



News Release

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TREUTLEN FOREST LAND DONATED TO CONSERVATION

A 1,556 acre tract of Treutlen County forest land will be permanently conserved under an agreement recently finalized by the Georgia Forestry Commission. The land was donated by Jim L. Gillis, Jr. of Soperton, whose family has been a forest industry leader for four generations.

"This is a conservation win as well as an economic win," said Lauren Newsome, Public Affairs Staff Forester with the GFC. "This large parcel of working forest will continue to provide wildlife habitat in its longleaf pine and wiregrass ecosystem. It will also become a permanent resource to supply Georgia's emerging cellulosic ethanol industry." Range Fuels broke ground last November on a facility near Soperton targeted to produce approximately 20 million gallons of ethanol and mixed alcohols per year from woody debris or "biomass." The plant is scheduled for completion in 2009. Statistics show Georgia's biomass production capability ranks third in the nation.

The agreement places the Treutlen County forest land in a "conservation easement," held by the GFC. It allows for the continued stewardship of the land through timber harvest and wildlife habitat enhancement, but prohibits development of any kind. The transaction allows the landowner to become eligible for tax credits. In addition, the conserved land remains on the local tax roll and continues to support Treutlen County.

"The Conservation Fund assisted greatly in this process, and the support of the Georgia Land Conservation Council has been key," said Newsome. "This is a perfect example of how private citizens can partner with public organizations to keep Georgia forests sustainable for future generations."

The GFC offers landowner assistance on many conservation opportunities. Information can be found at www.gatrees.org.

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