



3/24/2026

Dear Matre Forestry Newsletter Subscribers,

In this Newsletter:

- Saunders Real Estate Lay of the Land Conference in Columbus GA
- Mike Matre's new Hartford Lake listing offers one of the largest private lakes in Alabama
- Other Land Real Estate Updates
- Land wanted
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Lay of the Land Conference

You are invited to our annual Saunders Real Estate Lay of the Land Conference in Columbus GA on Thursday April 23, 2026.



About the Conference

Join leading landowners, investors, and industry professionals for the most comprehensive look at the forces shaping land value across Alabama and Georgia. The Lay of the Land® Conference convenes legislators, economists, developers, and land specialists to examine how land is used today, and what that means for value tomorrow.

EVENT DETAILS

Date: April 23, 2026

Location: Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center
801 Front Avenue Columbus, Georgia 31901

To register for the conference and reserve your room, please visit

<https://land.saundersrealestate.com/land-resources/events/georgia-land-conference/>

Stay Ahead of the Market

At the Lay of the Land® Conference, you'll step into the conversations shaping Alabama and Georgia land values, with insight grounded in data and experience.

Attendees will gain:

- Legislative and economic outlooks shaping land markets
- Real-world insights into development, entitlements, and infrastructure
- Practical guidance backed by the Lay of the Land® Market Report

ROOM BLOCK

Hotel Accommodations

A limited room block is available at a discounted rate for conference attendees.

HOTEL INFORMATION

Columbus Marriott
800 Front Avenue
Columbus, Georgia, 31901

Book by Friday, March 27, 2026.

RESERVE YOUR ROOM

Conference Schedule

Thursday, April 23, 2026

8:30 AM Attendee Check In and Breakfast

9:00 AM Welcome

9:15 AM Policy Issues Shaping Land Ownership

State and federal policy decisions continue to influence how land is owned, managed, and developed across the Southeast. This panel brings together leaders from regional advocacy organizations to discuss current issues affecting landowners, including surface water rights, environmental regulation under the Clean Air Act, and broader policy initiatives impacting forestry, agriculture, and rural land use.

10:15 AM Networking Break 10:30 AM Recreational Land Value Optimization

Recreational land continues to attract strong interest from both local and out-of-state buyers, but not all properties are created equal. This session explores the features and improvements that can significantly increase the value and appeal of a hunting or recreational tract, such as internal road systems, gated access, and other key elements buyers evaluate when considering land investments.

11:30 AM Succession Planning for Landowners: Navigating the Next Chapter

For many landowners, deciding what comes next for their property is about far more than a transaction. Whether planning for retirement, transitioning an operation, or preparing for the eventual sale of land and assets, this session explores the financial, family, and stewardship considerations of succession planning, along with practical guidance on developing a strategy that protects your interests with confidence, confidentiality, and a clear path forward.

12:30 PM Lunch 1:00 PM Growing Demand for Development Land

Population growth, infrastructure investment, and real estate demand are consistently reshaping how land is being developed. This session explores which land features are driving demand for residential communities, industrial and logistics facilities, and emerging uses such as data centers, while sharing insight into how sites are evaluated and what landowners should consider when positioning property for future development.

2:00 PM Lenders Discussion on Debt and Capital

Financing land can look very different depending on the property, the borrower, and the long-term plan for the land. In this session, panelists will walk through real scenarios involving agricultural operations, rural land purchases, and development projects. The discussion will explore lending structures, the role of leasing versus financing, and how borrowers can approach capital decisions with a clearer understanding of their options.

3:00 PM Networking Break

3:15 PM Lay of the Land® Market Update

The Lay of the Land Market Report remains a trusted benchmark for annual land sales and statewide market trends. This panel builds on that foundation, with Saunders Land advisors offering current insights from the field across key asset classes. Backed by the most current land sales data collected by the Saunders Research team, this session provides timely perspectives and practical guidance for the 2025 Alabama and Georgia real estate market.

Hartford Lake



Hartford Lake Fishing & Hunting with House

2625 Hartford Lake Rd, Hartford, AL 36344

Please visit pictures, brochure with maps and more, pictures, and video.

<https://land.saundersrealestate.com/land-for-sale/2625-hartford-lake-rd-hartford-sale/>

Contact the listing Broker Mike Matre, Senior Advisor & Associate Broker at Saunders Real Estate, 229-869-1111 , or mikem@saundersrealestate.com

Property Details

Property Type Waterfront

Property Subtype Hunting and Recreational Land

Acreage and Estates

Total Acreage 518 Acres **County** Geneva County, AL
Price per Acre \$6,950 **Price** \$3,600,000

Road Frontage 1.9 ± miles of paved road frontage

Driving Directions South of Harford Alabama, at the intersection of paved County Roads 67 & 16. The property is east of 67 and south of 16. Main entrance coordinates: 31.0605, -85.677

Location Description

The property is located in an aesthetic and quite rural area of Geneva County, Alabama, 3.5 ± miles south of Hartford AL, and 75 ± miles north of Panama City Beach FL.

Highlights

- 190 ± acre spring fed Hartford Lake, plus additional ponds
- 2 story cypress sided house, horse stables, barns, & fencing
- Cookhouse with brick oven and covered picnic shelter
- Boathouse & paved boat ramp
- Thorough road network
- Mature hardwood and pines
- 2015 planted loblolly
- Cypress ponds/wetlands
- Fields/pastures

Property Description

Some land properties are a challenge to describe just how special they are. Pictures help, and so do videos, but for the best of the best in legacy-quality land properties, you really must set foot on such properties to fully appreciate them. The 518 ± acre turnkey Hartford Lake Property is that type of property.

The property namesake, Hartford Lake, is a professionally managed 190 ± acre pristine spring-fed cypress lake located in the heart of the property, and is one of the largest private lakes in Alabama. Hartford Lake has standing cypress trees in roughly one third of the lake, including scattered individual cypress trees and clusters with numerous cypress trees. The mix of flooded cypress and expansive areas of open water creates one of the most aesthetic lakes you can imagine. With an average depth of ± 8 feet, a variety of aquatic habitats, and a desired amount of aquatic vegetation, Hartford Lake is a prime fishing lake with largemouth bass, crappie, bream, and catfish. Ten years ago, 200 striped bass were added, and they are mostly over ± 5 lbs now. Largemouth bass are plentiful, and their size is steadily improving as a result of management practices, with 5-pounders and a 7-pounder recently caught. Hartford Lake is well known as a prime crappie lake. 2,000 Grass Carp were stocked in 2013, and the lake was treated with herbicide in 2013 and treated again in 2024. As expected with a private lake of this size, it is underfished. As the next owner, it will be very difficult for you to overfish the lake, but you and your guests will have fun trying to! Hartford Lake is spring-fed, and the water level generally fluctuates about a foot depending on rainfall. There is a well & pump to supplement water if needed.

Before discussing the significant property improvements, let's discuss the balance of the acreage and the hunting opportunities. In addition to the 190 ± acre Hartford Lake, there are multiple other lakes and ponds, including a series of small ponds that used to be a catfish farm. The property has several great wetland areas, including cypress ponds and open grassy wetlands. With the

mix of the big lake, ponds, some shallow areas with heavier aquatic vegetation, and flooded timber, there is great potential for quality duck hunting. The Hartford Lake property offers 117 ± acres of 2015 planted elite loblolly pine, 97 ± acres of mature natural hardwood/pine mix, 32 ± acres of grass fields/pastures, food plots, and a thorough road network. The deer hunting is excellent, and there is turkey hunting potential, especially if prescribed burning is introduced by the next owner. Once the planted loblolly is 1st thinned in a few years, those areas would be ideal for released quail hunting. Some of the existing fields could be managed as dove fields as well.

Now for the improvements: the house is a 2-story, cypress-sided, well-maintained home with the 1st floor having a kitchen, dining area, living room, sitting area, master bedroom, master bathroom and shower, guest bathroom and shower, laundry closet, and nook with two built-in twin beds perfect for kids. Upstairs, there are 3 bedrooms and a bathroom with a bath and shower. Outside is a wraparound porch with great views, and a 2-car carport. Central heat & air. Built in 1990 (from public records) and well-maintained. 2,364 ± square feet (from public records).

There is a classic red barn with horse stables, and a lighted sitting area in the loft overlooking the lake. There is also an old office and workshop in the barn that could be restored as a guest room, mother-in-law suite, office, gym, storage, shop, or some other use. There is a 2nd barn used as storage, and a 3rd smaller barn with lots of charm but needing a little work. There is a cookhouse with a brick oven and a covered picnic shelter, a boat house, a concrete boat ramp, and a concrete pad ideal for boat trailer and truck parking.

Hartford Lake comes with a storied history. Constructed in 1959 by digging out a natural cypress lake, it was a popular public pay fishing spot and eventually had a restaurant, swimming pool, and dance hall. In the 1980s, the property went private. The current owner acquired the property in 2013 and introduced active professional lake and fisheries management practices, greatly improving the lake and fish health. Both the lake/fisheries manager and the overseer/caretaker are interested in continuing with the lake and property management if needed by the next owner.

Hartford Lake is perfect for the all-around sportsman desiring a legacy property for family, friends, and/or clients. If monetizing the property is desired, there are many possibilities. The paved road frontage on 3 sides of the property allows for subdividing. While commercial hunting preserves are fairly numerous, there is a limited number of commercial fishing preserves with large private lakes. Hartford Lake would make a great pay-to-fish commercial fishing preserve, with the ability to offer pay hunts as well. With its beautiful picturesque landscape, the property would also make a great wedding venue. Also growing in demand are RV parks, and most RVers prefer parks with desirable natural settings such as Hartford Lake. A permanent conservation easement would be an attractive option as well, which would protect this fine property from future development and likely provide significant tax deductions.

Other Land Real Estate Updates

Check out this affordable quality hunting and timber tract in Randolph County GA:



Please visit

<https://land.saundersrealestate.com/land-for-sale/0-county-road-186-cuthbert-sale/>
for all of the details and contact Mike Matre to arrange your showing.

Property Description

Overview: Located in desirable northeast Randolph County GA near Benevolence, the ± 106 acre **Block 107 North Hunting & Timber** tract offers affordable hunting land ownership with critical habitat present: multiple creeks buffered by mature cove and bottomland white oaks and other mixed hardwood & pine species; existing openings for food plots; and lots of upland flat to gently rolling acres with vigorous loblolly pines planted in 2025. The property has good access via Gas Line Rd (County Rd 186), and a quality woods road and firebreak network. **Price \$344,000.**

By the Acres: The tract was recently surveyed at 105.924 acres, and corners and lines are well marked and painted. Land use includes ± 88.3 acres of 2025 Upland Planted Loblolly; ± 13.7 acres in mature natural timber along creek bottoms and hedgerows; two new food plot openings totaling ± 1.0 acres. The ± 1.1 miles woods roads account for ± 2.9 acres. Lastly there are four creek/drains originating on the property that total 0.7 miles. The creek/drains appear to be perennial, providing quality water for deer and other wildlife likely year round. The largest creek forms a defined creek channel with clear running water, and the smaller drains have seeps/springs forming broad swampy

bottoms rather than defined creek channels. Having both a defined creek channel and wetlands without defined creek channels add habitat diversity, a huge plus for a hunting property.

Topography & Soils: The topography is an aesthetic mix. The uplands represent a strong \pm 87% of the acreage and consist of Lakeland sandy soils on flat to gently rolling terrain. Approaching the creek bottoms you will find rolling and some steep terrain dropping down to the creek bottoms.

Road Frontage: The road frontage along Gas Line Rd (County Rd 186) is \pm 0.28 miles. Due to sandy soils in the area, the road appears to handle wet weather well. The paved Benevolence Brooksville Rd (County Rd 8) and power is \pm 0.6 miles south of the property.

Neighbors & Area Habitat: The property is surrounded by large timber and agriculture properties, providing diverse habitat for deer, turkey, and other wildlife in the area. The immediate area has a handful of well known creeks, a critical component for quality deer hunting country. The creeks originating on Block 107 North eventually feed into the nearby Little Ichawaynochaway Creek to the south. Soapstone Branch and West Fork Ichawaynochaway Creek and Ichawaynochaway Creek are to the east. These creeks feed the Flint River, and a little northwest of the property is Pataula Creek, feeding the Chattahoochee River.

Timber Production: The 2025 planted loblolly pines are premium Control Mass Pollinated (CMP) exhibiting strong early survival and growth. The herbaceous weed competition was controlled very well for optimum pine growth in year 1, and as the stand is now heading into year 2 the ground cover is expected to green up well, enhancing natural browse and escape cover.

Stay tuned for new listings in the works.

Searching for quality off market hunting land in middle to south GA, budget roughly \$1,000,000 with no improvements to \$1,500,000 with improvements. I say off market because we have looked into on market properties and have not found a right fit for this particular client, yet. Thank you.

I have a confidential off market irrigated farm opportunity. Please reach out if interested. Thank you.

If you are considering selling or buying land, I would love to discuss with you. We have had a few new listings lately that have sold before we had a chance to put them on the open market, which goes to show how strong demand is for land. I would love the opportunity to help you navigate these uncharted land market waters, whether selling or buying. Call anytime.

Forestry Update

We have recently completed some very good mature pine timber sales on behalf of clients, primarily in Southwest Georgia. Since pulpwood has remained suppressed in our primary service area of West Central and Southwest GA and Southeast AL as a result of the the closing of GP Cedar Springs paper mill, we have not conducted any pulpwood heavy sales such as pine 1st thinnings. We are putting some feelers out for a couple of 1st

thinnings we are considering, and those discussions have gone better than expected. One thing I have always stressed when it comes to pine thinnings for forest health and/or wildlife management, there comes a point when you are better off conducting the thinning for whatever price you can get rather than prolonging the thinning hoping for better prices.



Above: A mighty fine load of ply logs from a recent Southwest GA Matre Forestry timber sale. One of many from that sale!

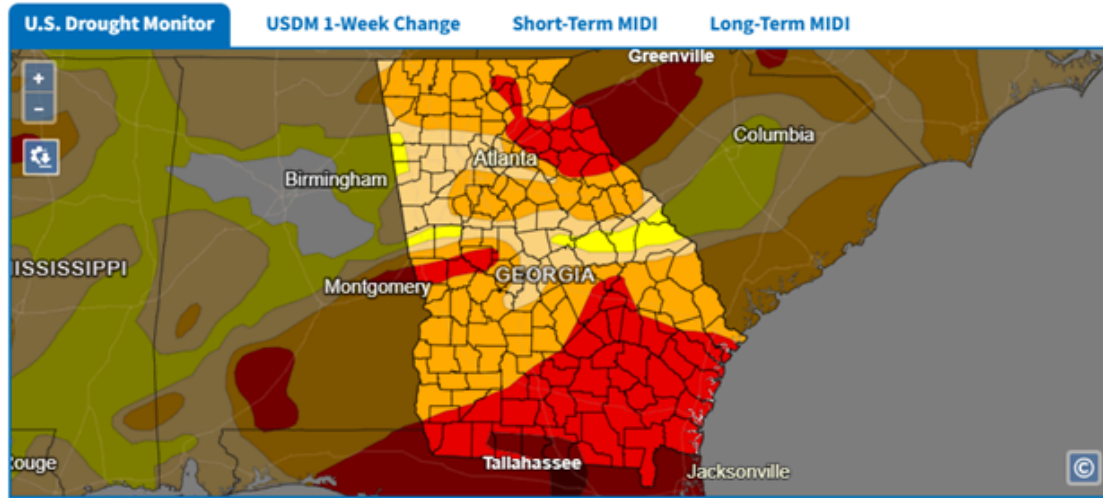
We are also wrapping up prescribed burning, which more people than usual seem to be burning this year - which is a great thing! Burning is one of the best tools we have to manage for forest health, aesthetics, and wildlife.

Learn more about prescribed fire in the video below featuring yours truly Mike Matre and fellow Saunders Senior Land Advisor Bryant Peace:



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We also just wrapped up a busy reforestation season, and are praying for rain!
 See the drought monitor GA map below:









The U.S. Drought Monitor depicts the location and intensity of drought across the country. The map uses 5 classifications: Abnormally Dry (D0), showing areas that may be going into or are coming out of drought, and four levels of drought (D1–D4). The map is jointly produced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and National Drought Mitigation Center. Authors from these agencies rotate creating the map each week, using both physical indicators and input from local observers.

This map is used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to trigger some disaster declarations and loan eligibility. Individual states and water supply planning may use additional information to inform their declarations and actions. [Learn more](#) or .

How has drought impacted this state in the past? Explore [historical Drought Monitor maps](#).

Source(s): [NDMC](#), [NOAA](#), [USDA](#), [NASA](#)

Legend

Drought & Dryness Categories		% of GA
	D0 – Abnormally Dry	3.6%
	D1 – Moderate Drought	15.8%
	D2 – Severe Drought	42.6%
	D3 – Extreme Drought	36.0%
	D4 – Exceptional Drought	2.0%
	Total Area in Drought (D1–D4)	96.4%

Updates

"Land, an investment you can truly enjoy"

Mike Matre

Thank you very much for being a subscriber to the Matre Forestry Newsletter, a great way to keep up with land for sale, and receive occasional news regarding timber and land market conditions, land management and investment tips, and occasional giveaways. We would also invite you to like Matre Forestry on Facebook and Instagram and/or YouTube, and Mike Matre on LinkedIn. We keep our subscriber list confidential and you can unsubscribe at anytime. Also, please follow the Saunders Real Estate social media pages.

Sincerely,

Mike Matre, ALC, ACF, RF

Georgia & Alabama Registered Forester and Land Broker

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[Click here for Mike Matre's Bio](#)

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