

For immediate release

State approves grant, loan for Land Trust property

Funding approved for Fort Frederica project

In a plan initiated by the St. Simons Land Trust, the Georgia Land Conservation Program has approved a land conservation grant and a low-interest loan to preserve a 20-acre parcel of land adjacent to Fort Frederica that will ultimately become a part of the national monument. The \$750,000 grant and \$2.75 million loan will cover the total \$3.5 million cost of the property. Gov. Sonny Perdue made the announcement on Tuesday, Sept. 11, in Atlanta.

Land Trust President Russ Marane said the Land Trust had completed purchase of the property on Aug. 31 from the Sea Island Company at a price below its market value, using borrowed funds. Glynn County will actually receive the funds from the Georgia Land Conservation Program and will transfer the money to the Land Trust so that the organization can retire its debt. The Land Trust will enter into a binding agreement with the county to pay the required debt service on the county's loan with the state of Georgia so that no county funds will be used for the project.

"This program and its shared funding represent a collaborative approach to land conservation," said Perdue. "I'm pleased that these natural and cultural resources will be preserved and enjoyed for generations to come."

"Preserving this beautiful and historic land for future generations is the right decision for Glynn County and for Georgia," said Rep. Jerry Keen. "I am pleased that we have all been able to work together to protect this pristine site for years to come."

In the meantime, the Land Trust will seek the assistance of Rep. Jack Kingston and the Georgia delegation to develop legislation for a boundary revision to include the new acreage within the park boundary and to obtain federal funding to recover its costs of acquiring and holding the property. Ultimately, the Land Trust will transfer the property to the National Park Service.

"The Land Trust may need to hold the property for three years, possibly longer," Marane said. "We are currently in discussions with the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit land conservation organization, about partnering with us. TPL has an office in Washington, D.C., and can assist the Land Trust in securing federal funds."

Mary Beth Wester, superintendent of Fort Frederica, noted that significant prehistoric archaeological features may exist on the property, as well as natural assets. These would be protected and potentially viewed by the public. The property acquisition will also protect the northern boundary of the fort from the visual impact of development, she said. The tabby ruins of soldiers' barracks at the fort is so close to the property line of the preserved land that any homes that might have been built there would have destroyed the 18th century feel of the national monument.

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The St. Simons Land Trust's mission is to preserve the island's natural and scenic character and to enhance the quality of life of the island community for present and future generations. The Land Trust currently protects 72 acres of property on St. Simons Island.

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