

Madison-Morgan Conservancy

Protecting Farms, Forests, and Front Porches for Future Generations



Celebrating 25 Years

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As my Conservancy board term comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on what an honor it has been to serve this organization since its founding. When we first started, we had a simple but profound goal: to protect the land, history, and character of this special place. Today, thanks to the dedication of so many, that vision has not only been realized but continues to grow beyond what we ever imagined.

What makes me most proud is not just what we've accomplished, but how we've done it. The Conservancy has been led by good people—folks who believe in rolling up their sleeves, doing the right thing, and leaving a place better than they found it. From our board members, past and present, to the many volunteers and members who give their time and treasure, this organization is built on service, passion, and stewardship.

Over the years, we have preserved land, protected historic sites, and worked with landowners and government officials to ensure that conservation remains a viable and attractive option for those who love their land. But our work is far from finished. The demand for conservation easements and responsible land stewardship is growing, and I believe the Conservancy is in the perfect position to meet that need. By expanding our reach as a regional

land trust, we can help more landowners protect the critical mass of farmland and forestland needed to avoid sprawl, and we can ensure that our landscapes remain productive, wild, and beautiful for future generations.

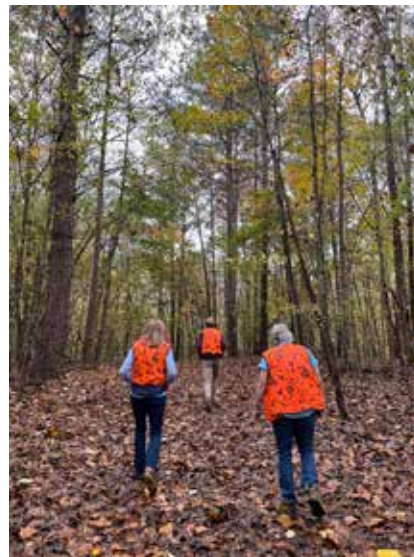
Over the last 25 years, we've learned a lot, and I hope you will join us in that learning curve by participating in the Conservancy's 25th Anniversary's "25 Ways to Engage in Conservation." You'll learn, but you'll have a good time, too.

Leaving the board doesn't mean leaving the mission. I'll always be here to support the Conservancy and encourage its continued growth. I hope you'll do the same. If you've ever considered getting more involved, now is the time. Whether through membership, volunteering, or advocating for conservation in your own way, your contributions are key to the Conservancy's success.

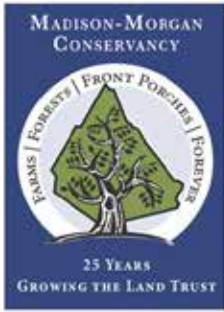
This organization is a testament to what a dedicated community can achieve when it comes together for a common cause. I have no doubt that it will continue to thrive, and I look forward to watching its next chapter unfold.

Sincerely,

Robert Trulock
President and Founding Board Member



25 Ways to Engage in Conservation in 2025



25 WAYS TO ENGAGE IN CONSERVATION

In celebration of the Conservancy's 25th anniversary, we present a curated list of 25 ways for you to engage in conservation.

Join us for a few hosted events, or explore on your own.

Participate in any of these to connect with productive, wild, and beautiful Morgan County.

25 YEARS

5 EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Stewardship Workshop (2/18/25) Derby Day (5/3/25) Membership Supper with Special Guest (9/13/25, new season) Cheese Wafer Baking Demo at Circle Tate Ranch (10/4/25) Watershed Donors Celebration (TBD) 	
5 HIKES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dairy Dash (hosted by Benkoski Farm 5/17/25) Goose Creek Farm Conservation Easement (hosted 6/14/25) BF Grant (self-directed) Hard Labor Creek State Park CCC Camp (self-directed) Len Foote Hike Inn (self-directed) 	
5 BOOKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold A Walk in the Woods, Bill Bryson Holy Shit: Managing Manure to Save Mankind, Gene Logsdon The Devil in the White City, Erik Larson The New Economy of Nature, Daily and Ellison 	
5 FILMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Tree Man (screening at Jack's Creek Farm) (5/29/25) How Trees Talk to Each Other (TED Talk) Who Owns Water (documentary) Why Bees are Disappearing (TED Talk) Why We Should Build Wooden Skyscrapers (TED Talk) 	
5 MEALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wild Game Supper at the Huntz's Long Meadow Farm (TBD Fall) Mayor Bruce Gilbert's Cornbread (recipe) McCauley's Garden Cucumber Sandwich (recipe) Symmes' Country Captain Casserole (recipe) Trulock's Bean and Sausage Chili (recipe) 	

For more information or to sign up, contact the Madison-Morgan Conservancy:
 PO Box 752 | Madison, GA 30650 | 706-818-8046 | info@mmcGeorgia.org | mmcGeorgia.org

Did you know that Morgan County is the only county in Georgia with its own countywide conservancy? As you ride through this productive, wild, and beautiful place, conservation may seem invisible—but that's the point. You won't see endless subdivisions because the "invisibility cloak" of conservation easements is working its magic.

Thanks to dedicated landowners who love their land and choose to protect it rather than develop it, 6,000 acres are now permanently protected. And the demand for conservation easements continues to grow.

As we look ahead, we see it is necessary to expand the Conservancy's reach to protect the lands in Morgan County and beyond that sustain Morgan County's farmers and farmland. It's time to grow the land trust.

To all who have supported this grand experiment—thank you. It's working. Morgan County still has a chance to avoid sprawl. Together, we can ensure it stays that way.

Engage in Conservation All Year Long!

To celebrate 25 years, we're inviting you to engage in conservation through:

- 5 Events**
- 5 Hikes**
- 5 Books**
- 5 Films**
- 5 Meals**

Join us as we explore the lands, the challenges, and the victories that shape our state (and our county) through land conservation and historic preservation.

Stay tuned for more details, and let's keep conservation thriving!

Conservancy Announces Intent to Apply for National Accreditation

The Madison-Morgan Conservancy is proud to announce its intent to apply for accreditation through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). This prestigious designation recognizes land conservation organizations that meet rigorous national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever.

Accreditation is a milestone that reflects a commitment to excellence, transparency, and enduring stewardship. Earning accreditation is an essential step in ensuring that our work meets the highest standards in land conservation. It reinforces our dedication to preserving the natural, agricultural, and historic resources of Morgan County and will provide confidence to this community that these treasures will be protected for generations to come.

The accreditation process is extensive and requires a thorough review of the Conservancy's policies, procedures, and programs to ensure compliance with national standards. This rigorous effort represents an investment of approximately \$60,000 and 350 staff hours, demonstrating the Conservancy's dedication to the highest ethical and

technical standards in land conservation.

Public Comment Period Open

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission invites public input on the Conservancy's application. Comments must be signed, written, and relate to how the Conservancy complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust.

For a complete list of standards, visit the Land Trust Accreditation Commission's website at <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices>.

To submit comments:

Visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org

Email comments to info@landtrustaccreditation.org

Mail comments to:

Land Trust Accreditation Commission

Attn: Public Comments

36 Phila Street, Suite 2

Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Comments on Madison-Morgan Conservancy's application will be most useful if submitted by June 18, 2025.

Land Protection

Digging Deeper: What are Conservation Easements

Think of conservation easements as an overlay of land use restrictions - you still own your land, can still hunt/fish/timber/farm it, but you just give up the rights to do certain things, like subdivide and develop.

Any legal interest in real property can be severed and sold. Think oil and gas (mineral) rights, or air rights, or even the right to lease. Landowners may get compensated for selling or giving away those rights, just as they may get compensated for selling or donating a conservation easement.

Selling Conservation Easements: The US Farm Bill provides funding to purchase conservation easements to protect the nation's best agricultural soils. Morgan County now has a Farmland Protection Program, which helps to purchase conservation easements on farmland by leveraging those federal funds. The Conservancy is facilitating that program by acting as the land trust to hold, monitor, and defend those conservation easements in perpetuity.

Donating Conservation Easements: Currently 6,000 acres in Morgan County are protected through donated conservation easements. The landowners who donated these



easements were eligible for a federal tax deduction (up to 50% of AGI for up to 16 years). Many of those landowners also qualified for a state tax credit (25% of easement value, capped at \$250,000).

If you'd like to dig deeper into conservation easements, how you might use them to protect your property, or how they might benefit your family, please contact us.

Or join us at the Land Stewardship Workshop on February 18, at Farmview Market, 5-7:30pm, \$35/person. Contact us to register.

Conservation easements will help protect a critical mass of farmland and help Morgan County avoid sprawl.

Junior Conservancy Out and About Doing Cool Things

All work and no play seems to be what the Madison-Morgan Junior Conservancy (JC) members prefer, believe it or not, as long as there is food involved! These youth have had a variety of educational and service experiences so far this year, from ringing the new bell in the Fairplay School renovation to learning the best methods of cleaning gravestones – did you know the preferred cleaning product is a horse shampoo, Orvis paste?

One of the many family cemeteries in our county is nestled in a beautiful hardwood grove accessible near the equestrian center at Hard Labor Creek State Park. In October, the JC board members proudly showed off “their gravestones” after gently scrubbing the lichens and algae off and clearing the saplings and brush growing in the cemetery the CCC boys protected with a low rock wall.

The November gathering had the teens romping in the woods and water. Using tools and techniques of “Adopt-a-Stream,” the board members collected and analyzed Still Creek in Rutledge, which feeds into Hard Labor Creek, one of Madison’s sources of drinking water. The data collected will act as a baseline to compare to future collected data. Changes in the data may indicate change that has occurred in the surrounding environment.

A working lunch meeting, in December, had board members breaking into committees for a planning session, over delicious fried chicken, mac ‘n cheese and collard greens at Benny Paul’s Soul Food Restaurant. Later in the month, the beautiful home and gardens of Sherri-Aynn and Brian Collins was the perfect venue to gather and celebrate the season for the annual Alumni Holiday Gathering. A yummy lunch and gift exchange highlighted the relief of the last day of school for the semester.

Finally, in January, the Junior Conservancy board learned about the Endangered Properties Revolving Fund and what the MMC board has been doing to ensure the preservation of some of our county’s precious properties. A tour of the Seedhouse, FTM House (outside), and a visit inside the Fairplay School where the contrast from last year’s tour of the gutted building was striking. Christine provided her sage insight to the structural importance of bringing back historically accurate architectural elements.

The Madison-Morgan Conservancy Junior Conservancy looks forward to meeting you, the Madison-Morgan Conservancy members, at Derby Day where the teens will be working the event. See you there!



What's Next for the Revolving Fund?

In its first five years, the Conservancy's \$1 million Revolving Fund has made a lasting impact—saving three historic buildings and permanently protecting 191 acres of farmland, forests, wildlife habitat, and parkland. Even better? The fund grew by 30% in total assets during that time.

Now, as the rehabilitation of the Fairplay School nears completion, we're looking ahead to the next big project.

The Goal: Buy & Protect Before It's

Too Late: We're working to capitalize the Revolving Fund at a level that allows us to step in before farmland is sold for development. Morgan County needs



a critical mass of farmland to keep its agricultural industry strong—the farms, farmers, and farm businesses that sustain our productive, wild, and beautiful landscape. But to compete with developers, we need real financial power.

Beyond farmland, we also need to protect the historic places that tell our story and shape our sense of place. Once Fairplay School is restored, we'll be ready for the next challenge. Got a project in mind? We want to hear about it! Let's work together to protect what makes Morgan County special—for the next 25 years and beyond.

Membership

Support Georgia's Newest Land Trust

Permanent land protection coupled with farm-friendly zoning is the only way to manage sprawl. If you agree and want to help keep Morgan County productive, wild, and beautiful, you can support the Conservancy by joining, renewing your

membership, or donating to the mission. We will need all the help we can get and all the funding we can find to protect an additional 11,000 acres by 2030. It's a lofty goal, a stretch, and we are actively working toward it. We would love your help!

Join or Renew Your Membership Today!

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

706-818-8046 | www.mmcGeorgia.org | info@mmcGeorgia.org

- Daniel Morgan Society - \$5,000+ (Watershed Donor Level)
- Sustainer - \$2,500+ (Watershed Donor Level)
- Benefactor - \$1,000+ (Watershed Donor Level)
- I would like to contribute an additional: \$ _____ to the Endangered Properties Revolving Fund.
- My Company has a matching gift program. Please send me information about matching gifts.
- Please send me information about including the Madison-Morgan Conservancy in my will.
- I would like to volunteer.

- Supporter - \$500
- Donor - \$250
- Preservationist - \$100
- Conservationist - \$50
- Naturalist - \$25

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

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone 1: _____ Phone 2: _____

Email 1: _____

Email 2: _____

Monthly Giving

It's all about cash flow. If you would prefer to give monthly, it's easy to do online. Just go to the Membership page on our website, www.mmcGeorgia.org/membership, click the "Monthly Membership" button, and fill in the monthly amount you'd like to contribute. Monthly giving is a win-win:

- You can spread your contribution over 12 months.
- Monthly membership income helps the Conservancy budget for the year.

Daniel Morgan Society \$5,000+ | Monthly = \$417

Sustainer \$2,500+ | Monthly = \$209

Benefactor \$1,000+ | Monthly = \$84

Supporter \$500+ | Monthly = \$42

Donor \$250+ | Monthly = \$21



Conservancy Members

December 2024 - December 2025

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* Charter Members

Watershed Donors (bolded)

** Junior Conservancy Members

New Members (green)

Conservancy Members

December 2024 - December 2025

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* Charter Members

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CONSERVANCY

PROTECTING FARMS, FORESTS, AND
FRONT PORCHES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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

(706) 818-8046

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 your membership annually to support the Conservancy's work and to expand its land trust.

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

25th Anniversary Derby Day

Saturday, May 3, 2025 | 5pm-10pm

@ Walton's White Lily House

**Dan Belman and Randy Korando's recent transformation
of the historic Peter Walton House**

Planning for the 2025 Derby Day is in full swing, and we are excited about the venue, the traditional festivities, and a new initiative that has already taken place. The Conservancy sponsored an art competition this year and invited Morgan County High School art students to participate. The level of creativity and skill exhibited by the students truly amazed us!

If you received a Derby Day announcement via email or visited Eventbrite to sponsor, you encountered the breathtaking artwork created by 11th grader Maggie Rogers. Inspired by the iconic grandstands of the historic Churchill Downs, her piece captures the essence of Derby Day with vibrant colors that evoke the spirit of the spectacle. Join us May 3rd to see the winning pieces.

The artwork submitted by these talented students was so impressive that the judging panel faced a formidable challenge in selecting the best entries. After much deliberation, we are excited to announce the complete list of winners:

1st Place: Maggie Rogers

2nd Place: Leah Miller

3rd Place: Catherine Malcom

4th Place: Hailey Thrower & T.J.

5th Place: Brenna Patrick, Audrey Williams,
& Rini Ethridge

Thoughtful Detail: Hayden Turk

Best Rose: Lauriel Arnold & Catherine Malcolm

**Sponsor Derby Day today
to help keep Morgan County
productive, wild, and beautiful.**