

2025 Legislative Session

TNC in Georgia



Executive Summary

Policy and government relations work is an essential component of how The Nature Conservancy achieves conservation progress in Georgia and beyond. Through our relationships at the federal, state, county, and city levels, we advocate for policies and practices that advance protection of our lands and waters and enhance our ability to address climate change in alignment with TNC's 2030 goals.

TNC Georgia engages with members of Congress, state legislators, city and county officials, and state and federal agency personnel to drive policy and funding decisions that support our programmatic priorities. As January 2025 brings both a new Congress and Administration in Washington and a new legislative session for the Georgia General Assembly, TNC's government relations team will be working to advance policies that support positive outcomes for conservation and climate.

Legislative Priorities

Land and Water Conservation

We will support policy and funding that advances land and water conservation in Georgia. TNC has been instrumental in conserving more than 400,000 acres across our state, and we will continue our productive collaborations with partners to protect more than 30,000 additional acres by 2030. Wise state policies and practices also play a pivotal role in protecting water quality and quantity in Georgia's rivers and tributaries and in preserving the health of our coastal and marine habitats. We anticipate the following areas of priority for legislative focus:

- **Protecting the Okefenokee:** We will continue collaborating with allies to secure legislative or administrative remedies to protect the Okefenokee Swamp and National Wildlife Refuge from mining operations that could cause irreversible damage to this unique ecosystem and to the communities that rely on it for jobs and economic vitality.
- **Sustaining Healthy Waters:** Furthering our ongoing work with partners to conserve the Lower Flint River basin, we will assess policy measures that may facilitate implementation of a new Habitat Conservation Plan to enhance sustainability in the basin. We will also explore remedies to stem the ecological damage being caused in streams and rivers by the ill-advised removal of fallen trees and other large woody debris that are critical to aquatic habitats.
- **Conservation Financing:** We will work with partners to ensure robust funding for conservation. This includes identifying opportunities to build on the success of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program and to ensure continuation of other key programs, such as the state Conservation Tax Credit Program.

- **State Wildlife Action Plan:** As Georgia launches its updated State Wildlife Action Plan in 2025, we will explore mechanisms to support its implementation. Many aspects of the SWAP align with TNC's priorities, including the development of wildlife corridors that provide multiple conservation benefits.



- **Coastal Marshland and Shore Protection:** Mindful of attempts in previous legislative sessions to weaken the state's ability to safeguard the coastal marshlands and seashores that support Georgia's fisheries, we will closely monitor any bills related to coastal marshland and seashore use.
- **Greenspace Protection:** We will support projects and policies that reduce impacts to greenspaces and water resources, improve urban resilience, and enhance sustainable growth. TNC continues to engage officials with the City of Atlanta and DeKalb County to implement measures to protect, connect, and activate greenspace in the South River Forest area. In north Georgia, we seek to mitigate environmental impacts from a proposed mining operation adjacent to a new Pine Log Wildlife Management Area.

Climate and Conservation

The significant damage inflicted on communities in Georgia and beyond by hurricanes in 2024 underscored the urgent need for enhanced planning and coordination to mitigate the effects of such extreme weather events. On a positive note, the year also saw the State of Georgia develop its first-ever climate action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The “Peach State Voluntary Emissions Reduction Plan” provides a roadmap of initiatives that, if properly utilized, can significantly reduce the state’s greenhouse gas emissions.



- **Enhancing Georgia’s Resilience:** We support the recommendation from the Georgia House Study Committee on Disaster Mitigation and Resilience to establish a state Office of Resilience and a Chief Resilience Officer for Georgia. The Nature Conservancy met with committee members during their meetings this fall and provided them with background information, including our work to strengthen the capacity of coastal communities to prepare for and manage climate events.



- **Renewable Energy and Decarbonization:** We will support state and local policy measures to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and expand the use of clean energy in ways that minimize adverse impacts on natural lands and habitats. We will support measures to expand the use of rooftop and community solar and other distributed generation, facilitate low-impact siting of large-scale solar facilities, and establish/implement clean energy goals and climate action plans. We will defend against measures that would impede progress in these areas. We are also closely monitoring developments related to the growing number of data centers being built in Georgia, which have significant impacts on energy demand, land use decisions, and water resources.
- **Natural Climate Solutions:** We will support opportunities to incentivize practices like reforestation and improved forest management that provide dual benefits for climate and conservation.

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