

GEORGIA

BATTLEFIELDS

Published by Georgia Battlefields Association, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preservation of Georgia's Civil War history and sites. Contact newsletter editor by e-mail: info@georgiabattlefields.org

Civil War Preservation Trust releases most endangered list

On 24 February, the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) announced its most endangered site list for 2005. Kennesaw Mountain represented Georgia as one of the ten most endangered sites. Although some of the historic area is protected by the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park (established 1926), the greenspace around the park has been disappearing at an accelerating rate (October, May, and March 2004 newsletters).

Another Georgia site, Paulding County's Hell Hole area, continues as an at risk site for 2005 after appearing among the ten most endangered sites on the 2004 list (March 2004 newsletter). View the announcement and the entire report on CWPT's web site: www.civilwar.org.

We're pleased that GBA's efforts have helped to call attention to threatened sites in Georgia, but we'd rather be able to report that all the sites were already protected.

Park Day is 2 April

The Civil War Preservation Trust is again sponsoring an annual park day, on which volunteers can help to clean up, maintain, and preserve historic sites across the country. Past volunteer activities included painting signs and fences, reinstalling headstones, and laying trails.

Contact these Georgia sites (going from Chattanooga area to the coast):

- Chickamauga National Military Park 706 866-9241 or 423 752 5214 x121 or jim_szykowski@nps.gov Jim Szykowski
- Prater's Mill, Varnell 706 694-6455 or pratersmill@dalton.net Judy Alderman
- Tunnel Hill Historical Foundation 706 673-2641 or rault@chartertn.net Bob Ault
- Confederate Cemetery, Dalton 706 278-3925 Marvin Sowder
- Kennesaw Mountain National Park 770 427-4686 or benita_duling@nps.gov Benita Duling
- Old Governor's Mansion, Milledgeville 478 445-4545 or matt.davis@gcsu.edu Matt Davis
- Blue & Gray Museum, Fitzgerald 229 426-5069 or bgmuseum@mchsi.com Patricia Walker
- Fort McAllister, Richmond Hill 912 727-2339 or dannybrown@coastalnow.net Danny Brown

While Park Day occurs only once a year, you can help state parks year round by contacting the Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites. Contact any park or historic site manager, or contact Friends executive director Brent Reed at brentreedfgsps@bellsouth.net or 770 975-7533 or 888 948-2092, or see the web site www.friendsofgastateparks.org.

Andrews Raid tour scheduled for 16 April

Friends of Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park (www.chickchatt.org) will conduct a bus tour that follows the route of the 12 April 1862 Andrews Raid, also called the Great Locomotive Chase. Park chief historian Jim Ogden will lead the tour. The bus will depart Chickamauga battlefield visitor center at 8 a.m. and return by 6 p.m. To reserve a seat, send a check for \$60 to Friends of the Park at PO Box 748, Chattanooga TN 37401. Indicate "Andrews Raid Tour" on the check, and provide a phone number or e-mail address so that you may be notified of any changes to the schedule.

Civil War photography exhibit at Atlanta History Center

The best-known photographs of wartime Atlanta were taken by George N. Barnard, who arrived in the city in September 1864 and returned in 1866 to take more photos. In conjunction with the U.S. Military Academy Library, the Atlanta History Center's Michael Rose has assembled dozens of Barnard's prints, including some that are rarely seen, in an exhibition titled *Sherman's Photographer: Scenes of Civil War Atlanta*. A notable virtue of the exhibition is the photos' clarity, which is often diminished in publication. The photos also highlight the almost total loss of sites around Atlanta. The display in the Center's McElreath Hall runs through 23 April.

Conflicting messages on government conservation funding

On 25 January, Governor Perdue announced the Georgia Land Conservation Act, a proposal to encourage preservation of green space. The bill was the first to pass the 2005 General Assembly (on 15 February). The legislation grew from recommendations of the Advisory Council for the Georgia Land Conservation Partnership, which issued its report in mid-August 2004 (October newsletter). The Act is intended to encourage the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), local governments, other state and federal agencies, and the private sector to act together to buy conservation easements or fee simple interest in forests, wetlands, farms, or other undeveloped landscapes (such as battlefields).

The Act establishes a \$45 million Trust Fund and a \$55 million Revolving Loan Fund. Of the \$100 million total, \$75 million will come from existing state or federal funding and \$25 million from private funding. Both the Trust Fund and the Revolving Loan Fund will be administered by the Georgia Environmental Facility Authority. A significant difference from the Georgia Community Greenspace Act of 2000 is that property owners will be paid to forego developing land rather than the state buying land outright. As Governor Perdue said, "The vast majority of protected land would remain in private ownership."

Separately, the Act establishes the Georgia Land Conservation Council, which will include the State Property Officer, DNR Commissioner, Georgia Forestry Commission Director, State Soil and Water Conservation Commission Executive Director, Department of Community Affairs Commissioner, and four other members appointed by the governor. The Council will decide which grant and loan requests are approved. Also, DNR will be responsible for establishing a database to track all conservation activities.

Since the Greenspace Program had not been funded for two years, this Act provides hope. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC)* reported the legislation was supported by the Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Wildlife Federation, and the Georgia offices of the Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land. As the *AJC* also reported, many of the new program's advantages were already available to large landowners; but the Act is intended to encourage more public-private land deals. Governor Perdue said that, if the plan proves viable, he may ask for further legislation that provides a permanent source of funding for the new program.

Three days after Governor Perdue's 25 January announcement, the U.S. Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation recommended a severe restriction on conservation easements. The Committee report indicates the public benefit of such easements is tenuous and speculative because donors living on the restricted land can still hamper preservation. Further, the estimated values of easements are often incorrect and result in unwarranted tax breaks.

The report recommends that an easement on open land not used as a home site (the category for most battlefield land) should allow a tax deduction of 33% of value, rather than the current 100%. Such easements would qualify for tax breaks only if the donor could prove that the restrictions clearly benefit a specific government conservation program.

The report comes in the wake of several press articles on conservation easement program abuses in which already wealthy people were the principal benefactors, including some who were insiders at the charitable organizations charged with monitoring the easement restrictions.

While GBA has advised people on the advantages of conservation easements, we are not currently monitoring any. GBA owns battlefield land at New Hope Church, and we hope to buy more; but our reading of both the state and federal proposals is that preservation may not be significantly easier, so we'll pursue simple purchase of historic sites.

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