



## **FOREST LAND PROTECTION ACT**

As Georgia continues to develop, it is becoming increasingly difficult to conserve our forests. Increasingly, as forest ownership patterns undergo dramatic changes, large tracts of forest land are sold then subdivided and resold increasing the value of these tracts and placing additional property tax burdens on all forest landowners. In many areas of the state, growing timber cannot continue to be a financially viable option for the property owner. When these forests are lost to development, the forests and the environmental benefits they provide can never be recovered.

### **Incentive for Forest Land Protection**

- Voluntary tax program for large tracts of forest land that are not eligible to enroll in the existing Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA) program due to acreage and ownership restrictions.
- In return for agreeing to keep the land in a complying use, landowners receive a lower property tax rate on their forest property.

### **Who Qualifies?**

- Private and non-private landowners with tracts of timber land 200 acres or greater
- Property has as its primary use the good faith subsistence or commercial production of trees, timber or other wood and wood fiber products from or on the land
- Property currently enrolled in Conservation Use (CUVA) or Preferential Ag is not eligible unless it is transferred out of the existing preferential assessment program

### **Key Features and Benefits**

- Establishes a 15 year covenant period and includes severe penalties in the event of a breach of the covenant
- Conservation value established by the State Department of Revenue's conservation use valuation tables
- 3% cap on annual revaluation of properties in this program
- All contiguously owned forest land within a county must remain in the same covenant
- Local governments are reimbursed by the State for 50% of the lost revenue up to 3% of digest revenues and 100% of lost revenue above 3% of digest revenues
- Landowners notified if they are in breach of their covenant and given 30 days to come back into compliance. Property owners are entitled to appeal the action of the board of tax assessors.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS PROGRAM AND THE NECESSARY FORMS PLEASE CONTACT KATIE SANDERS AT 706-864-2433 OR VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 99 COURTHOUSE HILL, SUITE C, DAHLONEGA GEORGIA.**