

**Savannah River Watershed Partners  
Announce the  
*Lower Savannah River Watershed Initiative***

**Georgia & South Carolina Forestry Commissions, USDA Forest Service, Savannah River Clean Water Fund, Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water, and The Longleaf Alliance are partnering** to provide forest landowner education and forest land protection in the lower Savannah River watershed of Georgia and South Carolina. The purpose of the Lower Savannah River Watershed Initiative is to support state forestry commissions and water utilities by strengthening the forest and drinking water connection through projects that enhance public surface water supplies.

The initiative will focus on voluntary strategic forest conservation, restoration, and management of priority lands. Projects that have high potential for cooperative forest conservation, sound management, and/or restoration and that demonstrate the value of forest cover to drinking water supplies are the focus. “Clean water is one of the many services provided by a healthy, well-managed forest. We are excited to partner with the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Savannah Clean River Water Fund, The Longleaf Alliance, and the four drinking water utilities along the Lower Savannah River to highlight the relationship between active forest management and clean drinking water,” says South Carolina State Forester Gene Kodama.

Specifically, the Lower Savannah River Watershed Initiative will provide education and outreach to help:

- Improve forest management to benefit drinking water quality and other natural resource values, such as through implementation of forestry Best Management Practices;
- Link landowners with voluntary programs that offer financial assistance for conservation easements and other programs that offer long-term or permanent forest protection.

The project will be implemented by The Longleaf Alliance, which excels at voluntary education and assistance programs for landowners. They have a longstanding and active presence in both South Carolina and Georgia. The Savannah River Clean Water Fund has strong partnerships with drinking water utilities, the forestry sector, and conservation groups and has created a fund to support watershed protection projects that connect forestlands with drinking water protection.

The Longleaf Alliance’s, Lisa Lord, will work with initiative partners to identify priority areas and interested landowners, and help them secure information needed to protect or better manage their woodlands, including financial assistance. She will be a key resource for forest landowners interested in managing their properties to improve watershed functions and values to benefit both forests and drinking water.

Funding for this effort is provided through a USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Grant awarded to the Texas A&M Forest Service to support state forestry commissions in four southeastern states including Georgia and South Carolina. This funding is matched by investments from the following drinking water utilities in Georgia and South Carolina: Columbia County Water Utilities, the City of Augusta Utilities, Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority, and the City of North Augusta, SC. This funding is being used to support the *Southeastern Partnership for Forests and Water* initiative, a regional collaborative effort between the drinking water, forestry, and conservation sectors to enhance forested watershed stewardship to benefit forests, drinking water, and local economies.

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