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 to Mr. Rick Ruark  
 cc East Campus Master Plan Committee  
 from Sasaki Associates  
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## INTRODUCTION

This memorandum summarizes the East Campus Master Plan for the Lake Laurel property endorsed by the East Campus Master Plan Committee during Sasaki's final presentation at Georgia College on June 17, 2011. During the meeting, the Sasaki team presented the property's environmental analysis, identified both campus and existing facilities challenges and opportunities relative to the current users, discussed the master plan goals and program elements, and evaluated four potential master plan alternatives. The meeting concluded with the Committee's endorsement of a preferred development strategy referred to as the *Final East Campus Master Plan* in this memorandum (see Figure 1). Guiding the master planning process were the following overarching goals identified during Sasaki's meetings and interviews with College staff, faculty and students at Georgia College in December of 2010:

1. *Preserve the pristine character of Lake Laurel*
2. *Maintain and enhance existing academic programs*
3. *Plan for economically sustainable new facilities*
4. *Make the campus more accessible to the larger Georgia College community*
5. *Expand recreational opportunities*

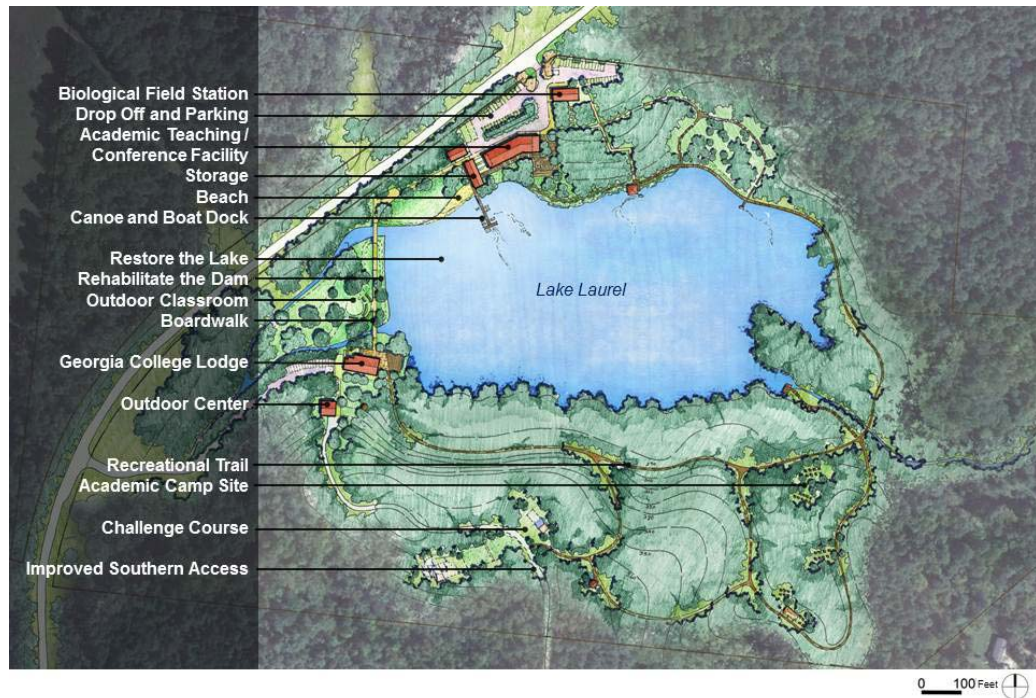


Figure 1. Final East Campus Master Plan

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### 1. Lake Laurel

Artificially dammed, Lake Laurel in its early years was used for recreation (swimming, canoeing, sailing, and fishing) and its facilities were available to the wider Georgia College community. However, in recent years Lake Laurel has fallen into disuse for several reasons. First, the use of Lake Laurel has been limited to only a few user groups – the Outdoor Center, the Outdoor Education Program, the Biology Program, the Academic Outreach Program and the Continuing Education Program. Second, the



physical condition of the lake had deteriorated as a result of siltation from agricultural run-off upstream. As a result, water quality has deteriorated significantly, making it unsuitable for swimming and many water activities. Lastly, there have been widely read reports of an alligator family living at Lake Laurel, further discouraging recreational uses.

## 2. Campus Users

The Biology Program is the main user of the northern portion of Lake Laurel – classes and research take place in the Biological Field Station and students collect water samples near Champion Creek. The Outdoor Education Program utilizes the southern portion of the property, mostly the lodge and challenge course (Figure 2). The lodge presently cannot be rented due to Outdoor Education’s use of the facility as classroom space, security and monitoring issues, and the poor quality of the space. In addition, only students who are part of the Outdoor Education Program are authorized to boat at Lake Laurel and use the challenge course.

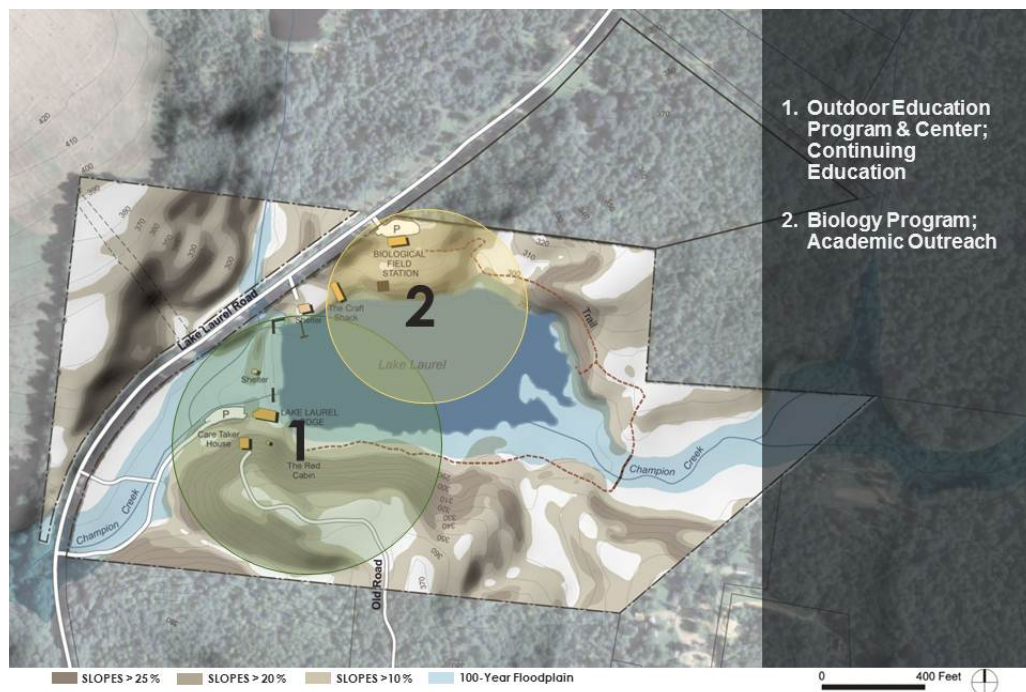


Figure 2. Existing User Zones

## 3. Vehicular Access

Maintaining and upgrading Old Road entry is crucial for providing emergency access to the challenge course which is otherwise inaccessible to vehicles. There have been preliminary discussions between the college and the property owner about abandoning Old Road and creating a new re-aligned access road to the Lake Laurel Property from the south. (Figure 3)



Figure 3. Vehicular Access & Campus Entries

#### 4. East Campus Expansion Opportunities

The triangular property across the street from Lake Laurel owned by the College is significantly constrained. Sasaki supports the College's interest in exploring the opportunity of a land swap for a contiguous property to the north of Lake Laurel. (Figure 4)

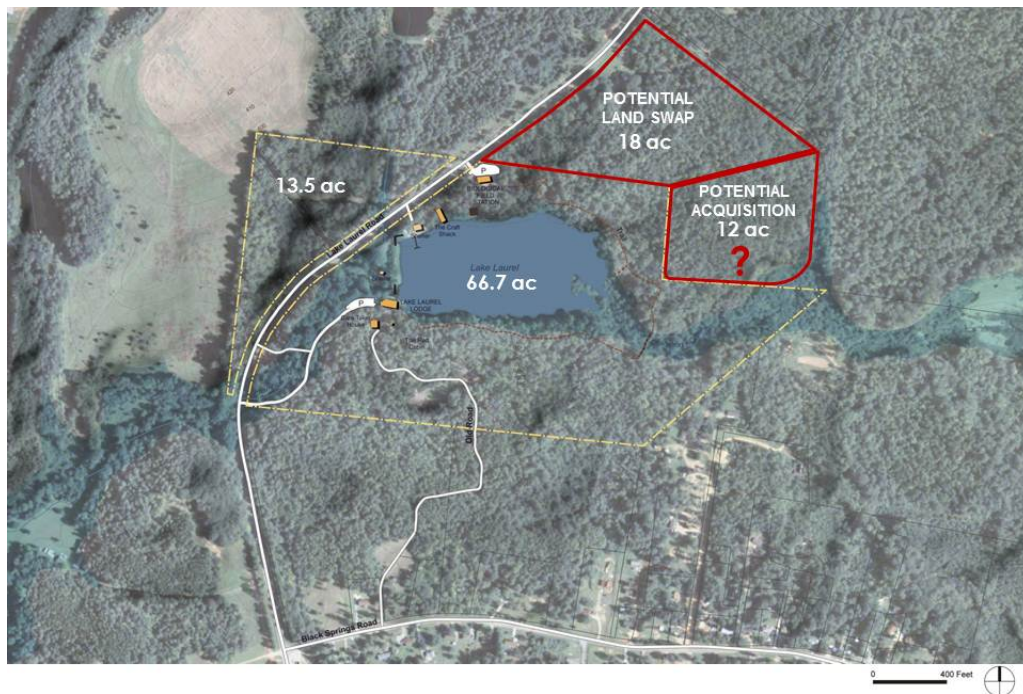


Figure 4. East Campus Expansion Opportunities

## 5. Site Analysis & Net Usable Land Area

Due to the 100 –year floodplain associated with Lake Laurel and the property's significant steep slopes, East Campus is naturally constrained to grow near the two existing campus entries or on the plateau near the challenge course. (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Net Usable Land Area Analysis

## PROGRAM GOALS

The program goals for the master plan include the siting of a future academic facility in conjunction with larger meeting / conference space, accommodating and enhancing existing academic programs with appropriate facilities on the property (providing adequate meeting space, storage, parking and access), and strengthening the recreation program for the whole College community (trail network, swimming, boating, fishing, and camping). A guiding principle behind the final master plan was to achieve these program goals while maintaining the property's environmental integrity and pristine character.

## LAND USE CONCEPT

### 1. New Facilities – Academic / Conference Facility and Potential Lodging

The Sasaki team initially studied four alternative siting options for the future academic / conference facility and evaluated its relationship and impacts relative to the existing programs on East Campus. The preferred facility location as illustrated in the final master plan (Figure 1) offers the most favorable siting conditions due to the site's moderate topography, visibility from Lake Laurel Road, proximity to an existing campus entry and academic facilities, wide angle view

of Lake Laurel, and non-obstructive complementary relationship to the existing Biological Field Station. In addition, this new facility site location offers the most infrastructure cost savings due to its adjacency to Lake Laurel Road. The proposed new facility (two-story, ten thousand square feet) will house classrooms, administrative offices and a meeting space for approximately one hundred people. Expanding the adjacent existing sundeck will provide the space necessary to accommodate larger outdoor functions associated with the new conference program use.

In the near term, the current Biology program research areas will not be impacted by campus growth. In the long term, the master plan envisions that twenty to thirty small cabins could be nestled in the landscape to the east of the proposed academic / conference facility. These cabins could accommodate visiting faculty and/or be rented in conjunction with the conference space to outside user groups.

## **2. Existing Facilities And Academic Programs**

Based on the input gathered from College staff, faculty and students, and with the intent to make the East Campus more accessible to the larger Georgia College Community, the final master plan proposes that the Lodge be renovated and returned to its original use to serve as a shared student and College community facility. However, the change of the current use of the Lodge is contingent upon the development of the new academic / conference facility. Upon completion of the proposed academic / conference facility, the Outdoor Education Program could relocate its teaching programs to the new facility where it will have better access to its equipment in the adjacent upgraded storage structure (Figure 1).

Under the final master plan, the Biological Field Station will maintain its existing function and continue to accommodate the academic needs of the Biological Science program. The new academic / conference facility presents an opportunity for the Georgia College Science program to expand on East Campus, potentially housing an onsite interdisciplinary water program.

## **3. Vehicular Access and Parking**

The two curb cuts off Lake Laurel Road will continue to serve as primary access to East Campus. Secondary access to the property from the south by means of a realigned easement on Old Road is recommended. The master plan illustrates an expanded parking area near the north campus entry to accommodate both existing and future parking demand. In addition, the reconfigured drop-off area near the future academic / conference facility allows for improved access to the boat storage facility and facilitates the loading and unloading of academic program related equipment.

## **4. Pedestrian Connections, Open Space and Recreation**

The master plan envisions a reinforced and complete trail loop around Lake Laurel with educational pavilions and overlooks at strategic locations. This trail loop will serve both as an educational feature for the Outdoor Center and as the primary recreational amenity for the whole College community and outside user groups. The trail loop reuses the existing trail network along the north bank of Lake Laurel but is realigned along the south bank to route visitors away from the Outdoor Education challenge course due to safety concerns when the course is unmonitored.

The master plan recommends that Lake Laurel be reclaimed for community recreational activities such as fishing, swimming and boating. Utilizing the lake for such activities will be contingent

upon resolving the issues of siltation, poor water quality, and of the perception/presence of alligators.

To reinforce the proposed upgraded trail loop and recreational access to the lake, the master plan recommends the following community facilities and amenities:

- In response to student demand, the master plan proposes an informal outdoor camp site for both student and academic use in conjunction with the Outdoor Education Program / Outdoor Center.
- The master plan recommends construction of a new boardwalk in concert with the dam stabilization project. This proposed boardwalk will reinforce the important pedestrian link between the Lodge and the future academic / conference center. The relatively flat area behind the dam wall is envisioned as an outdoor classroom with simple amphitheater seating.
- The master plan recommends realigning the boat dock to provide a sunny site for student lawn and beach near the northern end of the dam.