

# Madison-Morgan Conservancy

Newsletter  
Winter, 2018-2019

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## Letter from the President

# Balancing Stability and Dynamism

Looking back on the Conservancy's last twelve months, it is clear we have come a long way: we've almost reached our \$1,250,000 goal to fund an Endangered Properties Revolving Fund (EPRF) and have saved and stabilized the Foster-Thomason-Miller House in the process. By August 2019, with your help, we will have reached our EPRF funding goal, and hopefully, we will have found the next steward of Madison's Masterpiece on Main.

During those busy twelve months, we were also quietly working on some great land conservation projects. In addition to 314 acres being permanently protected in December by private landowners who donated conservation easements, the Conservancy has partnered with the Conservation Fund on a farmland protection program designed to keep working lands in working hands. We resolutely believe that current and future generations will benefit from the protection of these critical resources.

Speaking of the future...

Morgan County has requested the Conservancy's assistance in exploring improvements to the solid waste system, including improvements to the recycling program. The Junior Conservancy is currently researching the issues and should have a report by the end of May. We expect a robust countywide recycling education program to be one result of their work, as there is a critical need to reduce contamination of our recycled waste in order to recycle more of it.

The future of the historic Davis Crossroads near Rutledge is at risk, three corners of which are

protected by conservation easements by private landowners. We all use and demand a reliable source of energy, but that quality of life sometimes comes at a cost. The Conservancy is working with the Georgia Transmission Corporation and Davis Crossroads landowners to minimize the impact of the proposed high voltage transmission lines by finding a route that does not negatively impact the scenic, agricultural, and historic assets already protected at the crossroads.

As you know, the Conservancy aspires to be agile – being able to address multiple issues simultaneously and move from one project to the next, depending on community need. The recent recycling issue and the energy infrastructure issue are two examples of that agility. Thanks to a board of directors and committees with deep and broad experience, we are able to collect expertise and put it to good use when needed. Thanks to this citizen-led leadership and to members, foundations, donors, and volunteers, the Conservancy

has been able to balance stability and dynamism and has made a significant impact on Morgan County.

Thank you to all of you who support this organization. We are honored to do this work and look forward to all that is to come in the next twelve months.

Sincerely,



Robert Trulock, President

LOVE





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## Resource Protection

# Playing Matchmaker for an Endangered Masterpiece

“I’ve seen the best of times and the worst of times since being built in 1883, but through it all I’ve stood tall as an incredible example of architecture influenced by the American Aesthetic Movement. Located in beautiful, historic Madison, Georgia, I am brimming with decadent, sumptuous details and fine craftsmanship in every nook and cranny of my 5,000 square feet of space. Set on an acre of land on the main street of a town recently named the “best small town in Georgia” by Southern Living Magazine, I don’t think it’s too bold to say that living under my decadent ceilings is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.”

The above is the opening paragraph of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s “*Preservation Personals: 1883 Diamond in the Rough in Madison, Georgia.*” A different kind of Match.com, the personal ad ends with “I know I need a bit of a facelift, but as a National Register-listed property, I am eligible for huge tax incentives to help out with my rehabilitation. If you love a good project, maybe a fixer-upper like me can end up being your Prince Charming!”

We are actively seeking a buyer who has the wherewithal to rehabilitate the now stabilized Foster–Thomason–Miller House and bring her back to life. Thanks to press from the Georgia Trust’s Places in Peril list, the National Trust, the London Evening Standard, MSN, and our own Morgan County Citizen and Lake Oconee News, there have been over 200,000 photo views and over 3,600 first time-visitors to the Lewis and Redwine Listing site. A record breaker. We can’t wait to see who swipes right!

In the meantime, we need your help to finalize the Endangered Properties Revolving Fund Campaign by July 31, 2019. We are \$130,000 from our \$1,250,000 goal. Thank you to the Watson-Brown Foundation for the challenge grant, to The 1772 Foundation for a matching grant, and to all the Founding Contributors! If you would like to support this kind of work, please contact us or contribute by donating online or by mailing a check.

To all of you who have volunteered over the last few months working in the yard, cleaning the house, researching history and materials preservation techniques, decorating for Christmas, we thank you so very much for your inspired devotion to this amazing house and to this community.



## Resource Protection

# Working Farms Program Comes to Morgan County



The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit organization that protects land across the United States, is working to protect important farmland right here in Morgan County. The Working Farms Program is a project of the Conservation Fund that protects farmland and halts land fragmentation in major metro areas, creates pathways to secure land ownership for farmers, and helps launch new farm businesses. Morgan County has been selected by the Conservation Fund to launch the Working Farms Program in the Atlanta-metro area. With the help of the Madison-Morgan Conservancy, farmers and land owners are currently being sought to participate in the program.

The Working Farms Program helps keep working lands in working hands by providing farmers with access to land at a reduced purchase price. The Conservation Fund utilizes a four-step method: 1) BUY: acquire small to mid-sized farms facing development pressure, 2) LEASE: provide access to this land to farmers through a secure lease contract, 3) PROTECT: place a conservation easement on the property for permanent protection and to reduce purchase price by 40-50%, and 4) SELL: sell reduced-priced land to leasing farmer.

As the Atlanta-metro area expands, this innovative program will help protect rural farmland in Morgan County and offer farmers with a financially-feasible path to land ownership in the vicinity of a large urban area demanding locally-grown products. Given the current status of agricultural trends in the U.S., we are excited that Morgan County is at the forefront of this program in Georgia.

If you are a landowner or farmer interested in participating in the program, please contact Christine McCauley Watts at [cmccauley@mmcGeorgia.org](mailto:cmccauley@mmcGeorgia.org) for more information.

### Our Farmers are Aging:

The average age of a U.S. farmer is 58

### Demand for Local Food Continues to Increase:

Local food sales have grown 9% annually since 2014

### The Number of Next-Generation Farmers is on the Rise:

For only the 2nd time in last century the number of farmers under 35 has increased

## Utility Corridor Risks Historic Davis Crossroads

It sits on a little rise, Davis Crossroads does, and gives you a long view of one of Morgan County's most bucolic landscapes. Davis descendants have farmed and cared for the land surrounding this crossroads for generations and in the last two decades have donated three conservation easements to permanently protect the scenic, historic, and agricultural conservation values found here.

This place may never look the same, so we drove out to take it all in. For months, we have been pouring over maps and researching historic homes and churches in the area, all in an effort to find an alternative route for the Georgia Transmission Corporation's (GTC) Facebook Transmission Line and 230/115 kV Substation project.

The utility corridor will be one of those huge ones: giant substations, monopoles 80- to 120-foot tall carrying transmission lines across nine miles in 500- to 750-foot spans from a substation north of I-20 to Facebook's new ThumbsUp substation in Stanton Springs. No matter the route they take, the towering lines will plow through farmland, over creeks, through forests, and wind around historic homes and cemeteries at the historic Davis Crossroads. The big problem: 93 acres of permanently protected conservation land lay between the two substations, and GTC wants to bulldoze right through and over it.

The conservation easements at the crossroads protect the iconic Davis Cemetery, prime farmland, a circa 1900 farmhouse, and the scenic quality of the crossroads. The easements were donated by three different landowners whose families have owned land here for generations – charitable gifts held and de-fended by NRCS and a land trust, all in an effort to pass on to future generations the land, the sense of place, the wide-open spaces, the quality of life, and the history. We thought it was safe.

The Conservancy understands that utility companies, like the rest of us, want the most effective use of their dollar. They are, therefore, inclined to locate their infrastructure on wide open, sparsely populated, cheap land. Conservation land is cheap because the development potential has been removed to protect some other important use, drastically reducing its fair market value – in this case, a personal financial sacrifice and the epitome of an altruistic effort to protect private land for the public's quality of life.

Shire PLC (formerly Baxalta International) is here, in part, for that quality of life. And Facebook is coming. And we know progress comes at a cost. So, the Conservancy has spent the last eighteen years being proactive, working in concert with developers, local governments, and private land-owners to protect those things the people here respect and honor: family histories, fertile farmland, beautiful historic homes, and the heritage tourism and agritourism industries that fuel our economy. This is what we consider a holistic approach to balanced growth, and it seems only right to demand the same level of consideration from those entities needing to use those cherished natural, agricultural, and/or historic resources.

The Conservancy is not alone in this approach. The Land Trust Alliance, who works to “save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America,” is working on a higher level to amend the Natural Gas Act and other FERC-regulated processes to ensure resource protection, local economy preservation, and respect for private property rights during the permitting process.

So, as we await the federal changes needed to resolve these local issues, we will continue to pour over maps, recommend alternative routes, and provide as much assistance as possible to simply find another way. Hopefully consensus will eventually be found among landowners, the utilities, and the community at large.



The mission of the Madison-Morgan Conservancy is to provide public education on conservation matters and to protect and enhance the heritage and quality of life of the residents of Morgan County by preserving historic sites, greenspace, farmland, and timberland.

## Technical Assistance

# Sign Up for Solar by March 31<sup>st</sup>

Morgan County residents and business owners have until March 31, 2019 to sign up for the Solarize Newton-Morgan program. This is a community-based solar group-purchasing program that helps homeowners, businesses, and nonprofits save on the cost of solar by leveraging the power of bulk purchasing – the more participants, the greater the savings! As part of the campaign, a free solar evaluation is available to provide you with a 25-year outlook of the benefits of solar on your property.

If you missed the Solarize workshop in Madison last fall, you have the opportunity to learn more at a “Deep Dive” workshop on January 24th and a Solar Open House on January 26th. For more information about these events and the Solarize program, please contact Theresa Pippin at [tpippin@mmcGeorgia.org](mailto:tpippin@mmcGeorgia.org).



## Educational Programming

# Junior Conservancy Out and About in Morgan County

The Junior Conservancy is kicking off the new year with a new project: Researching waste and recycling in Morgan County. Students will visit the Athens Landfill and Recycling Center this spring to learn about state-of-the-art practices in waste management that are utilized right up the road from us in Clarke County. The students will research various topics, from how our waste in Morgan County is disposed of, to innovative alternatives to traditional landfills. This research will be presented by the Junior Conservancy students to the Conservancy Board of Directors in May.

In the first half of the school year, Junior Conservancy students met monthly to plan activities that got them out and about in Morgan County. In September, students kayaked on Lake Rutledge, in October, they participated in an educational Ramble through Morgan County, and in November, they volunteered at the Bostwick Cotton Gin Festival. Needless to say, it has been a productive Junior Conservancy year so far!



## Technical Assistance

# 314 Acres Permanently Protected in December

We revel in the glory of this news! 314 acres were permanently protected in December by two landowners who voluntarily donated conservation easements on their farms. The Athens Land Trust now holds these conservation easements and is responsible for monitoring them annually and defending them in perpetuity.

Morgan County now has 4,300+ acres of conservation easement land. That means more wildlife and wildlife habitat, prime agricultural soils, working forests (income-producing planted pine forests managed for production), creeks, and beautiful scenery are all secured for future generations. And the landowners who donated these easements find some tax relief, so they can invest in their farms, or send their children/grandchildren to college, or go on vacation. Now that's a win-win.



We send a big THANK YOU to the landowners who donated conservation easements! If you are interested in this estate planning tool, please contact us so we can help you figure out if it's right for you and your family.

## Organizational News

# The Conservancy Team is Growing!

Conservancy interns are the best! The goals of our internship program are 1) to produce something timely and useful for the Conservancy's programming, 2) to produce something the intern can take with them to show future employers the quality of their work they can produce, and 3) to have fun. That last part is not usually hard – between the staff, the Junior Conservancy, and a few great interns, the office is a happenin' place! We even have a water cooler now.



Over the holiday break, Carter Atchison, a Morgan County graduate now in his sophomore year at Wofford College, did a deep dive study into solid waste and recycling issues. The Conservancy is exploring these issues upon the County's request, and Carter's internship has been a key component to our early understanding of the core issues.



In 2019 Sandra Hall will continue her internship working on the Greenprint Guide, photo-documenting the 200+ resources found during the most recent Morgan County Greenprinting process. She has been a key part of this process for about seven months and is becoming an integral part of our team.

If you or anyone you know is interested in an internship with the Conservancy, please see the “Internships” page on our website and contact us.

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## Join or Renew Your Membership Today!

Madison-Morgan Conservancy  
P.O. Box 752, Madison, GA 30650  
706-818-8046 | [www.mmcGeorgia.org](http://www.mmcGeorgia.org) | [info@mmcGeorgia.org](mailto:info@mmcGeorgia.org)

### Annual Membership Form

Support the Conservancy's mission with your annual membership:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daniel Morgan Society \$5,000 +<br>(Watershed Donor Level)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter - \$500       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer - \$2,500 +<br>(Watershed Donor Level)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Donor - \$250           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor - \$1,000 +<br>(Watershed Donor Level)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Preservationist - \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to contribute an additional: \$ _____<br>to the Endangered Properties Revolving Fund. | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservationist - \$50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My Company has a matching gift program.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Naturalist - \$20       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to volunteer.   |  |

Name(s) as it should appear on the Membership list:

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 2: \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership

## Skin in the Game

100% of Conservancy board members contribute financially; hundreds of volunteer hours are dedicated to programs, administration, and fundraising; and a group of Watershed Donors contribute significantly to help fund operations. This is the Conservancy's skin in the game – a sign to everyone else that we are not just asking for handouts.

Each year, the Conservancy tries to match a \$50,000 grant awarded to us in 2009 by the Waterfall Foundation. These Watershed Donors commit to contributing over \$1,000 annually to the Conservancy, providing that much needed stability all non-profits seek. In 2018, we raised \$40,550 in Watershed Donor memberships. Help us reach \$50,000 in 2019 by becoming a Watershed Donor today. You will help us remain agile and endure for future generations.

**Our Vision:** We envision a thriving Morgan County to be a healthy, beautiful place to live and work for current and future residents, where clean air and water, abundant wildlife, forestry, agriculture, and heritage tourism are vital and contribute to the regional economy. We aim to preserve the beautiful public vistas, agrarian heritage, rural crossroads, and small town atmosphere while attracting small to medium sized businesses to provide essential jobs and sustain our balanced tax digest. We envision an organization that makes an impact locally and uses its success to promote conservation and balanced growth throughout Georgia.



MADISON-MORGAN  
CONSERVANCY

SERVE † SAFEGUARD † SUSTAIN

Madison-Morgan Conservancy  
P.O. Box 752  
Madison, GA 30650

(706) 818-8046

[www.mmcGeorgia.org](http://www.mmcGeorgia.org)



Return Service Requested

## Need to Renew? Check Your Mailing Label.

The date printed above your name on the mailing label is the last date on which you paid your annual membership dues. Please renew annually to support the Conservancy's work and to expand our programming.

### Winter, 2018-2019

*This newsletter is printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper.*

### Upcoming Events

**JANUARY 24**

#### Solar Deep Dive Workshop

Thursday, January 24, 7–9 PM at the Georgia Wildlife Federation, 11600 Hazelbrand Rd NE, Covington, GA 30014. For more information, please contact Theresa Pippin at [tpippin@mmcGeorgia.org](mailto:tpippin@mmcGeorgia.org)

**JANUARY 26**

#### Solar Open House

Saturday, January 26, 1–3 PM, 439 Knox Chapel Rd., Social Circle, GA. For more information, please contact Theresa Pippin at [tpippin@mmcGeorgia.org](mailto:tpippin@mmcGeorgia.org).

**MARCH 21**

#### Junior Conservancy Applications Due

Applications for the Junior Conservancy 2019-2020 school year will be due Thursday, March 21st. All high school students who live in Morgan County are invited to apply. Please visit our website for more information and to access the application.

**MARCH 22**

#### Annual Membership Supper at Malcom's Crossroads

Join us Friday, March 22, 2019, 7:00 p.m. for the Annual Membership Supper at Dan Rather's barn at Malcom's Crossroads. Details to follow.

**MARCH 31**

#### Solarize Sign-Up Deadline

Morgan County residents and business-owners have until March 31, 2019 to sign up for the Solarize Newton-Morgan program. Please contact Theresa Pippin for more information, [tippin@mmcGeorgia.org](mailto:tippin@mmcGeorgia.org).

**MAY 4**

#### Derby Day at the Foster-Thomason-Miller House



Mark your calendars – Saturday, May 4, 2019 is Derby Day! We'll be getting down and derby again. The Masterpeice on Main (the Foster-Thomason-Miller House) will provide the perfect setting for the Conservancy's only annual fundraiser. Details to follow.

**DATES TO BE DETERMINED**

#### The Easy Ease

A series of tours of conservation easements with the landowner and land trust. Keep your eyes open for announcements and plan to walk, hike, or hayride through the property and hear about the forests, creeks, wildlife habitat, and agricultural conservation values being protected by the easement. Of course, we'll have refreshments, too!