



GEORGIA WILDLIFE
FEDERATION*

Press Release

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GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSES LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN OUTDOOR STEWARDSHIP, EXPAND LAND PROTECTION AND PARKS

Atlanta (April 1, 2026)– On March 31, the Georgia State Senate “agreed” to changes and joined the House in passing S.B. 478, bipartisan legislation reauthorizing and strengthening 2018’s Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act (GOSA). This action is ensuring continued investment in land conservation, outdoor recreation and park development across the state. The Senate passed S.B. 478 unanimously earlier in the session; the House amended it and passed it on Friday by a vote of 163 – 2. The agreement sends the legislation on to the Governor.



S.B. 478 increases the allocation of existing sales tax revenue from outdoor recreation equipment dedicated to GOSA from 40 to 60 percent without creating any new taxes. The increase will provide approximately an additional \$15 million annually and expand Georgia’s ability to protect critical natural landscapes, preserve wildlife habitat and create new regional parks and recreational opportunities for communities statewide. The bill also extends the program for an additional 10 years, through 2039.

“GOSA has proven to be one of the most impactful conservation programs in Georgia’s history,” said Senator Sam Watson, sponsor of S.B. 478 – and also the sponsor of the original GOSA legislation from 2018. “This legislation ensures we are making the most of existing resources to protect our state’s natural assets and expand access to the outdoors for future generations.”

Since its launch in 2019, GOSA has funded 88 projects totaling more than \$175 million, though demand has far exceeded available funding. The enhanced investment provided by S.B. 478 will allow more communities to benefit from conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

“By increasing the dedication of existing funds, we are meeting a clear demand from communities across Georgia,” said Senate Majority Leader Jason Anavitarate, a champion of the bill. “This is a fiscally responsible way to invest in conservation, recreation and economic growth. In a time of political division, today’s vote demonstrates broad, bipartisan support for conservation.”

House Natural Resources Committee Chair Lynn Smith – sometimes referred to as the Godmother of GOSA, who carried the legislation in the House, emphasized the statewide impact: “From rural communities to urban centers, GOSA projects are transforming how Georgians experience the outdoors. This legislation ensures that more of these high-impact projects can move forward.”

Proven Success Across Georgia

GOSA funding has already supported transformative projects across the state, including:

- **Dug Down Corridor (Polk County):** Protection of nearly 13,000 acres along the Dugdown Mountain Corridor, preserving a high-biodiversity habitat and expanding public access for hiking, hunting and wildlife observation within the Treat Mountain Wildlife Management Area and Tallapoosa River Wildlife Management Area.
- **Ceylon Wildlife Management Area (Camden County):** Conservation of tens of thousands of acres of coastal habitat, including wetlands, longleaf pine forests, and critical gopher tortoise habitat, while expanding recreation opportunities such as fishing, camping and wildlife viewing.
- **Atlanta BeltLine Westside Extension (Atlanta):** Expansion of a critical urban trail connection, helping to link the Atlanta Beltline to the Silver Comet Trail while enhancing green space and supporting habitat connectivity in a rapidly growing city.
- **McIntosh Reserve (Carroll County):** Expansion of the park by more than 750 acres along the Chattahoochee River, increasing access for camping, paddling, hiking and other outdoor activities. This park is part of the **Chattahoochee RiverLands** vision to develop a 100-mile linear park through the heart of the metro Atlanta region.

The legislation is strongly supported by the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Coalition, a broad alliance of conservation and recreation organizations, including Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Wildlife Federation, Open Space Institute, Park Pride, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Land.

Together, these organizations and legislative leaders have worked to ensure that Georgia continues to invest in its natural resources, outdoor heritage and growing recreation economy.

About the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act is the state's premier conservation funding program, supporting land protection, regionally significant park development, and outdoor recreation projects that benefit communities, protect natural resources, and enhance quality of life for all Georgians.

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About Georgia Wildlife Federation

Georgia Wildlife Federation was founded as a sportsman's organization in 1936 and is Georgia's oldest conservation organization. Today, members include hunters, anglers, bird watchers, hikers, educators, and all Georgians who are interested in preserving our natural resources and outdoor heritage.