Annual Report

A recap of our work for our members in 2010
Dear Environment Georgia members,

As an advocate for Georgia’s environment, 2010 has taught me the importance of perseverance. Take our work to designate the Conasauga an “Outstanding River,” affording it the highest level of protection possible under the Clean Water Act. After four years of research and advocacy from Environment Georgia, the state Environmental Protection Division appears poised to act.

Last spring’s BP oil spill is another case-in-point. At the time, the Obama administration had recently opened Georgia’s coasts to drilling and showed no signs of backtracking. After months of campaigning from Environment Georgia and allied groups across the country, the Obama administration extended the ban on drilling off our shores until 2017.

At the end of the day, making progress to protect our environment can take more than a month, more than a year, and sometimes more than five years. But we’re in it for the long haul—thanks for standing by our side.

Sincerely,

Jennette Gayer
Advocate for Environment Georgia
A push to save our trails

The Appalachian Trail, along with other North Georgia trails, provides a gateway to undisturbed wilderness. But parts of these trails, and the wild areas they display, are privately owned and lack long-term protections. Environment Georgia is calling on the state to protect Georgia’s trails and the green spaces that surround them.

Every day, we lose 100 acres of open space

In 2010, Environment Georgia and our allies called on President Obama and Congress to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation fund (LWCF)—dollars collected for buying and preserving priceless scenery.

We made serious progress when the president’s budget recommended almost $480 million go toward the LWCF. Now we’re working to make sure these dollars become a reality—and go toward land preservation in Georgia.

In Georgia, preservation takes on particular importance:

• According to University of Georgia studies, the state loses more than 100 acres of open space every day to new developments. If left unprotected, the scenery along our trails could one day meet the same fate.

We’re building toward full funding of the LWCF at $900 million—and will work to see that it’s used for its intended purpose.

Facts about Georgia's longest trails

- The AT begins in Georgia, and runs for 75 miles here. It ends in Maine.
- Numerous parcels of private land exist within the AT’s viewshed.
- The Benton MacKaye Trail begins in Georgia and runs 80 miles before crossing into Tennessee.
- The trail starts at the same place as the AT, on Springer Mountain near Ellijay. It then runs on private property and crosses major roads.
On the surface, Georgia’s waters—from the Chattahoochee River to the swamplands of the Okefenokee—offer us a natural playground. We can paddle down the Flint and go fishing on the Savannah. But beneath the surface, pollution from development has left its mark on our waters. We recently helped pass a landmark water efficiency bill; but to protect our waters completely, we have a long way to go.

A new law to conserve water

A new Environment Georgia-backed law will conserve more than 20 million gallons of water per day and keep our rivers flowing strongly. The law—the Water Stewardship Act—focuses on specific strategies to curb wasteful practices. Passed during the 2010 legislative session, the Act is one of the nation’s most ambitious water conservation laws:

• The Water Stewardship Act restricts lawn watering to the early morning hours or the late afternoon, when water is least likely to evaporate before seeping into the ground.

• Builders will have to construct new buildings with high-efficiency plumbing fixtures.

• New buildings that have more than one tenant will have to meter for water separately, to encourage conservation.

• New industrial structures will be built with high-efficiency cooling systems, to avoid draining copious amounts of water for cooling purposes.
Efforts to protect all our waters

The Chattahoochee, like every river, is only as clean as the streams and wetlands that feed it and keep it clean. Unfortunately, loopholes in the Clean Water Act leave these smaller waters at risk of pollution and development. As a result, the Clean Water Act might no longer protect 57 percent of Georgia’s streams, perhaps leaving them vulnerable to unlimited pollution.

To ensure the health of Georgia’s rivers for future generations, we have to protect these small streams and wetlands:

• Environment Georgia spoke to more than 3,000 Georgians in 2010, gathering thousands of signatures in support of strong protections for our wetlands and streams. We’ve since delivered them to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, showing her that Georgians support strong action to keep our waters clean.

• Despite opposition from powerful developers and factory farms, we’ve received word that Administrator Jackson has taken steps to begin closing the loopholes that jeopardize our rivers, streams and wetlands. The process is ongoing. And until the new rules are finalized, our staff will strongly support comprehensive protections for all Georgia’s waters.

Preserving our most “Outstanding” rivers

Beginning in 2007 Environment Georgia petitioned the Environmental Protection Division for an “Outstanding National Resource Water” designation on the headwaters of the Conasauga River. The designation is the highest level of protection available to rivers under the Clean Water Act and would mean far-reaching protections from pollution. To date, Georgia has no “Outstanding” rivers.
Our beaches, barrier islands, and salt marshes will be safe from BP-style oil disasters, thanks to the Obama administration’s decision to bar offshore drilling until at least 2017. It was a great victory for anyone who loves our barrier islands and salt marshes—but we won’t rest until these safeguards are made permanent.

Drilling ban capped months of advocacy

In December of 2010, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced the Obama administration’s intentions to protect the Atlantic coast, Pacific coast and eastern Gulf of Mexico from new oil and gas drilling. The Dec. 1 announcement, which protects 200 million acres along the Atlantic coastline, capped months of advocacy and organizing by Environment Georgia staff and volunteers:

- In June, we joined our allies in delivering 400,000 comments to the Obama administration, calling for a moratorium on drilling along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

- Meanwhile, our research showed that clean beaches inject $4 into the economy for every $1 that could be earned from offshore drilling.

- Our members also took part in Hands Across the Sand events, including one on Tybee Island, declaring our outrage at the BP tragedy and drawing a line in the sand against new drilling.

- Last, supporters opened their homes and their checkbooks to help Gulf Coast residents affected by the spill. Throughout the summer, people in Georgia and at least 27 other states organized “Gumbo for the Gulf” dinners to raise funds in support of BP disaster relief and our efforts to prevent future spills.
Efforts to break Georgia’s oil addiction

In the wake of the BP oil spill, Environment Georgia launched a new program to free the state from our dependence on oil. We favor electric cars over more air pollution, public transit instead of price shocks at the pump, and clean electricity instead of oil rigs. As a result, Georgians would have more jobs, less pollution, and improved public health. In particular, Environment Georgia has focused on our state’s promising capacity for offshore wind:

• On the same day the Obama administration closed the door to drilling off our shores, Environment Georgia joined our allies at the National Wildlife Federation to release a new report titled “Offshore Wind in the Atlantic: Growing Momentum for Jobs, Energy Independence, Clean Air, and Wildlife Protection.”

• The report detailed the striking potential for wind power along the Atlantic coastline. By placing wind farms 15 to 20 miles off our coast, Georgia could eventually power more than 5 million households with offshore wind.

• Mary Hallisey Hunt, of the Georgia Institute of Technology’s Strategic Energy Institute, has been engaged in researching the state and nation’s offshore wind prospects for years. According to Hunt, wind power can slash pollution, create jobs, and usher Georgia past its outdated reliance on fossil fuels.
Clean energy for Georgia

Georgia’s energy future could be bright—if we make the right decisions today. A new report from the Georgia Institute of Technology found that Georgia could save water, clear our air and put Georgians to work by making our homes and businesses more efficient. We could also avoid having to build more outdated coal plants.

New law eases transition to efficiency

Last November, Georgians nudged our state toward a greener future with Amendment Four, which Environment Georgia supported during the 2010 election season.

The new law allows state buildings to pay for upgraded, more efficient structures with future savings on energy costs.

In another step in the right direction, Georgia later developed new building codes to reduce energy consumption for all new buildings in the state.

The new codes require more efficient windows, doors and lighting, increased insulation, and better duct sealing. Experts predict that households in the Southeast will use 13.4 percent less energy and save almost $242 per year as a result of the code upgrade.
The air we breathe

Stronger emission standards for the cars we drive mean less air pollution, and a safer, healthier future. In Georgia, cars and trucks join power plants as major contributors to smog and soot pollution. By expanding MARTA and ushering in new, stronger fuel efficiency standards, we could clear the air—and save Georgians hundreds of dollars every year.

More transit and cleaner cars

Georgians’ reliance on cars contributes to statewide smog and global warming pollution; it also consumes green space by necessitating more miles of road. To help ease our smog problem, Environment Georgia advocates for improved public transportation and cleaner cars.

On both fronts, 2010 saw important progress:

• The state Legislature passed a bill that allows localities to impose a one cent sales tax intended to fund transportation projects for the next 10 years.

• Environment Georgia released a report last Thanksgiving showing the money Georgians could have saved by driving more efficient cars to their holiday dinners: $7 million. We’re urging President Obama to require that new cars made after 2025 get at least 60 miles to the gallon.

This is a vision of future transit in Atlanta based on Concept 3, a proposal supported by Environment Georgia and adopted by Atlanta’s regional planning body. Now, Environment Georgia is working to make this concept a reality.
Citizen support is the cornerstone of Environment Georgia. Thousands of Georgia citizens supported Environment Georgia and the Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center by making membership contributions in 2010. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organizations’ research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote Monthly Supporters. These members provide stability to the organizations’ resources through our monthly giving program.

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Foundation support

The Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center is a 501(c)(3) organization, and conducts research and public education on emerging environmental issues. Contributions to the Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center are tax-deductible. To find out more, contact Jennette Gayer at (404) 892-3573. The Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center would like to thank the Rockefeller Family Fund and the Sapelo Foundation for supporting our work in 2010.

Financial information

The charts below represent the combined financial information for Environment Georgia and Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center for the Fiscal Year 2010.

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<th>FY10 Income</th>
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<td>Citizen Members 80%</td>
<td>Program 76%</td>
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Building a greener future

Environment Georgia and Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work. Your gift will assure that we can continue to protect Georgia’s air, water and open spaces for future generations. For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentGeorgia.org.