



Staff Report

Subject: Amendment to Section 6.09 – Tree Fund Management, Tree Protection & Preservation Ordinance
Author: Jennifer Rose, Planner I
Department: Development Services – Planning & Zoning
Meeting Date: November 4, 2025

Proposed Zoning: N/A
Existing Zoning: N/A
Map & Parcel: County-wide application
Parcel Size: N/A
Proposed Use: Establish clear guidelines for the administration, funding and authorized use of the County’s Tree Fund
Applicant: Effingham County Board of Commissioners
Owner(s): Effingham County
Location: County-wide

Background:

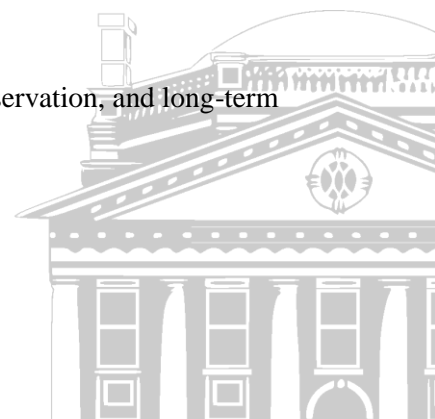
The revised section strengthens this framework by adding **Conservation Land Restitution and Contributions** as a new revenue category, enabling the County to receive in-lieu payments, negotiated settlements, or mitigation fees designated for conservation projects.

The Proposed Development:

The proposed amendment to **Section 6.09 – Tree Fund Management** broadens the scope of the County’s Tree Fund to include **Conservation Land** as both a **source of restitution** and an **authorized use of Tree Fund expenditures**.

Article VI – Section 6.09 – Tree Fund Management

- Establishes the Tree Fund as a restricted account to support tree planting, canopy preservation, and long-term conservation, including Conservation Land acquisition.



- Expands revenue sources to include licenses/permits, service charges, fines/forfeitures, private donations, and Conservation Land restitution & contributions (in-lieu fees/settlements).
- Authorizes expenditures for planting/maintenance, reforestation and habitat restoration, acquisition/management of Conservation Land or Easements, education/outreach, and related administration/enforcement; allows restitution-based conservation mitigation.
- Requires County Manager oversight with an annual report to the BOC on revenues, expenditures, conservation acreage/easements, canopy gains, and ongoing obligations.

Determination:

Staff finds that the proposed revision to Section 6.09 provides a comprehensive framework for the responsible collection, management, and use of Tree Fund revenues, ensuring that both immediate and long-term conservation goals are achieved through tree planting, habitat restoration, and Conservation Land Protection.

Conditions for Consideration:

- Aligns with best practices in environmental and land-use management by supporting both restoration and protection strategies.
- Ensures transparency and fiscal accountability through mandated annual reporting and BOC oversight.
- Operational Feasibility and Administration
- Public and Interagency Coordination – Enhances opportunities for grant matches and partnerships with the Georgia Forestry Commission, local land trusts, and federal conservation programs.
- Effective Enforcement and Restitution Mechanisms

Planning and Zoning Services

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