

## **APPENDIX M. Summaries Of Comments From Regional Stakeholder Meetings**

### **CWCS Stakeholder Meeting**

**Amicalola Falls State Park, Dawsonville – Blue Ridge Ecoregion**

**October 26, 2004**

#### Stream/Wetland Protection:

- How does CWCS relate to S.B. 460 (state legislation on stream buffers)? There seems to be a disconnect. Take a look at the data (threats, impacts)
- State-level protection for isolated wetlands is needed
- Use 319 grants to develop watershed monitoring programs

#### Species/Habitat Management

- Consider beaver reintroduction to enhance bogs and early successional wetlands
- Ways to take pressure off of wild ginseng populations
- Disconnect between plant retailers and invasive species must be addressed
- What is state's role in critical habitat designation?
- Bobwhite Quail Initiative can be a model for other state-funded incentive programs
- The loss of early succession habitat is having a tremendous negative impact on a number of game and nongame species. Will this be addressed in the "fire" section as well as the "forestry" section of the CWCS? Should ruffed grouse be included as a high-priority species in one or both of these categories?

#### Erosion & Sedimentation

- ATVs are a big problem in this region; status quo is "sacrifice zones". Illegal ATV use is the main problem, not legal use.
- Environmental courts may be needed to address some local issues
- Hemlock wooly adelgid – what is state involvement in biocontrol research?
- Hemlock wooly adelgid effects on streams are unknown – thermal impacts of canopy loss may be significant
- Horses and human traffic – can cause erosion problems like ATVs
- In mountains, paving roads can be a good thing, but requires paradigm shift for the public
- Turn-out placement on dirt roads can make a significant difference; need to work with DOT to keep these away from slope bottoms (near streams). DOT is an important player in stream protection.
- All roads (and their effects on wildlife) are not the same. Address specific problems (e.g., unpaved county roads) rather than wholesale solutions (e.g., banning all roads in a given area). This concept can be applied to a number of different situations.

- Proximity of high-priority streams to population centers is a way to define “hazard areas”
- Interaction with local governments is important; enforcement is at county level.

### Education and Information Initiatives/Issues:

#### 1. ATV Usage

- Be responsible
- Cut back on driving through streams and in return we will see a cut back in silt and sedimentation
- Honda ATVs: Education Campaign
  - Go to the ATV corporations for assistance in funding and marketing this message
  - They have money to “mitigate”
- Suggested message: “If they close this area to ATVs, then no one can ride. We need to police each other to cut back on breaking rules or ATV areas will start being closed.”
  - WRD Law Enforcement Hunter Education:
  - Add responsible and ethical riding of ATVs in Hunter Education books, programs and classes

#### 2. Marketing Messages to General Public

- GPTV – “good stuff”
- Need PSAs on networks with messages that grab the audience’s attention and educates them at the same time - California, Oregon and Washington states are using this method
- Need a DNR wildlife magazine:
  - Content should include broad topics for all audiences – hunting, fishing, birdwatching, What are the threats to a particular ecosystem?, etc.
  - Funding – South Carolina sells posters, t-shirts, hats, etc. for magazine funding
  - Funding – Tax on birdseed, related products?
- Hit the mass media with issues
  - Dee West with Soil & Water Conservation District, Fulton Co., has a connection with Channel 11 (Atlanta) CEO. Her husband has worked for the station for over 40 years. May be interested in doing “community service” for CWCS promotions
  - Turner Broadcasting
  - Cox Communications
- Post ecoregion information at highway rest areas, local chambers of commerce, visitors’ bureaus, welcome centers, welcome wagons (new homeowner greeting services)

#### 3. Education/Workshops

- Get parents more involved with teachers
- Invite parents to attend education workshops
- Use teachers and parents to share message with students

#### 4. Education Materials/Methods

- Education Trunks
  - Include illegal paraphernalia, pelts, feathers etc. along with Georgia Performance Standards curriculum for teachers
  - Partner with USFWS – already may have this program
  - Track the trunks with evaluations/surveys to see where they are being checked out
- Distance Learning Programs – GSAMS

#### General Comments about CWCS

- “This is an important process and DNR is doing a great job with it!”
- “Great work putting together and including public comments. Make sure these get lots of up-front publicity.”
- “Thanks so much for this critical information!”
- “I hope this process leads to protection on the ground & waters of our great state. Good luck and thanks for including the public.”

**CWCS Stakeholder Meeting  
Georgia International Horse Park, Conyers – Piedmont Ecoregion  
October 29, 2004**

General Questions/Comments:

1. How can the CWCS data/results be useful to grant writers for their area/site?
2. Can CWCS information help as to why a parcel of land should be used as a park?
3. Do we know how many Carolina Bays are in Georgia? Any effort for restoration? Savannah River Ecology Lab has done extensive research – are we using their data?
4. Can we present CWCS program to legislature? The threats are out of our (WRD) control – point this out to legislators.
5. “If I was a county commissioner and I saw this information, I would want to know what to do to help.”
6. How much cooperation are we doing with EPD – regulations, etc.?
7. Should these priorities not be considered in EPD’s permitting and impact statements?
8. Why was the Corps of Engineers not brought into this process? Does this have relevance to 404 permitting?
9. Cooperation with other groups is needed. Include historical societies (e.g., saving old barns for barn owls).
10. Do we have a state level effort to raise money for land acquisition?
11. Invasive species – are they listed and is there money in the CWCS plan to address?
12. DeKalb County is purchasing land near Panola Mountain/Arabia Mountain. There is need for fire in that area and we need help from EPD/DNR to have off-season burns and fire management in those areas.

Education and Information Initiatives/Issues:

1. Work with Georgia Wildlife Federation’s initiatives to educate public to not shoot rattlesnakes
2. Adopt-A-Stream
  - “If the program was given more validity, volunteers could officially alert WRD of areas of concern and could assist with the monitoring needs of species and habitats of concern.”
  - Volunteers are currently not given much training in hydrology for vegetation stream bank education
  - Newton County has 40 sites in program. At first the school system said “No” to including the program in the schools; it took time to convince them it would fit into the current curriculum.
  - Volunteers are currently not given enough watershed training
  - Every school in Georgia should be a part of the Adopt-A-Stream program. We should be doing outreach to the State Board of Education to implement this initiative.

- Corporations are giving money to local schools for test kits, etc. – this should be made available to all statewide participants – possibly through the RESA (Regional Education Service Agency) offices.
  - Adopt-A-Stream participants are building an information database for one agency (EPD) that needs to be shared with another (WRD)
  - Educate students in University Education Schools to do Adopt-A-Stream program.
3. Curriculum and programs are out there, we just need the teachers to communicate and share resources and expertise/skills.
  4. S. B. 1840 – “Open Fields” bill
    - Estimated to provide \$50 million in 2007
    - Encourages private landowners to open their lands to the public
    - Could double land leased for public use in Georgia
    - Available by grants and based on need
  5. Marketing Messages to General Public
    - Mail out copies of “Landowner Guide to Conservation Incentives” to all county Greenspace programs
    - Make CWCS data more accessible to everyday people – use the website with maps and easy links to identify the high priority species in a particular county.
    - “CWCS is a great idea, but what can I do to help?” Provide information on tangible ways that public can be involved in wildlife conservation.
    - Stewardship: Waterways are public domain vs. land species – who owns streams and water in the streams?
    - Share information with general public about high priority species. This can help with land development decisions (i.e., avoiding impacts to rare species by providing information to developers).
    - Post CWCS data online and link to [accessatlanta.org](http://accessatlanta.org). Link to as many other websites as possible: TNC, Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Add color photos to website along with large maps with links to counties and high-priority species in that county.
    - Promote final CWCS report to general public through local news papers – with maps included
    - Promote on airplane sign: “VISIT [www.GeorgiaWildlife.com](http://www.GeorgiaWildlife.com)”
    - Place final report in state library systems
    - Hand out information materials at county tag and vehicle license offices.
  6. Education Resources
    - Share information on WRD resource materials with the environmental education centers across the state.
    - Provide final CWCS report to nature centers and ask them to use in existing programs and provide workshops for teachers

## 7. Early Childhood Education

- Get parents more involved in wildlife conservation activities
- Ask parents to bring their kids to the program/project and invite the parents to volunteer and get involved in the project too.
- One Atlanta area school requires students to do community service. Recruit some of these students to do invasive species control or other hands-on projects. Use high school students as volunteers.

## 8. Rain Gardens

- Encourage homeowners to create rain gardens (vegetated swales to handle runoff) in high-priority watersheds
- Athens has a new subdivision in which each home site has a rain garden. This planning has exempted the homeowners in that subdivision from county stormwater fees.
- Contact the Georgia Homeowners Association to promote this same idea throughout the state.

**CWCS Stakeholder Meeting  
The Forum, Rome – Southwest Appalachians/Ridge & Valley Ecoregion  
November 3, 2004**

General Comments/Questions:

1. “The graph of threats is flipped, correct? Most important threats were on the bottom.”
2. “Monitoring – TNC is working on this – don’t have a handle on it yet – will be meeting soon.”
3. “What is timeline to turn in comments?” Place deadline on comment sheet.
4. Problems with surveying and monitoring – really knowing where everything is – one of the most important things to consider.
5. Berry College students could help with research and surveys – students and teachers are looking for new research projects.
6. LIP (Landowner Incentive Program)
  - How long is the money available?
  - Who monitors the projects and checks on the changes through the years?

Aquatics:

1. Have you overlaid the CWCS high-priority streams with the state list of trout streams? This could add a layer of protection – however, enforcement is still the issue.
2. Cedar Creek water quality issues: Past history with industrial dumping – stream is unnatural near Cedar Town – no tree cover. South and northwest of town the stream looks more pristine – possible restoration project with Corps of Engineers – potential removal of old mill sites – stream bank restoration – trout release couple of times a year.
3. Overlay high-priority stream with TMDL lists
4. “Some go to hospital – some go to maintenance” (comment on management strategies for high-priority streams)
5. Does RiverCare 2000 have some relevance to this process?
6. Holly Creek water quality issues:
  - Storm water, sewage treatment plants, sod farm (?)
  - Work with county governments to address at the local level
7. Does CWCS include aquatic plants?
8. How does EPD’s impaired stream list compare with this program? Do they use the same criteria?
9. Does CWCS also look at aquatic invasive exotics and have a strategy for dealing with them?
10. Tap into the USFS database for scientific and public comments – check with Erica Mavity of the USFS Gainesville office.
11. Stream mitigation bankers could potentially make use of the list of high-priority streams once it is finalized.

Terrestrial Habitats/Issues:

1. Altered fire regimes are a major issue/problem in this ecoregion
2. Fire Education
  - General public needs a better understanding of why we do prescribed burning
3. What is the difference between recreation and poaching of ginseng?

Education and Information Initiatives/Issues:

1. Promote CWCS through public trails
  - Use existing trails at Berry College (and other state locations) to educate general public and school groups about CWCS.
  - Add new signage to existing trails.
  - Add CWCS verbage to information sheets for current trails
  - Get responses from Watchable Wildlife and Education Funds contacts
2. Add CWCS information to the Coosa River Basin Initiative programs
3. Provide CWCS information/data/results at the Mountain Longleaf Conference at Berry College in October 2005.
4. Present posters/talks to various environmental education and biological science conferences throughout the state.

**CWCS Stakeholder Meeting**  
**The Stellar Conference Center, Brunswick – Southern Coastal Plain Ecoregion**  
**November 9, 2004**

General Questions/Comments:

1. When will NARSAL update the 1998 land cover maps?
2. Is conversion to agriculture considered a current or historic impact? (historic)  
Most is already in agriculture – not much left to convert.
3. Are there connections between fire use and hydrology – or water quality – look at the results from other issues – are they interconnected?
4. Merge coastal habitats with other habitats.
5. Is prescribed fire listed as a strategy?
6. List all freshwater wetlands as high priority habitats

Education and Information Initiatives/Issues (Breakout Group Discussion):

1. Cumberland Harbor condo tower and other development issues
  - How do we educate the coastal people that we do not want high-rises and how to recognize natural resources and their importance?
  - Georgia's coast has been able to keep out the high-rise condos and hotels so far because there is no real market for them at this time, but that is changing.
  - We need to identify potential properties to keep away from development
  - Encourage smart growth – cluster housing and easements
  - Night glow is an issue on the islands for the public and for sea turtles
  - Does zoning address lighting?
  - Encourage or mandate that developments include a small patch of land or greenspace for neighborhoods
2. Marketing Messages to General Public
  - Sidney Lanier Bridge Construction Project – great education effort to let public know about coastal issues like pollution, lighting, etc.
  - Educate the consumer, visitors to the coast and new homebuyers about coastal issues. Reach out to the local banks and real estate agents.
  - “Education is the key to conservation”
  - There are opportunities to educate people from all around the world at Sea Island
  - Choose our top 10 issues and find the best vehicle to get out the message
  - The U. S. Navy provides orientation classes to over 20,000 sailors and can place brochures with CWCS information and messages into those classes of sailors.
  - Provide information online
  - “So many people in Georgia don't know Georgia even has a coast”
  - Trash on roads is a problem

- Need to do a marketing analysis to see what our key messages are and how to get the messages out to the public: i.e. cereal boxes, coke cans, CoastFest, beach cleanups (a great education tool about geography is to catalogue where the trash came from), regional wildlife festivals
  - Use hunting and fishing popular guides to get out CWCS message
  - “Adults feel we don’t want to get involved in something until we have a stake in it. Americans like the independence and freedom to do what we want.”
  - “Unless there is a crisis in our face, why should we care?”
  - Consider various audiences: prisons (outreach in prison libraries and classes), NPR/GPR, local papers, email (meet with Human Relations directors at large companies and do a mass email once a month with a “Did You Know?” message) – “Corporations have a stake in environmental issues and they need to share – not just take, take – take and give back.”
  - Department of Motor Vehicles – Provide pamphlets to visitors to read while waiting in lines
  - Six Flags TV ads – Provide commercial TV ads to visitors while they wait in line for rides.
  - Let the public know how they can make a difference: river cleanups, beach cleanups, etc.
  - Ask other countries how they get their message out to their general public: Canada, Latin America, Peace Corps, European Countries
3. Early Childhood Education
- Education programs in schools – have kids go home and share what they learned with their parents – adults might be more interested in listening to the message from their children.
  - Place the sea turtle tracking program in schools statewide – gives a feeling of ownership by naming turtles, tracking, etc.
  - Use education centers to get out the messages – i.e., new Turtle Center on Jekyll Island
  - Provide a hands-on experience opportunities for kids
  - Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance – Provides teacher training on endangered plants – contact Jennifer Ceska with the State Botanical Garden in Athens
  - Work with the Georgia Wildlife Federation’s Schoolyard Wildlife Habitats program
4. Conservation Easements
- Set-up a conservation easement organization group to share TNC and Georgia Land Trust information to let all groups know what land easement offers are available
  - Create a platform level of communication
  - Create a clearinghouse for state and not-for-profit groups on what lands are available

- Compile a list of funding opportunities to share for grant writing – directory of sources of funding/grants
- Department of Defense encroachment issues – work with TNC and Georgia Land Trust to address habitat protection needs near bases.

#### Aquatic habitats

- Studies have shown that blackwater streams are sensitive to a variety of activities that impact hydrology and nutrient/sediment loading.
- Blackwater streams and rivers in this region are showing widely-fluctuating flows (above normal ranges) and increased sediment loads, plus problems with aquatic weeds, low dissolved oxygen, and stresses to aquatic organisms due to excess nutrient loads.
- The Satilla River watershed is in dire need of a floral/faunal inventory.

**CWCS Stakeholder Meeting  
Little Ocmulgee State Park, McRae - Southeastern Plains Ecoregion  
November 15, 2004**

Inventory and planning

- County-based natural area surveys are a good mechanism for gaining information
- Regional planning approach is good idea biologically, but it is easier to plan at county level because of political infrastructure
- Use watershed approach for larger areas; the Satilla basin should be a high priority for future inventory efforts

Funding for research and conservation

- Provide information on incentive programs available now and in consideration
- Because of financial climate, need to participate in coalitions to accomplish goals
- Plug into small colleges for research needs
- This plan will identify gaps of information that can be addressed locally by small colleges
- “Landowner’s Guide to Conservation Options” is a good tool
- Georgia GAP is a good tool for broad-scale considerations
- One message that we need to get out there is the fact that conservation funding is not consistent or secure from year to year

Management needs

- Long term ecological management is a concern; how to get partners to take a balanced, active role?
- Education about management tools and needs is very important
- Prescribed burning is an important issue for this region – work with Georgia Forestry Commission on this issue
- Local education component at small colleges – give course credit for work done to manage/restore natural habitats
- Include/involve corporations to provide money to small colleges to get work done
- Need to address impacts to blackwater streams in this region – excess nutrients, sediments, altered hydrology. Many streams have impaired habitat/water quality.

Land protection needs

- Weyerhaeuser lands have been sold off – lots of acres being bought for recreational use (hunting). Need to educate the new owners about conservation needs of their properties.
- Explore new funding sources for land acquisition

**CWCS Stakeholder Meeting**  
**Oxbow Meadows Environmental Learning Center, Columbus**  
**Southeastern Plains and Piedmont Ecoregions**  
**November 29, 2004**

Education and Information Initiatives/Issues:

1. Marketing Messages to General Public
  - Share information/data with the Land Trust Alliance meeting in February
  - Make contact with local land use groups – Regional Development Centers, watershed-level planners, RAC (Regional Advisory Councils)
  - Provide training for newly elected public officials and zoning boards
  - Conduct regional meetings and co-sponsor the meetings with DNR, Columbus State University, Callaway Forest, real estate companies and developers to demonstrate that we're already working with those partners and not just preaching to the choir.
  - Combine CWCS with land use partnership programs
  - “This region has a lot of resistance to land use suggestions.”
  - “It was very hard to get our tree ordinance passed.”
  - Tie in the CWCS message with hunting and fishing messages and advertisements.
  - Work with developers and explain how they can get more money for developments bordered with greenspace.
  - Get local people involved in delivering the CWCS message
  - Bring down the information to county level.
  - Show the public wildlife specific to their local area.
  - Fort Benning often does easements to landowners near the base. The closer the landowner is to a military base the higher chance of receiving federal money to do landowner incentives like growing trees and Safe Harbor Programs.
  - Target CEOs and corporations with a competition. Create a challenge between corporations at a small local scale to get employees involved. Provide awards and invite to meetings. (Could possibly incorporate into Forestry for Wildlife program)
  - Many people do not know what “ecoregion” means – start describing there and then go to the local level
  - The citizens of this region need to be better educated about prescribed burning and the role of fire. Partner with the Southwest Georgia Burning Council.
  - Media outlets for general public message:
    - Place CWCS information online with excellent links
    - Water First program
    - GPTV
    - Peach State Public Radio

- EcoChallenge on GPTV – Create a challenge for five groups to travel around the state to see who can see the most species and habitats of concern. Develop after programs like the bird-a-thon.
- Information series with newspapers corporations like Knight-Ridder – i.e. “Fifty Great Places”

How to organize sending out the message – may have to take it one step and one category at a time – make the choices on how to best blend the categories – prioritize on who needs to hear what first:

- Audience: i.e. general public
- Geography: i.e. regions
- Media: i.e. newspaper
- Message: i.e. fire

## 2. Education Resources and Ideas

- Create an interactive CD or put CWCS data into textbooks
- Combine the CD with a text book
- Use the Chattahoochee River CD and add CWCS message/data – Have a special animal/plant of concern in each section
- Develop CWCS data into state Georgia Performance Standards for teaching
- Create lesson plans that will correlate with the CD and then provide teacher training workshops on how to use the program and textbook.
- Partner with publishers for funding of the CD project.
- Integrate CWCS messages with Project WILD, Advanced Project WILD, Project Wet and Project Learning Tree
- Maybe do something new – to say it is a new program, new name and not to say “been there, done that.”
- “Which grade level would you target?”
- “Who will put the information into useful materials for the schools?”
- Establish an advisory team to do develop the teacher packet.
- Create a take home message for kids with bookmarks, posters, etc. and provide some kind of involvement for kids with the program.
- Partner with programs like Rivers Alive and river cleanups and provide CWCS information with DNR staff representative to explain.
- Investigate Georgia Conservancy’s YES program and possibly incorporate the CWCS message into their annual theme.
- Bring together all of the statewide conservation competition efforts (i.e., Project Wet school of the year, EIC schools) and use winners from all competitions to have a CWCS challenge. Use money from local corporations for awards.
- Create a Gopher Tortoise suit to share the message about fire – Have a debate with Smokey the Bear!
- Make sure local schools know local creatures and not boas, and tigers, etc.

- Work with contests like River of Words, junior duck stamp, put image on tag
- Tie in CWCS message to Hunter Safety classes

3. General Comments and Questions:

- Request for the watershed information to be in smaller areas – request for data at HUC 12 (small watershed) level instead of eco-regional level
- ATV usage problems
- The Chattahoochee River will soon be used as a major tourism corridor – concerns about more boat usage and degradation of riverbanks along with the public’s safety.
- This area is in need of recreation planning.
- Invasive species issues – educate horticulture centers that are selling invasive species and share information with centers on what to sell what not to sell.
- What partnerships already exist and who can share the message