



County's Community Forest Project Moves Forward with Multiple Grant and Strategic Funding Pathways

Posted on September 9, 2025 by Carey Fauscett-Anderson

TRENTON, Ga. (Sept. 9, 2025) — The Dade County Commission is advancing the Community Forest initiative, anchored by a \$500,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.



Commissioner Phillip Hartline explained that the initial grant was awarded after the project's launch, and that the county has already invested around \$50,000 last October in due diligence—covering surveying and an advanced soil study. He projected that, with all funding secured, the county's net cost would be approximately \$700 to \$750 per acre.

County Executive Don Townsend affirmed the project's flexibility, stating, *"We're not locked into this at any time. If we need to back out, we can get out of it."* He

highlighted ongoing efforts to secure layered grant funding: a potential additional \$1.2 million through the Community Forest Program grant, \$200,000 for restoration through the Trust for Public Land, and potential funding from Georgia Power. These combined resources could bring total project funding to \$2.4 million, covering both land purchase and recreational expansion.

Importantly, the forest land in question is already held in a conservation trust and is *not* on the tax digest, meaning its acquisition will not impact property tax revenues.

Under the terms of the LWCF agreement, Dade County will comply with state and federal requirements, supported by local



conservation partners who will assist with acquisition, planning, and long-term stewardship.

Bordering Cloudland Canyon State Park and encompassing over two miles of Lookout Creek frontage, the property offers opportunity for trail systems and nature access. To underscore the forest's classic significance, Commissioner Hartline quoted his father: *"The only thing the side of a mountain is good for is holding the world together."*

Chairman Don Townsend called the initiative *"a win for our entire community,"* emphasizing its promise to preserve Dade County's natural heritage while enhancing outdoor access and promoting economic opportunity.

