



Sansavilla Wildlife Area expansion complete

HORTENSE, GA, UNITED STATES

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The Georgia Department of Natural Resources held a ribbon cutting ceremony in Hortense, Ga., Oct. 16 to announce the acquisition of land for the Sansavilla Wildlife Management Area.

“I am standing here today to proudly open nearly 20,000 acres for the Sansavilla Wildlife Management Area,” said Mark Williams, the commissioner of the Georgia DNR. “Sansavilla is one of the region’s most popular WMAs for hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts. Thanks to our generous partners, Sansavilla is now protected forever and will continue to provide incredible outdoor opportunities for Georgians and also serve as an important habitat for seventeen of the most vulnerable species we are working to protect.”

Sansavilla was purchased by the Georgia DNR in phases. The funds for the purchases came from the Georgia DNR conservation fund, the Nature Conservancy, the Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program. The Marine Corps purchased a restricted use easement to buffer Townsend Bombing Range.

“We are proud to be a part of the team effort to protect Sansavilla,” said Col. Timothy P. Miller, the commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. “The conservation of this critical property along the Altamaha River provides needed encroachment protection that will enhance our training at TBR and will ensure our pilots and crew are prepared for today’s enemies and tomorrow’s conflicts.”

Sansavilla is home to 17 federally or state-listed endangered, threatened or species of concern, such as the indigo snake, short nose sturgeon, corkwood, several rare mussel species, and the gopher tortoise.

“The gopher tortoise can be found in six south east states but most of its population is here in Georgia,” said Jon Ambrose, the chief of nongame conservation at Georgia DNR. “It is known as a key stone species because its burrows provide habitat for over 350 other species. Therefore, over the past ten years we have been working to identify the best sites and viable Gopher Tortoise populations in Georgia. We identified Sansavilla as a very important site for the Gopher Tortoise along with 12 other species that are state protected or federally protected. The Sansavilla land acquisition is a key acquisition in the Gopher Tortoise conservation and I am pleased to be celebrating its completion.”

Along with the conservation of endangered species, the land acquisition will also help stimulate Georgia’s economy. “This Wildlife Management Area will be great for this area,” said Williams. “Hunting and fishing has an incredible impact on our economy. Sportsman supports as many jobs in Georgia as Delta Airlines and Hewlett-Packard combined, which are two of the largest employers in our state. This property has so much to offer to out-door enthusiasts and the state’s economy and I could not be more pleased with its completion.”

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