell. "And the dirtier the water going into the aquifer is, the more money they have to spend treating it."

"It was kind of new ground for everybody," says Rothe. "Giving up an interest in your land is a big deal. There were many landowners that said not 'no' but 'hell, no, I don't want anybody saying anything about my property.'" But... many local ranchers have begun to recognize that by selling off their development rights through conservation easements, they can receive money that will provide the kind of

**WALLACE GROVE SCHOOLHOUSE RESTORATION RECEIVES 2012 STATE PRESERVATION AWARD**



Before

179 Days

And

Voila!



After



**Thank You Contributors!**

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
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| Franklin Restoration           | Plainview Baptist Church      |
| Georgia Metal                  | Ruark Farms                   |
| Great Estate Landscaping       | Social Circle Hardware        |
| Indian Creek Baptist Church    | Sunflower Farm                |
| Madison-Morgan Cultural Center | Thankful Baptist Church       |
| Morgan County Landmarks        |                               |

**Thank you Volunteers!**

Ricky Boswell, Barry Brown, David Buck, Pastor Tommy Chatman, Deacon Gerald Cooper, Geraldine Cooper, Wes Holt, Rena and George Holt, Nathan Howell, Ken Kocher, Deacons Jesse and Louis Mathis, Christine McCauley, Mary McCauley, Opie Nell and Mac McMullin, Charlie Moore, and Preston Robinson.



**FARMEANDER EXPANDS**

We invite you to FARMeander through local farms, stay in farm-related inns and b&bs, and shop at local farmers markets. FARMeander now covers Morgan, Newton, and Walton Counties! Find FARMeander at [www.mmcGeorgia.org](http://www.mmcGeorgia.org)



**AMERICANS MORE THOUGHTFUL ABOUT "BUYING LOCAL"**

*Courtesy Farmers & Consumers Market Bulletin, 7/25/12, Georgia Department of Agriculture*

MORE AMERICANS THAN EVER ARE THINKING ABOUT WHERE THEIR FOOD COMES FROM AND ITS NUTRITIONAL IMPACTS ON THEIR HEALTH.

These are the findings of the 2012 "Food & Health Survey: Consumer Attitudes toward Food Safety, Nutrition and Health." The study was conducted by the International Food Information Council Foundation, and looked at how Americans feel about their health, dietary information, food safety and more.

The survey reflects improvements in many areas of diet and health:

- 60 percent of Americans describe their health as either "excellent" or "very good", but many recognize there is still room to improve their diet
- More than 60 percent of Americans consider themselves to be "active"
- 9 of 10 parents believe it's good for their health to sit down and eat meals with their family; 57 percent "strongly agree" with that statement
- 75 percent of Americans strive to choose lower-fat products at least sometimes
- Nearly all Americans report they are trying to improve their eating habits, with 87 percent of those studied trying to eat more fruits and vegetables

The Georgia Department of Agriculture now provides Georgians with several easy ways to live more healthfully.



Georgia Grown, a program of the Department of Agriculture, helps connect consumers with local produce, meats, cheeses and other agricultural products. Georgia Grown not only helps support jobs in the state, it provides fresher products, which benefits both bodies and the environment. Lists of what's in season, U-Pick operations and more can be found at

[www.georgiagrown.com](http://www.georgiagrown.com).

The State of Georgia also administers new ways for lower-income families to eat more locally-grown goods. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) allows participants to buy fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy and grains at their local farmers markets. Food-bearing plants, such as citrus or nut trees, or berry bushes, also qualify. A list of Georgia's farmers markets that accept SNAP benefits is located below.

U-Picks and roadside stands also are eligible to accept SNAP funds. Operators interested in learning more should contact their area USDA Nutrition Service director or the Department of Human Services.

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## MADISON-MORGAN CONSERVANCY

P.O. Box 752, Madison, GA 30650  
706-342-9252, www.mmcgeorgia.org

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Kim Jackson	Watershed Donors
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MADISON-MORGAN  
CONSERVANCY

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P.O. Box 752  
Madison, GA 30650

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Summer, 2012