

## GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION DIRECTOR

Governor **Nathan Deal** recently announced **Chuck Williams** as Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). Williams' nomination was approved by the Commission in August and was effective September 1st. The vacancy was created when former GFC Director **Robert Farris** retired in May.

"Chuck Williams is a dedicated public servant and an effective leader who has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to forest management and sustainable forestry," said Deal. "As a forest landowner, Chuck has a keen understanding of the forestry community in our state and country. His years of service on the GFC Board of Directors, coupled with his extensive background in economics, make him uniquely qualified to lead GFC as it provides leadership, service and education in the protection and conservation of Georgia's forest resources. Georgia's 24.1 million acres of commercial timberlands, more than any other state in the nation, offer a number of benefits to our citizens, from clean air and water to wildlife habitats, products and jobs. I am confident that under Chuck's guidance, GFC will continue to provide critical support of Georgia's timberlands and help to solidify our status as a top state for forestry."

Williams represented the 119th District in the Georgia House of Representatives since August 2011. He held leadership roles on various committees, including Agriculture and Consumer Affairs and Natural Resources and Environment. Williams was named as Georgia's Tree Farmer of the Year in 2005 in recognition of his passion for forestry and stewardship of the land. In May, 2017 he was awarded the Distinguished Northeast Georgia Service Award by NEGRC. He served in leadership positions for many forestry and agricultural organizations, including the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Georgia Forestry Association, the University of Georgia's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the Georgia Agribusiness Council. Williams also has experience in banking and financial services. He earned a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Georgia. Williams and his wife, Beth, live in Oconee County.

## AVIATION SYSTEM PLAN STAKEHOLDERS MEETING HELD

The second Stakeholder Committee meeting for the Georgia Statewide Aviation System Plan Update was held at GDOT offices on Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>. Executive Director **Jim Dove** represents our organization and the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) on the Committee. GDOT has contracted with JVIATION as Project Consultant. The planning effort is approximately 75% complete, with an anticipated completion date of February, 2018.

Key findings from the inventory of existing airports focused on analyses of Runway Protection Zones and Land Use/Height Zoning requirements, among others. Demand forecasts have included research on industry trends and statewide demands, i.e. commercial enplanements/operations and based aircraft and general aviation operations. Also studied to date have been current state roles and objectives, and gaps in current system coverage. An evaluation of the system performance is being undertaken along with current and future accessibility.

Next steps in the planning process will include:

- Changes to airport roles
- Facility objectives analysis
- Airport report cards
- Anticipated costs to improve system
- Project webinar

Should you have any questions or comments, please contact GDOT Aviation Program Manager **Steve Brian** at [sbrian@dot.ga.gov](mailto:sbrian@dot.ga.gov).

## DCA ANNOUNCES NEW PROGRAM

Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) leadership recently made us aware of the new **Rural Zone** program. Up to ten communities will be jointly designated by the Commissioners of Community Affairs and Economic Development each year. This designation will provide eligibility for businesses and investors to earn tax credits for job creation, investment in property, and rehabilitation activities within the designated zones.

In order to apply for the Rural Zone Designation, a community must meet the following requirements:

- Applicants must be municipalities, counties or consolidated governments with a population of 15,000 or less;
- All applicant governments must be in compliance with the state requirements regarding comprehensive planning and reporting, Service Delivery Strategy, Government Management Indicators (GOMI) Survey, and the Report of Local Government Finances as of December 1, 2017;
- Applicants must possess a concentration of historic commercial structures at least 50 years old within the targeted zone;
- Applicants must provide proof of economic distress based on poverty rate, vacancy rate, or blight; and
- Applicants must have developed a master plan/strategic plan designed to assist private and public investment, as well as a feasibility study/market analysis identifying business activities that can be supported in the targeted zone.

Information has been posted on the DCA website at <http://www.dca.ga.gov/economic/developmenttools/programs/ruralzones.asp>. Additional information can be obtained by contacting **Cherie Bennett** at [Cherie.Bennett@dca.ga.gov](mailto:Cherie.Bennett@dca.ga.gov) or Regional Representative **Beth Eavenson** at [region5@dca.ga.gov](mailto:region5@dca.ga.gov). Applications will be accepted until October 31, 2017, with designations anticipated before the end of the calendar year.

## PERDUE PARTNERS WITH SENATE COLLEAGUES ON APPALACHIAN SOLUTIONS

On Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, Senator **David Perdue** (R-GA), along with Senators **Joe Manchin** (D-V), **Mark Warner** (D-VA) and **Thom Tillis** (R-NC), released the recommendations from a partnership with the Bipartisan Policy Center's (BPC) Appalachia Initiative to boost prosperity and economic growth in the region. The Appalachian region is a large one, spanning 13 states and more than 25 million people, so to say it is a microcosm of rural issues may not be exactly right, but the region is a handy stand-in for the rural issues plaguing much of the country. The decline of the coal industry and traditional manufacturing has cost the region millions of jobs. Opioid abuse, low educational attainment and youth out-migration are just a few of the major problems. Over 40 percent of the Appalachian population lives in rural communities, as opposed to 20 percent for the nation as a whole, so any problems in rural communities are likely exacerbated in Appalachia.

The task force that put together the report began in May and heard from regional and national experts. The report developed 19 bipartisan recommendations "designed to address the region's most pressing economic needs." The study was split into four critical topics, with each Senator helming the topic of their particular expertise: entrepreneurship and job creation, energy and infrastructure, rural health, and education and workforce.

Senator Perdue, with his business background, led on entrepreneurship and job creation. "The economic miracle we witnessed over the last 70 years was built on innovation and capital formation. We must encourage innovators to stay and invest in Appalachia to help spark growth in the region," he said. In Northeast Georgia, four counties – Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison – are designated as part of Appalachia.

The 19 recommendations were each split into the four topic groups. The recommendations from Perdue's entrepreneurship and job growth group are:

- Reduce overlap and duplication in the federal government's financial regulatory structure, and give regulators more flexibility to set thresholds for enhanced regulatory supervision.
- Establish a Senate Task Force on intergovernmental Affairs.
- Expand federal programs that facilitate workforce-related public-private partnerships.
- Identify barriers that prevent Appalachian businesses from accessing existing workforce programs.

The key area of focus identified by his group was creating formal public-private partnerships to address job creation. These kinds of partnerships are often the outcomes of study groups but in the digital age, connecting these groups to foster development and cooperation has never been easier. As part of this, the group suggests an "innovation eco-system." The hope would be that after some initial support from governmental entities, the collaboration between government, academic institutions and the private sector "could provide more organic support for job creation, independent of formal government programs."

To see the full report and the recommendations for the other topics contact [www.perdue.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/BPC-Economy-The-Appalachia-Initiative.pdf](http://www.perdue.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/BPC-Economy-The-Appalachia-Initiative.pdf).

## RIBBON CUTTING HELD

The Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board (WDB) recently held a ribbon cutting for the re-branded Northeast Georgia WorkSource Georgia mobile units. The WDB provides oversight for federal workforce development funds received for the 12 county Northeast Georgia area. The local workforce area has one twelve station unit and one six station unit, which are used throughout the region partnering with a variety of organizations to bring both career services and basic computer literacy. The Georgia Department of Economic Development's Workforce Development Division rolled out the state workforce development brand of WorkSource Georgia. Each local area has its own identifier added to that brand.

For additional information on workforce development programs available in Northeast Georgia, please contact the Workforce Development Division of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission which serves as the fiscal and administrative entity for the funds in the region. Staff may be reached at **(706) 369-5703**.



*Workforce Development Board*

## REMINDER

The next meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission will be held on **Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn**. Information on the meeting will be forthcoming.

## NEGA CITIES RECEIVE EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Three cities in the Northeast Georgia region were recognized for innovation and community-building projects during the 2017 Georgia Downtown Conference.

The Excellence in Design Award honored the Braselton Town Green. The Town Green serves as a gathering place for festivals and movies, and the occasional prom picture, christening, prayer meeting, rocket launch demonstration, and more. It wraps around the historic Braselton Brothers Store and serves as the catalyst for future private development. The Town Green includes a gazebo, bandstand, paved walking trails, open areas, and doubles as an amphitheater.

The Oconee Brewing Company in Greensboro was given the Excellence in Economic Development Award. In 2014, this 1900s building, once home to a soft drink bottling and distribution facility was declared a slum and blighted property. A father and son duo rehabbed and repurposed the 11,000 sq. ft. historic warehouse into a craft beer production brewery and event space. This \$2.6 million investment took a partial roof collapse, extensive mildew, rot and standing water issues structure and transformed it into an establishment that is redefining downtown Greensboro. The development team worked closely with the City of Greensboro and its Downtown Development Authority to receive financing.

The Athens-Clarke County Solid Waste Department received the Excellence in Organization Award. The Department's strategic programming has made possible several partnerships that introduced innovative ideas to maintain a clean Athens. Continuous overnight trash and recycling pickup, bi-weekly sidewalk scrubbing, the installation of unique cigarette receptacles and pedestrian recycling containers are a few measures implemented by the Department to address environmental maintenance needs.

## GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES SENIOR LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Governor **Nathan Deal** has announced senior administration nominations for multiple state agencies. Deal recommended **Christopher Nunn** to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Nunn's appointment followed former DCA Commissioner **Camila Knowles'** announcement that she was departing at the end of September for a position in the private sector. The change was effective on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Deal also appointed Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) President **Shawn Ryan** to fill the position of Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS). GSFC Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer **Caylee Noggle** will fill the vacancy by Ryan's departure as interim President of GSFC.

"I would like to thank Commissioner Knowles for her service to our state," said Deal. "Her efforts at DCA have helped build and grow strong, vibrant communities around Georgia, especially her work helping to revitalize rural areas in our state. I wish her the best in her future endeavors as she transitions to the private sector. I'm confident the incoming leadership at DCA, along with DOAS and GSFC, will continue advancing the needs of and serving Georgians throughout the state."

Mr. Nunn recently served as Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Administrative Services. He was previously the deputy commissioner of DCA. Prior to joining state government, Nunn led a midsize Atlanta-based professional services firm and worked as a management consultant focused on strategic planning, leadership development and process

improvement. A native of Perry, he earned a bachelor's degree from Emory University and a master's degree from the University of St. Andrews.

## MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open enrollment for Medicare Part C and D begins October 15<sup>th</sup>, and you will have until December 7<sup>th</sup> to make drug and health plan choices. With so many options available, choosing the right one is important. There is only one election period for both Medicare Parts C and D. After this time, plan changes can be made during the Annual Disenrollment Period of January 1 - February 14<sup>th</sup> of each year. During the Disenrollment Period, you will only be allowed to leave a Medicare Part C plan and return to Original Medicare (Parts A and B) with the option of choosing a prescription drug plan.

If you want to join a stand-alone prescription drug plan (PDP), use the Medicare Plan Finder Tool on [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). The Medicare Plan Finder Tool compares plans based on the drugs you need, the pharmacy you visit, and your drug costs. If you want to join a Medicare Advantage Plan, call 1-800-MEDICARE to find out what plans are in your area. You can also call or visit the website of your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), which in Georgia is called GeorgiaCares.

GeorgiaCares provides free, one-on-one assistance, so that callers can get personalized help as they compare options and decide on which plans best meet their needs. GeorgiaCares urges everyone to review their coverage and make sure that any changes to the plan for 2018 will continue to meet their needs. If you do not want to make a change, you can remain in your plan from 2017 as long as the plan is still available. GeorgiaCares urges you to compare your plan as close to October 15<sup>th</sup> as possible, so you will have plenty of time to make an informed decision. If you are interested in a Medicare Advantage Plan, you should talk to your doctors and other medical providers to find out which plans they accept.

For more information, contact **GeorgiaCares at 1-866-55AGING (1-866-552-4464), Option 4**. Staff can also be reached at [www.mygeorgiacares.org](http://www.mygeorgiacares.org) or at [www.facebook.com/GeorgiaCares](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaCares).

## RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM GRANTS AVAILABLE

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has announced the availability of funding under the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

Local governments, state and federal agencies, and 501(c)(3) nonprofits are eligible to receive up to \$200,000 over the two-year grant term in addition to the required 20% match. Permissible activities include new trail construction, trail restoration, trailhead facility construction, lease of heavy equipment, purchase of hand tools, land acquisition for trail purposes, water trail development, and safety and educational programming. The pre-application deadline for this grant is Tuesday, January 2, 2018.

Northeast Georgia communities have submitted successful applications and received RTP funding for walking and bicycling trails in previous cycles, including for construction of the planned 39-mile Firefly Trail.

Visit the DNR's website to learn more about RTP funding: [www.gastateparks.org/RTP](http://www.gastateparks.org/RTP). To discuss the NEGR's ability to provide application assistance for RTP grants, please contact Principal Planner **John Devine**, AICP, at [jdevine@negrc.org](mailto:jdevine@negrc.org).



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*Update*

**REGIONAL MEETINGS**  
**OCTOBER**

10	8:30 a.m.	Workforce Development Board	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
18	1:30 p.m.	Aging Advisory Council	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
19	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
19	3:00 p.m.	Firefly Trail Advocacy Group	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
24	8:30 a.m.	Youth Advisory Committee	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room



*Sincerely & Respectfully,*