

Keeping Forests in ForestsSM

Program Overview Fact Sheet

- Keeping Forests in Forests is a scientifically based program to preserve Georgia forests while helping Georgians offset a portion of their carbon emissions, or carbon footprint. The program is a partnership of Power4Georgians, the Carbon TreeBank, LLC, and Wells Timberland REIT.
- Keeping Forests in Forests is currently available to over 250,000 members of the electric membership corporations (EMCs) in the Power4Georgians consortium. It will soon be available to all 700,000 EMC members, and partner organizations hope to expand the program statewide. Members who choose to participate pay a monthly surcharge on their electric bill; that money is used to preserve forests in Georgia that naturally absorb and store carbon from the atmosphere.
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- Approximately 200 to 300 acres of Georgia's existing forests are lost every day to development and other purposes; Keeping Forests in Forests provides a needed financial incentive for forest landowners in Georgia to preserve their land as forest. Wells Timberland REIT, a Georgia-based real estate investment company, is providing up to 50,000 acres of Georgia forestland for the first three years of the program.
- Carbon is a naturally occurring element that is present in all living things, as well as in many types of rock formations. When carbon-based substances such as coal, natural gas, petroleum and wood are burned, the main products of combustion are carbon dioxide (CO₂) and water vapor. Trees and all other plants absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere as part of the photosynthesis process, storing much of the carbon in their woody mass, leaves and root systems, and releasing valuable oxygen (O₂) back into the atmosphere. Evergreen trees like those in Georgia's pine forests are especially effective at sequestering carbon.
- A typical Georgia EMC member's home produces about 25 tons of CO₂ each year. This carbon footprint is comprised of about 10 tons of CO₂ related to electricity usage, 10 tons from driving automobiles, and five tons from burning natural gas.
- Keeping Forests in Forests is scientific and verifiable. 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 CO₂. Additional technical and scientific consultation will be directed by the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. Program results also will be audited annually by a third party consultant for additional confirmation.
- Each year, independent auditing firms will review the program to ensure that, dollar-for-dollar participants' carbon offset contributions match program partners' contributions to the Carbon TreeBank. The Carbon TreeBank will retain the services of a certified verification expert to determine the amount of carbon sequestered by forests in the program and the results will be reported to participants each year.
- Forests have been called the "lungs of the earth." They clean our air by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. Forests also help clean our water, cool our air, support enormous amounts of other plant life and provide an invaluable habitat for animals, birds and insects.
- According to the Georgia Forestry Association, Georgia has over 24 million acres of commercial forestland, more than any other state. Georgia has replanted more than 3 billion trees over the past decade and is second in the nation with more than 3,800 certified tree farms that total nearly eight million acres.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that planting one acre of trees on marginal land will sequester 0.6 to 1.6 metric tons of carbon annually in the first five years of growth. Because one ton of carbon is contained in 3.67 tons of CO₂, one acre of trees planted on marginal land will sequester nearly four tons of carbon dioxide each year during the first five years. As trees grow older and bigger, they sequester more carbon each year.