Creating Resilience
Preserving Georgia’s Natural Environment

2019 Annual Meeting | Atlanta, Georgia

Georgia Grantmakers Alliance

in partnership with the Southeastern Council of Foundations
As a statewide network of private grantmakers, the Georgia Grantmakers Alliance (GGA) has the privilege of working with philanthropic leaders who share a passion for helping others and giving back to the community. For many, that investment comes in the form of working to grow awareness, develop new tools and support networks of organizations. The 2019 GGA Annual Meeting features grantmakers and community leaders driving individual and policy level actions that preserve Georgia's beautiful and vital natural resources.

Welcome

If philanthropy is defined as charitable giving to improve human welfare, Mother Nature may be the world’s first, and certainly its most generous, philanthropist. But this has not been a reciprocal relationship. In 2017, charitable giving in the United States amounted to $410 billion, with only 2.7 percent of that ($11 billion) going to environmental causes. Nature, on the other hand, provides an estimated $125 trillion a year globally in free benefits and services to humanity. These come in tangible forms like the provision of basic necessities such as food, clean air and water, as well as less tangible forms such as mental health and socio-ecological benefits. Nature provides the underpinning for human welfare and well-being, and all of the luxuries enjoyed in our modern society.

Nature’s gifts have often been taken for granted. With unprecedented population growth, increased industrial activity, rising consumption rates and changing weather patterns, evidence suggests that her capacity to give may soon sunset, and yet her human beneficiaries continue to make jeopardizing investments that threaten her ability to efficiently operate in perpetuity. As natural resources and healthy ecosystems erode away, grantmakers’ abilities to have impact will be challenged, regardless of our focus areas, and our limited resources will be more frequently sought for the most basic necessities.

Yet all hope is not lost! During this meeting, we will explore Georgia’s unique natural environment and the important role that it plays supporting livelihoods and the well-being of all Georgia citizens. We will dive into the current and expected challenges for Georgia’s urban and rural land, water and climate while incorporating evidence that protecting our natural environment can help achieve results in other areas of philanthropy such as education, health care, economic development, poverty alleviation and social justice. Together, we can learn from field leaders advancing community goals within these intersections and help proactively address what many call the next generation’s greatest challenge in Georgia and beyond.

John Hardman
Dot and Lam Hardman Family Foundation
Program Agenda

8:30am  Breakfast and registration

9:00am  Welcome
        John Hardman, Dot & Lam Hardman Family Foundation
        Nancy Rigby, Cox Foundations

9:15am  Georgia’s Unique Environment (includes Q&A)
        Shana Jones, Carl Vinson Institute, University of Georgia
        Dr. J. Marshall Shepherd, Atmospheric Sciences Program, University of Georgia
        The Honorable Lindsay Thomas, former member of the U.S. House (Georgia’s 1st Congressional District)

10:35am  Break

10:50am  Considering the Land
        Deron Davis, The Nature Conservancy in Georgia
        George Dusenbury, Trust for Public Land
        Erik Johnson, Robert W. Woodruff Foundation
        Cheryl Peterson, McIntosh SEED
        Andrew Schock, The Conservation Fund

11:45am  Digging Deeper: Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act & The Gopher Tortoise Initiative
        Steve Friedman, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
        Eleanor Ratchford, Knobloch Foundation

12:15pm  The Coast, Georgia’s Greatest Treasure
        David D. Weitnauer, R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation

12:30pm  Lunch

1:30pm  Considering the Water
        Megan Desrosiers, 100 Miles
        Mark Masters, Albany State University
        Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper
        Katherine Zitsch, Atlanta Regional Commission

2:30pm  Diving Deeper: Connecting Water & Land Through Finding the Flint
        Judy Adler, Turner Foundation
        Stacy Funderburke, The Conservation Fund
        Jennifer Hilburn, Altamaha Riverkeeper
        Hannah Palmer, Finding the Flint

2:50pm  Grantmaker Perspective and Relevance
        Dr. Jalonne White-Newsome, The Kresge Foundation

3:20pm  Closing Remarks

Planning Committee

John Hardman (Chair)  |  Dot and Lam Hardman Family Foundation
Judy Adler  |  Turner Foundation
Jennie Blake  |  Cox Foundations
Lydia Clements  |  Georgia Grantmakers Alliance
Troy Ettel  |  Turner Foundation
Sydney Hulebak  |  Dot and Lam Hardman Family Foundation

Erik Johnson  |  Robert W. Woodruff Foundation
John Lanier  |  Ray C. Anderson Foundation
Pat Lummus  |  Sartain Lanier Family Foundation
Christine Reeves Strigaro  |  The Sapelo Foundation
Sonia Vick  |  Williams Family Foundation of Georgia
David Weitnauer  |  R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation
Because millions of Georgians depend on the food, air, water and livelihoods sustained by our state’s natural resources, the productivity and resilience of natural ecosystems should be a priority for all Georgia grantmakers. From agriculture to outdoor pursuits, Georgia’s past and future are inextricably linked to its natural environment.

Georgia has variations in topography and geology that produce a spectacular variety of ecosystems. In turn, that array of ecosystems supports a diverse mix of people, plants and animals. Terrestrial ecosystems range from the live-oak seaside forests of the coast to the rocky outcrops of north Georgia. Aquatic ecosystems include small streams, large rivers, lakes and estuaries where the state’s major rivers meet the sea.

Georgia’s coastline includes 14 barrier islands, approximately one-third of the remaining salt marsh on the Eastern coast (500,000 acres) and extensive estuaries where the state’s major rivers flow into the ocean. Like freshwater ecosystems, coastal ecosystems supply vital services.

Georgia ranks 6th in the nation in overall species diversity. More than 60 species are exclusive to Georgia, a number exceeded by only 11 other states.
“The threat of uninformed or poor planning was subtle but growing,” says Alston Watt, executive director of the Williams Family Foundation. She’s reflecting on the foundation’s early work to create widespread understanding of the Red Hills Region’s ecosystem services and economic impact. Across the six counties, three in Southwest Georgia and three in Florida, the region’s environment provides clean drinking water, clean air and wildlife habitat for more than 60 rare species while also supporting a working landscape generating $147 million in economic contributions to the area’s rural communities. But many people, including elected officials, were not even aware of the model of sustainability in their own backyard and that unfamiliarity threatened future decision-making.

Collaborating with Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy, the Williams Family Foundation approved a three-year grant, among other things, to produce and distribute an economic impact report to build public support for protecting natural resources in the region. “This project was about education, advocacy, and economic development. We intuitively knew that our natural environment is an important economic asset and that its multiplier effect could be vast - but we needed to quantify it to help folks really understand,” reflects Alston. Three other Georgia funders also supported the project: the William Howard Flowers, Jr. Foundation, the Harley Langdale, Jr. Foundation, and the Turner Foundation. Since the completion of Valuing Ecosystem Services in the Red Hills Region, additional reports have been distributed that inform policymakers and the general public about the priority of environmental stewardship across Southwest Georgia’s Brooks, Grady, and Thomas counties.

Georgia has 5 major ecoregions and 66 natural communities.

Georgia’s population will increase by 4 million people by 2030.
All grantmakers can help protect our natural resources and environment while also having intended impact in areas central to their philanthropy such as education, health care and rural economic development.

For instance, in terms of economic development, the outdoor recreation industry creates 238,000 jobs and $8.1 billion in wages and salaries in Georgia. Due to its contribution to a high quality of life, outdoor infrastructure also attracts and sustains employers and families. Agriculture industries provide $73 billion annually to the state economy, and employ one in seven Georgians.

Longitudinal studies of education outcomes are another lens, suggesting that nature-rich schools help raise standardized test scores. Children's academic performance, behavior and focus improve when they spend time in nature. Those in low-income communities appear to benefit proportionally more from access to green space than those in higher-income communities. This suggests that districts that “green” their schools can expect a high rate of return on their investment while also developing a love of learning.

Finally, consider public health in urban areas. Healthy tree canopies reduce city-level health care costs by up to $60M. Trees are sustainable infrastructure contributing to healthy urban communities by removing particulate matter from the air, helping regulate temperatures, supporting water quality.

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The Environment Is Relevant for All Grantmakers

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Rising Generations Inspire Natural Resources Preservation

A poem illustrates how the unbounded possibilities of future generations inspire the Ray C. Anderson Foundation’s focus on natural resources. Tomorrow’s Child by Glenn Thomas, which Ray often recited, references the generations yet to come: “without a name, an unseen face” and “knowing you has changed my thinking....”

Jay Lanier is Ray Anderson’s oldest grandchild and son of foundation trustees Jaime and Mary Anne Lanier. He explains that the poem’s significance became substantially more meaningful when his son, August, was born. “It is more real when you have that little person, chomping for the chance to go outside. One of his favorite things is to explore the yard. To watch, feel, play, grab leaves and try to eat them. The outdoors has always been refreshing for me and I can’t wait to share all my secret spots and connect with him in those special places.”

John Lanier, the foundation’s executive director and grandson of Ray Anderson, says the foundation’s NextGen Committee takes an active role by investing in projects geared toward making the world a better place for tomorrow’s children. Over the past six years, the NextGen Committee has funded $300,000 in programs with focuses ranging from conservation to youth education to urban agriculture. “Supporting a school-based urban agriculture program is an example of how we extend our reach through natural intersections,” says John. “We look for project-based models that improve broad knowledge while also serving as proof points for innovative designs. Our range of tools includes investing in sharing knowledge about the state’s resources, providing incentives to shift behaviors, and informing individual decisions through education and technical assistance.”

29 schools and districts in Georgia have received federal Green Ribbon School Awards since 2011.

70% of K-12 school leaders report green efforts have raised student test scores.
Georgia Collaborations are Working

$1.3 billion, $3 billion, $46.9 billion. These are three thought-provoking numbers. The first is the combined annual grantmaking budgets of all foundations in Georgia. The second is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's annual grantmaking budget. And the third is the State of Georgia's annual budget. So, of course, no foundation, organization, or person has the resources to make change alone.

As Georgia continues to grow, stronger and more effective partnerships among state agencies, local governments and private sector organizations will be needed to make progress towards quantifiable environmental objectives. Such collaborations do exist in Georgia and are generating results by working together to protect our keystone species, expand our urban tree canopies, conserve our water supplies, and preserve the coastal ecosystem.

For example, almost two decades ago, The Sapelo Foundation supported the creation of the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC). It began as four organizations working together to protect and care for the water resources that are essential for sustaining Georgia's prosperity, providing clean drinking water, preserving aquatic habitats for wildlife and recreation, and strengthening property values. “Today, it’s great to see how GWC's environmental progress manifests in both outcome and processes,” says Christine Reeves Strigaro, executive director of The Sapelo Foundation. “It is a powerful success story.”

Tangible outcomes have been plentiful. GWC helped prevent the privatization of water in Georgia twice, and many of its members were integral in the recent bipartisan policy not to pursue offshore drilling along Georgia’s 100 mile coastline. GWC has blossomed into a 13-member leadership team and 260-member coalition. It’s comprised of riverkeepers, lawyers, scientists, advocates, and statisticians.

Christine explains that, “They thrive on three levels: a untied coalition with clear practices, goals, and strategies; sub-groups of cross-sector leaders who work together; and individual organizations that now have stronger networks, acumens, and capacities. It’s quite something to see big, bold, and brilliant people making decisions together and working tirelessly all day... and still choosing to hang out together on the weekends. Collaborations at their best are people making progress on their collective life’s work.”
Leaders and Resources

Leaders

GGA Steering Committee:
Pat Lummus (Chair) | Sartain Lanier Family Foundation
Mark Crosswell (Treasurer) | Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Sonia Vick (Communications) | Williams Family Foundation of Georgia
Shell Knox Berry | Community Foundation for the Central Savannah River Area
Lydia Clements | Georgia Grantmakers Alliance
Robbo Hatcher | Georgia Pine Level Foundation
Janine Lee (ex officio) | Southeastern Council of Foundations
Atiba Mbiwan | The Zeist Foundation
Lisa Medellin | Healthcare Georgia Foundation
Lizzy Smith | Woodruff and Whitehead Foundations
Suzanna Stribling | Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation
Tené Traylor | The Kendeda Fund
Yvonne Whitaker | NCR Foundation
Paul White | Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation

Collaboration & Learning

Contacts available for presentations or strategy considerations:
Judy Adler | Turner Foundation
John Hardman | Dot and Lam Hardman Family Foundation
Erik Johnson | Woodruff Foundation
John Lanier | Ray C. Anderson Foundation
Christine Reeves Strigaro | The Sapelo Foundation
David Weitnauer | R. Howard Dobbs Foundation

Save the date for GGA’s Coastal Philanthropy Tour: March 5-6, 2020

Books:
Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder (Richard Louv)
Project Drawdown (Paul Hawken, Editor)
And The Coastlands Wait (Reid Harris)

Georgia Research:
Atmospheric Sciences Program and the Carl Vinson Institute for Government (University of Georgia)
At the Tipping Point: A Comprehensive Assessment and Conservation Action Plan for the Georgia Coast (Southern Environmental Law Center - 2007)
Georgia Climate Project (Daniel Rochberg, Emory University)

Podcasts/TEDtalks:
Georgia Water Coalition’s Clean 13 Videos and Report:
Posted at www.gawater.org/clean-13

J. Marshall Shepherd’s TEDx Talk:
“3 kinds of bias that shape your worldview”
Posted at www.ted.com/speakers/j_marshall_shepherd

Katharine Wilkinson’s TEDx Talk:
“How empowering women and girls can help stop global warming”
Posted at www.ted.com/speakers/katharine_wilkinson

On Second Thought Podcast:
Episode: Atlanta, The ‘City In A Forest,’ Is Losing Its Trees (May 21, 2018)

Talk with Green Guy Podcast:
Episode: Deron Davis, The Nature Conservancy in Georgia (April 28, 2019)
Episode: John Lanier, Ray C. Anderson Foundation (June 2, 2019)
Speakers

Judy Adler  
President and Treasurer, Turner Foundation

Deron Davis  
Executive Director, Georgia, The Nature Conservancy

Megan Desrosiers  
Chief Executive Officer, One Hundred Miles

George Dusenbury  
State Director, Georgia and Alabama, The Trust for Public Land

Steven Friedman  
Chief of Real Estate, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Stacy Funderburke  
Assistant Regional Counsel and Conservation Acquisitions Associate, The Conservation Fund

Jen Hilburn  
Riverkeeper, Altamaha Riverkeeper

Shana Jones  
Planning & Environmental Services Unit Manager, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia

Mark Masters  
Director, Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center, Albany State University

Hannah Palmer  
Writer and Urban Designer; Co-Founder, Finding the Flint
The Honorable Lindsay Thomas
Former Member, U.S. House of Representatives, Georgia’s 1st Congressional District

Katherine Zitsch
Manager of Natural Resources, Atlanta Regional Commission

Dr. Jalonne L. White-Newsome
Senior Program Officer, The Kresge Foundation

Dr. Katharine K. Wilkinson
Vice President of Communication & Engagement, Project Drawdown

David Weitnauer
President, R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation

Eleanor K. Ratchford
Board Member, Knoblauch Family Foundation

Cheryl Peterson
Senior Managing Director, McIntosh SEED
(Sustainable Environment and Economic Development)

Gordon Rogers
Riverkeeper and Executive Director, Flint Riverkeeper

Andrew Schock
Georgia State Director, The Conservation Fund

Dr. J. Marshall Shepherd
Professor of Geography and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Georgia

Katherine Zitsch
Manager of Natural Resources, Atlanta Regional Commission
Founded in 2010, the Georgia Grantmakers Alliance (GGA) is a nonpartisan initiative open to all private grantmakers interested in peer learning, critical Georgia issues, and promising solutions. Our programs feature place-based philanthropic tools, future trends, and local examples of the connections between state policy and grantmaking. By fostering relationships and strengthening the network of Georgia funders, GGA is making a positive and lasting difference in Georgia’s communities.

Special Thanks to Our Annual Meeting Host

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