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**8 in 10 Voters Agree: Georgia Should Invest in Land Conservation**  
***New Polling Shows Strong, Bi-Partisan Support for Conservation Initiative***

Eight in 10 Georgians agree that a portion of the existing state sales tax on outdoor recreation equipment should be constitutionally dedicated to land conservation according to a recent poll conducted by McLaughlin & Associates for the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Coalition. The coalition is comprised of the state's leading conservation organizations.

“Georgians understand the important role that land and natural resources play in their quality of life, from clean drinking water to places for children and families to be outside,” said Robert Ramsay, president of the Georgia Conservancy. “We are excited about this proposed solution that would have a generational impact on land conservation without raising or creating any new taxes.”

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act (HB332) would dedicate 75% of the existing state sales and use tax on outdoor recreation equipment to the protection of the state's land, water and wildlife. Funds generated could be used to protect lands critical to water quality, maintain and improve access to parks, and address the conservation program defined in Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan. The shift from appropriated to annually dedicated funding would also allow the state to attract more private and philanthropic investment.

“Georgia's outdoor economy, which includes hunters and anglers as well as those who simply enjoy the outdoors, has an annual economic impact of \$27 billion and supports nearly 240,000 direct jobs. We believe this proposal will not only protect this significant industry sector, but allow it to grow. With dedicated funding, the state could better protect not only the habitats of game and non-game wildlife, but also the beaches, rivers, and lakes that outdoor enthusiasts enjoy ,” added Mike Worley, president and CEO of the Georgia Wildlife Federation.

The Georgia constitution requires the dedication of any taxes for a particular purpose to be approved by the voters. If passed by the required two-thirds of the General Assembly, the measure would be on the ballot in November 2018.

“Our state has benefitted from a legacy of leaders willing to invest in our land and natural resources. We are hopeful that the General Assembly will agree with their constituents who overwhelmingly support this proposal that this is a viable approach to

preserve our state's natural beauty, ensure access to land and greenspace for both rural and urban communities, and protect critical resources including our water supply," concluded Thomas Farmer, executive director of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Coalition.

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Coalition is comprised of The Conservation Fund, Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Park Pride, and the Trust for Public Land. For more information, visit [www.georgiaoutdoorstewardship.org](http://www.georgiaoutdoorstewardship.org).

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