

# Keeping Forests in Forests<sup>SM</sup>



## News Release

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### **First-of-its-Kind Carbon Offset Program Launched in Georgia**

**"Keeping Forests in Forests" program provides sustainable, credible and scientifically based method for EMC customers to offset carbon footprints**

(Cochran, Ga., March 20, 2009) – Power4Georgians, along with the Carbon TreeBank LLC, and Wells Timberland REIT, have launched a scientifically based carbon offset program to be available to 700,000 Georgia electric membership corporation (EMC) members. The program, called "Keeping Forests in Forests<sup>SM</sup>," will use Georgia's timberlands to mitigate CO<sub>2</sub> in the environment and will be made available to all members of the EMCs that are part of the Power4Georgians consortium.

"Keeping Forests in Forests" will provide an opportunity for members of those EMCs to offset a portion of their household carbon footprints for a small surcharge (ranging from \$5 to \$25) added to their monthly electric bills. The fee will be used to preserve forestland in Georgia – one of the state's most important ecological resources – that might otherwise be harvested or cleared. Wells Timberland, a real estate investment company that has been awarded the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification for responsible forestry, will designate up to 50,000 acres in west Georgia for preservation in the first three years of the program.

To commemorate the program's launch Governor Sonny Perdue addressed a gathering at Gully Branch Tree Farm in Cochran, Ga. on March 20. Gully Branch is a 1,500-acre parcel of land owned by Earl and Wanda Barrs. Located in Bleckley County, the Barrs' farm was the 2008 Georgia Tree Farm of the Year and is managed according to SFI guidelines. Earl Barrs is a partner in Carbon TreeBank, and his tree farm provides a backdrop for understanding the value of forests in Georgia.

"Our state has experienced significant economic growth over the past several years while the demand for traditional wood uses has decreased. Programs like 'Keeping Forests in Forests' will help ensure that our robust forest lands stay intact," said Perdue. "This environmentally responsible program will provide economic incentives for landowners to maintain their land as managed forests, and will greatly benefit the state's environment by capturing and storing atmospheric carbon. Georgia's forests are among our greatest and most prized natural resources, and this program, along with other forest and environmental initiatives directed by the state, will help keep it that way."

Participants in the "Keeping Forests in Forests" project note it will be distinguished by solid science and methodology. Much of the information used to develop the program is based on Duke University's Forest-Atmosphere Carbon Transfer and Storage Experiment, a U.S. Department of Energy-funded study begun in 1994 to measure the reaction of forests to elevated levels of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, a greenhouse gas that is essential to plant life.

Power4Georgians officials also say the program's sound methodology will provide a level of credibility and verifiability many feel are lacking from other carbon offset programs. During the program, Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences is providing technical information and research developed from its **Free Air CO<sub>2</sub> Enrichment** experiment to the Carbon TreeBank and its partners. Moreover, additional technical and scientific information and research will be provided by the University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources.

"This is not a program where you send \$20 off in the mail with the promise that your donation will support tree planting somewhere that you can't ever verify or quantify," said Dean Alford, spokesperson for Power4Georgians. "This program allows customers to know exactly what their money is supporting, where the trees are being managed, and the impact of those trees on carbon removal right here in Georgia. The science is very sound and credible, and we believe that is a differentiating element of our program when compared to other offset programs."

Barrs added, "We hope the initial project is first of many carbon offset programs to come. In addition to serving as gigantic sponges that absorb carbon dioxide, Georgia's forests provide other significant benefits such as clean water and air, abundant wildlife, and recreation opportunities to Georgia's citizens."

While the "Keeping Forests in Forests" program is initially available to the 700,000 members of the Power4Georgians EMCs, partner organizations hope the program will eventually expand statewide.

EMCs involved in the Power4Georgians project include Washington EMC, Sandersville; Diverse Power, LaGrange; Jackson EMC, Jefferson; Excelsior EMC, Metter; Central Georgia EMC, Jackson; GreyStone Power, Douglasville; Pataula EMC, Cuthbert; Cobb EMC, Marietta; Snapping Shoals EMC, Covington; and Upson EMC, Thomaston.

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