

Atlanta Beltline Arboretum Project To Benefit from Grant to Atlanta Audubon Society

Foster's Wine Estates funds habitat restoration for birds and wildlife

Atlanta Audubon Society (AAS) is the proud recipient of a \$24,000 grant from Foster's Wine Estates to support the Atlanta Beltline's Arboretum project in partnership with Trees Atlanta. The grant project will help restore critical habitat for wildlife and birds along a six-mile urban corridor. "The Atlanta Beltline Project is so huge that it's important to provide a voice for the birds and wildlife. We look forward to involving the community in this important project. The grant from Foster's Wine Estate will help us connect Atlantans to our shared natural heritage and to the things we can do to protect them," said Catharine Brockman Kuchar, Executive Director of the Atlanta Audubon Society.

Atlanta Audubon Society will work with Trees Atlanta to do conservation and education work with seven neighborhoods along the beltline including Clear Creek, Hulsey Yard, Murphy's Crossing, Westside, The Quarry, The Gap and Waterworks. Projects will include invasive removal and tree planting. "Trees Atlanta is proud to partner with Atlanta Audubon Society and Foster's to educate people about the Atlanta Beltline Arboretum. We are grateful for the opportunity to share information about Atlanta's unique trees and how they support people, birds and wildlife," said Trees Atlanta Executive Director Marcia Barnsley.

Atlanta Audubon Society received a similar grant in 2008 from TogetherGreen and National Audubon Society to work in concert with Trees Atlanta to complete field analysis and develop public information for the first seven natural targeted neighborhoods and do restoration work in Southern Way, Entrenchment Creek, New South, Piedmont Park, Warehouse Row, The Confluence and West Connection including site preparation, grading, clearing out invasive species and planting native trees. The 2009 grant will target the remaining neighborhoods.

AAS and Trees Atlanta will complete a field analysis to assess threats to the unique wildlife and bird species of each neighborhood, create public information for each natural neighborhood focusing on the unique habitat/wildlife of the area and complete two on-the-ground restorations projects. In the process, they will enlist strong citizen participation to restore habitat and to demonstrate to children and residents the unique natural features of their neighborhoods. Involving local residents to do conservation work in their neighborhoods will increase environmental stewardship and will positively impact birds and wildlife in each neighborhood along the Atlanta Beltline.

Atlanta's rich heritage of green spaces has been devastated by sprawl. Habitat restoration has become critical for Atlanta because over the 20 years, over 60 percent of metro Atlanta's natural tree cover, significant habitat for wildlife and bird species, has been destroyed and replaced with concrete and asphalt. Among many other examples, the city has seen the decline of the Brown Thrasher, Common Grackle and Northern Flicker, along with many other birds and wildlife species. The Arboretum project will create a canopy cover for the area and is one of multiple components of the 25-year, \$2.8 billion Beltline Project. The Beltline will eventually connect over 50 neighborhoods encircling downtown Atlanta, providing 22 miles of transit, trails, redevelopment projects and will link cultural/heritage sites and natural resources.

Other components of the Beltline project include: transit, trails and transportation; new parks and greenspace; affordable workforce housing; brownfield remediation; economic development; historic preservation; community engagement; public art and land use planning.

For more information on Atlanta Audubon Society's projects, go to www.atlantaaudubon.org. For Trees Atlanta, go to www.treesatlanta.org. For information about the Atlanta Beltline, go to beltline.org.

Foster's Wine Estates is the parent company of Beringer Vineyards, Chateau St. Jean, Stags' Leap Winery, Penfolds, Rosemount and several other wineries. The grant awarded to Atlanta Audubon Society is part of Foster's community investment program that in 2009 donated to more than 700 nonprofit organizations.