Georgia: A New Order

Selected Demographic Trends Impacting
Forest Resources Decision-Making

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Georgia is a great state filled with many opportunities, resources, and natural assets. Georgia's diversity, quality, and value of forest resources are unrivalled by any state. The people of Georgia have been blessed with productive soils, a good climate, and a variety of different growing sites. The values derived from forest resources in Georgia include many consumptive and non-consumptive uses, all available for sustainable management. But, the greatest resource of Georgia is its citizens.

Resource Responsibilities

Georgia's forest resources are impacted by the people who own or manage the resources, decision makers who regulate and determine land uses, and by citizens who believe forest resource management is critical to the strategic values of the State. Many people have a "say" or feel responsible as to what happens on Georgia's lands, whether these lands are in public or private sector holdings. It is critical to understand some of the key human changes occurring within the State. A few demographic evaluations are shown here to suggest where the State is going and how these changes may impact forest resource management.

A Common Theme

Georgia has many people, and is growing fast, is highly diverse, is aging and growing younger at the same time, is struggling with educational opportunities, is below the national average in personal income, and is challenged with a number of critical social and health issues. A common theme woven into many changes is the demand for a better quality of life by Georgia's citizens. Forest resource concerns are a part of this quality of life theme. Both the rural and community forests of Georgia provide many things for families including wood, paper, shade trees, recreation, water, wildlife, and jobs. Georgia has many quality of life and forest resource interactions.

This publication is a brief introduction to a few changes within Georgia impacting how forest resources are managed. From a single tree in a parking lot in downtown Atlanta to a large plantation pine forest near Waycross, both are a part of a gradient of forest resource management requiring specialized professional care and knowledge. How this specialized care and knowledge are used to further individual and societal goals are changing. The demographic changes occurring in Georgia can be visualized in maps, statistics, and descriptions. Here, only a few maps are used to suggest where informed forest resource management is headed.

Understanding Change

Remember, it is not individual forest landowners, tree advocates, or professional resource managers who have the ultimate word on how land use changes will occur -- it is the voters and their elected representatives who must make far-reaching and impactful decisions about the future of Georgia's resources. It is also important to understand demographic changes are not placed out in some future landscape coming at us, but are current measures of change happening now.

Big Population

Georgia is home to approximately 8.6 million people with 6.6 million, roughly 77% of the population, in metropolitan areas. The Atlanta metropolitan area is home to about 4.5 million citizens (52% of all Georgians). Georgia has the 9th largest population of any state in the United States. Georgia's population continues to grow

rapidly. Georgia is the 4th fastest growing state with most of the new people (60%) arriving from other Southeastern states.

Many Diversities
Georgia has a growing diversity of people with various backgrounds. Georgians are ~60% European American, ~30% African American, ~8% Hispanic American, and ~2% Asian American. Half of all the minority populations are concentrated in the Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah metropolitan areas. It is important to appreciate that Georgia is, and has been for more than two census cycles, an urban and suburban state with 77% of the population in metro areas. About 2 million Georgians live in rural areas, a population greater than at least five other states. Population numbers here are derived from information provided by Dr. Doug Bachtel at the University of Georgia and his web site **www.gafacts.net**.

Mapping Change
In making decisions regarding forest resources, more people (voters) and their elected decision makers (legislators) are actively involved than ever before. In order to more clearly understand Georgia's people and political power impacts on forest resource management, several maps have been developed. Map #1 shows the distribution of Georgia's people per square mile. This density of people and households is broken down into two areas of the state, places where the population is greater than 45 people per square mile and those areas with less than 45 people per square mile. The purpose of this map is not to provide precise and accurate population data, but demonstrate a pattern which divides the state.

People & Money
Map #2 shows the general distribution of Georgia's population into relative low population areas and high population areas. Again, appreciating the pattern on the landscape of Georgia's population is key to understanding how it could impact forest resources across a gradient of management intensities. Map #3 shows the primary and emerging metropolitan areas of the State. Note the Atlanta metro area is by far the largest but there are significant populations centers scattered across the state. Map #4 suggests differences in personal and household wealth across the state in a very simplified way. Map #4 gives a rough breakdown of housing prices across the state. Where housing prices are high, there is a greater concentration of wealth. Because of marketplace demands, the number of people and housing prices are concentrated in the same areas. Increased disposable income can help leverage political processes.
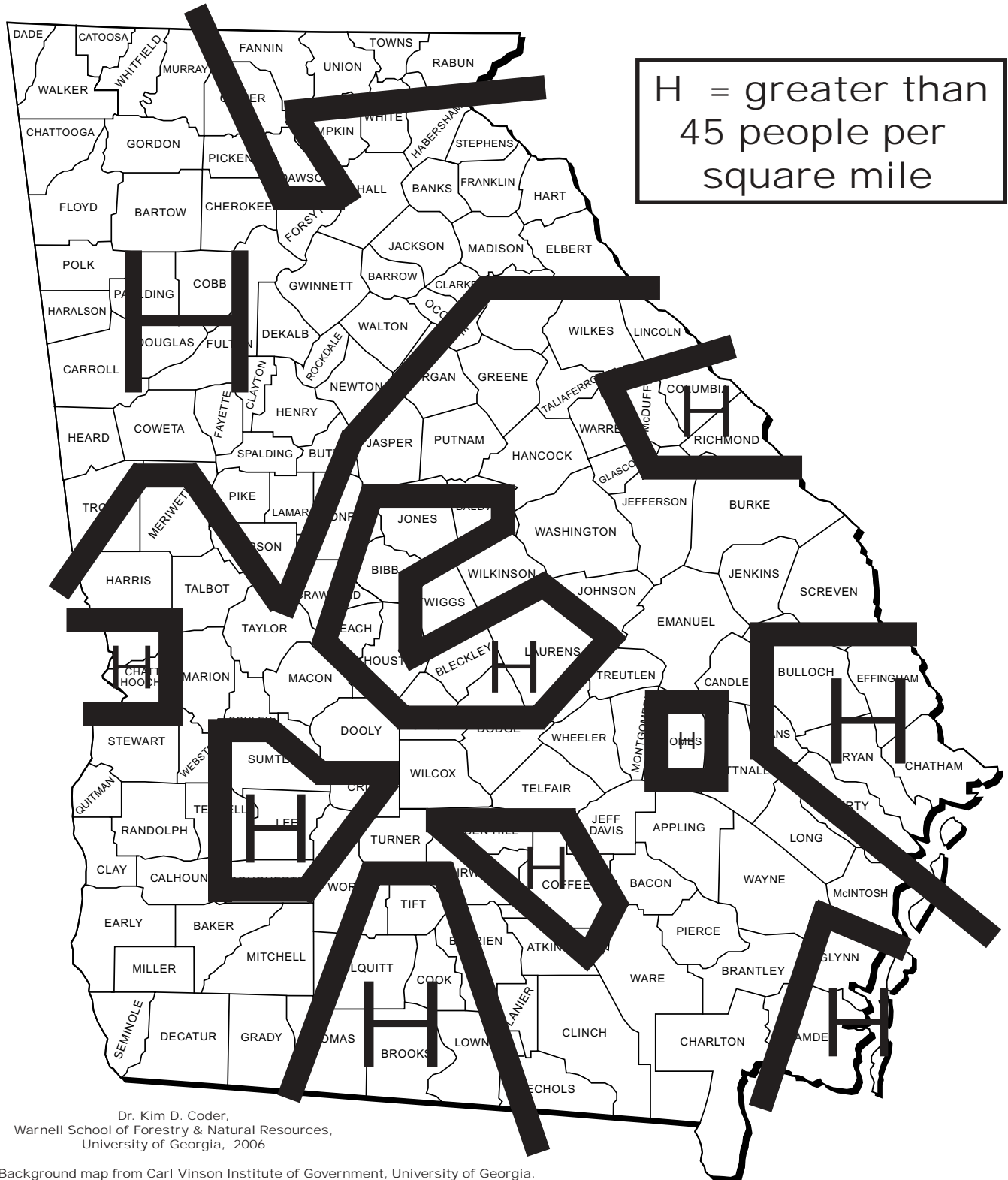
Political Resolve
Map #5 shows the distribution of state level elected decision makers in Georgia. The numbers give an approximate distribution of state house and state senate seats associated with serving constituencies in metropolitan areas. Note greater than 63% of the votes in the Georgia legislature come from urban or suburban areas. Map #6 is a combination of the population centers of Georgia voters, estimated household wealth, and number of elected decision makers. Map #6 is important because people and places not falling along the corridors or population islands, have and will have a dramatically more challenging time growing and thriving. The future of the state in many ways lie with the islands and corridors of political will represented by Map #6.

Forest Resources
Map #7 provides a view of future development and investment opportunities within the production forest resource sector of the state's economy. Many parts of the state are reserved from consumptive forest resource use and direct conversion for income. These lands will either be preserved intact or be developed for other people-centered uses. Comparing Map #6 and Map #7, it is clear more land use and investment decisions will be influenced and controlled by voters and elected decision makers at some distance from rural forest land holdings. In addition, more review activities will be concentrated around community forests, green ways, recreational lands, and parks.

Georgia has great potential for continuing to be the wood basket of the nation, especially in those places of the state where land values, tax structures and resolve exist to manage productive forests sustainably. Georgia is also seeing an explosion of community forest resource development and an associated increasing demand on forest resource managers.

Map #1: Distribution of Georgia's Population per Square Mile

H = greater than 45 people per square mile

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Background map from Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

Map #2: General Distribution of Georgia's Population

L = low population areas

H = high population areas

DADE CATOOSA WHITFIELD FANNIN TOWNS RABUN
WALKER MURRAY GILMER UNION
CHATTOOGA GORDON HABERSHAM STEPHENS
FLOYD BARTOW CHEROKEE DAWSON HALL BANKS FRANKLIN HART
POLK PAULDING COBB FORSYTH JACKSON MADISON ELBERT
HARALSON DOUGLAS FULTON GWINNETT BARROW CLARKE OGLETHORPE WILKES LINCOLN
CARROLL DEKALB WALTON OCONEE
CLAYTON ROCKDALE MORGAN GREENE TALIAFERRO McDUFFIE COLUMBIA
HEARD COWETA FAYETTE HENRY NEWTON PUTNAM WARREN RICHMOND
TROUP MERIWETHER PIKE BUTTS JASPER HANCOCK JEFFERSON BURKE
HARRIS UPSON MONROE JONES BALDWIN WASHINGTON JENKINS SCREVEN
TALBOT CRAWFORD BIBB WILKINSON JOHNSON EMANUEL BULLOCH EFFINGHAM
MUSCOGEE TAYLOR PEACH TWIGGS LAURENS TREUTLEN CANDLER BRYAN CHATHAM
CHATTA-HOOCHEE MARION SCHLEY MACON HOUSTON BLECKLEY MONTGOMERY TOOMBS EVANS TATTNALL LIBERTY
STEWART WEBSTER SUMTER DOOLY PULASKI DODGE WHEELER JEFF DAVIS APPLING LONG McINTOSH
QUITMAN RANDOLPH TERRELL LEE CRISP TURNER WILCOX TELFAIR BACON WAYNE PIERCE GLYNN
CLAY CALHOUN DOUGHERTY WORTH TIFT IRWIN BEN HILL COFFEE BRANTLEY
EARLY BAKER MITCHELL COLQUITT COOK BERRIEN ATKINSON WARE CHARLTON CAMDEN
MILLER DECATUR GRADY THOMAS BROOKS LOWNDES LANIER CLINCH ECHOLS
SEMINOLE

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Background map from Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

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Map #3:
Primary Urban & Suburban Population
Centers of Georgia In Order
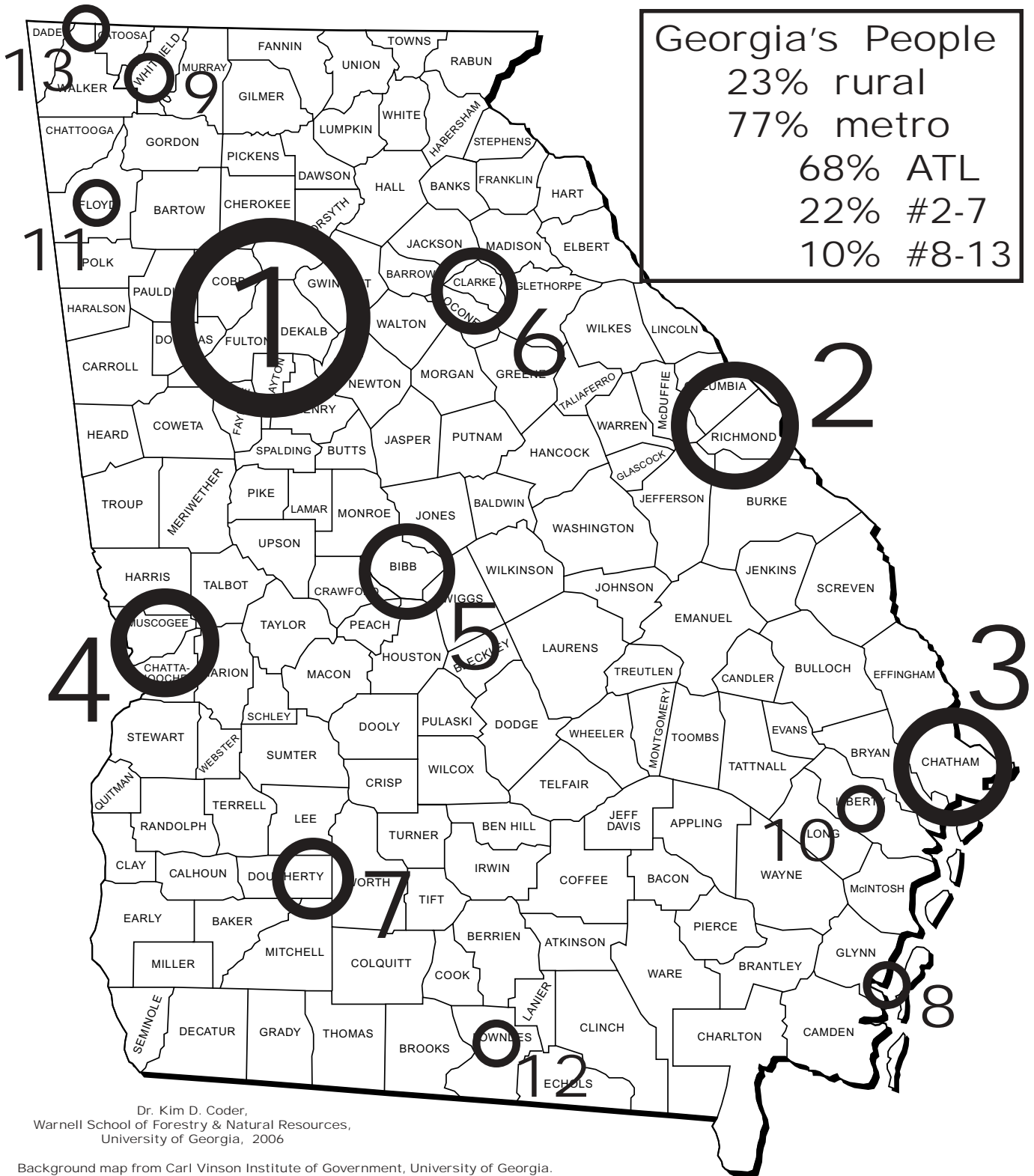
Georgia's People
23% rural
77% metro
    68% ATL
    22% #2-7
    10% #8-13

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Background map from Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

Map #4: Distribution of Median Housing Values Across Georgia

median house value ($46,500)

H = higher than median
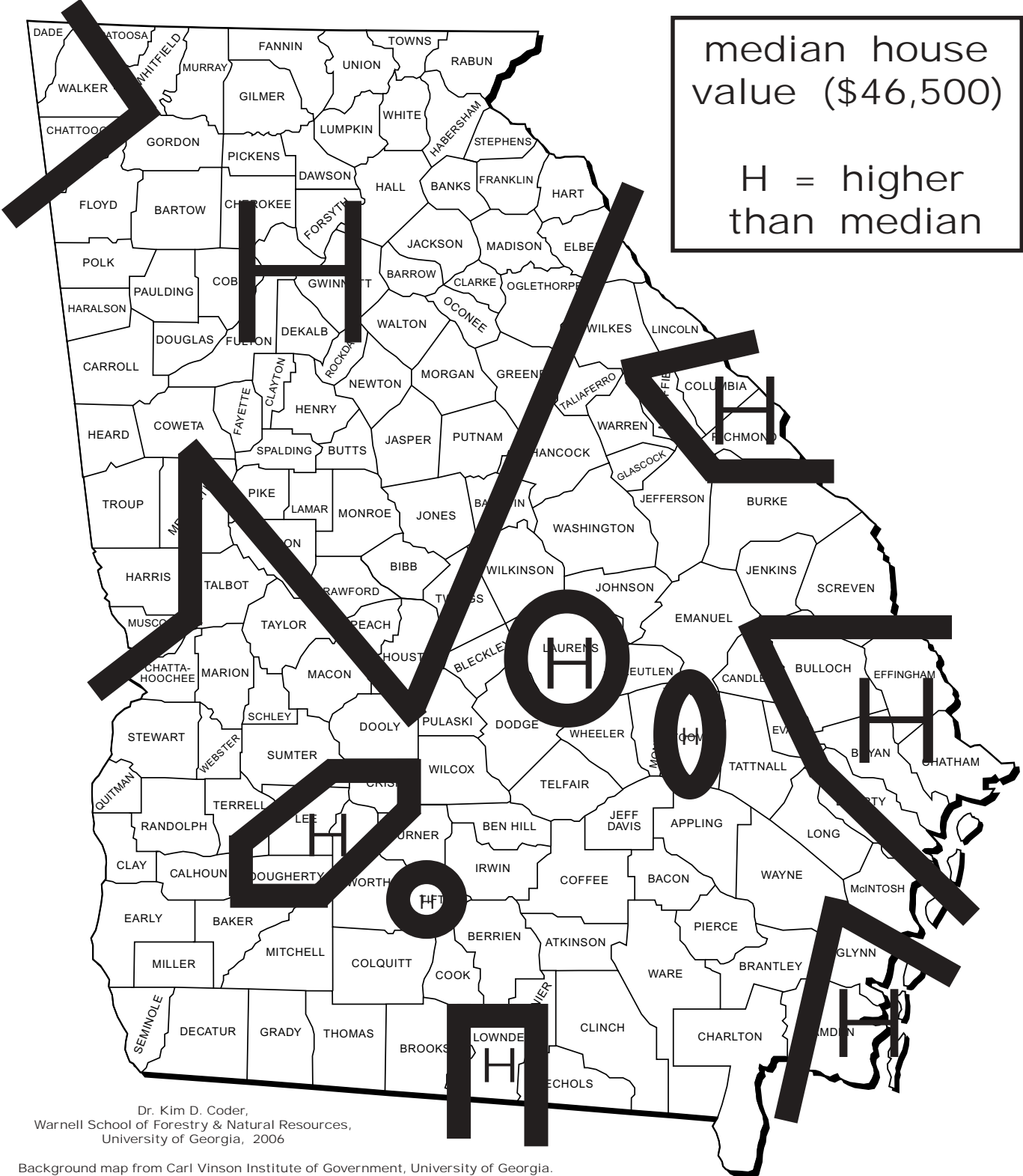
Map #5:
Rough Distribution of Metropolitan Area Decision-Makers In Georgia

U.S. House
6 of 13 districts (46%)

Georgia House
114 of 180 districts (63%)

Georgia Senate
36 of 56 districts (64%)

GA House / GA Senate

● = 1

88 / 30

5/1

5/2

4/1

5/1

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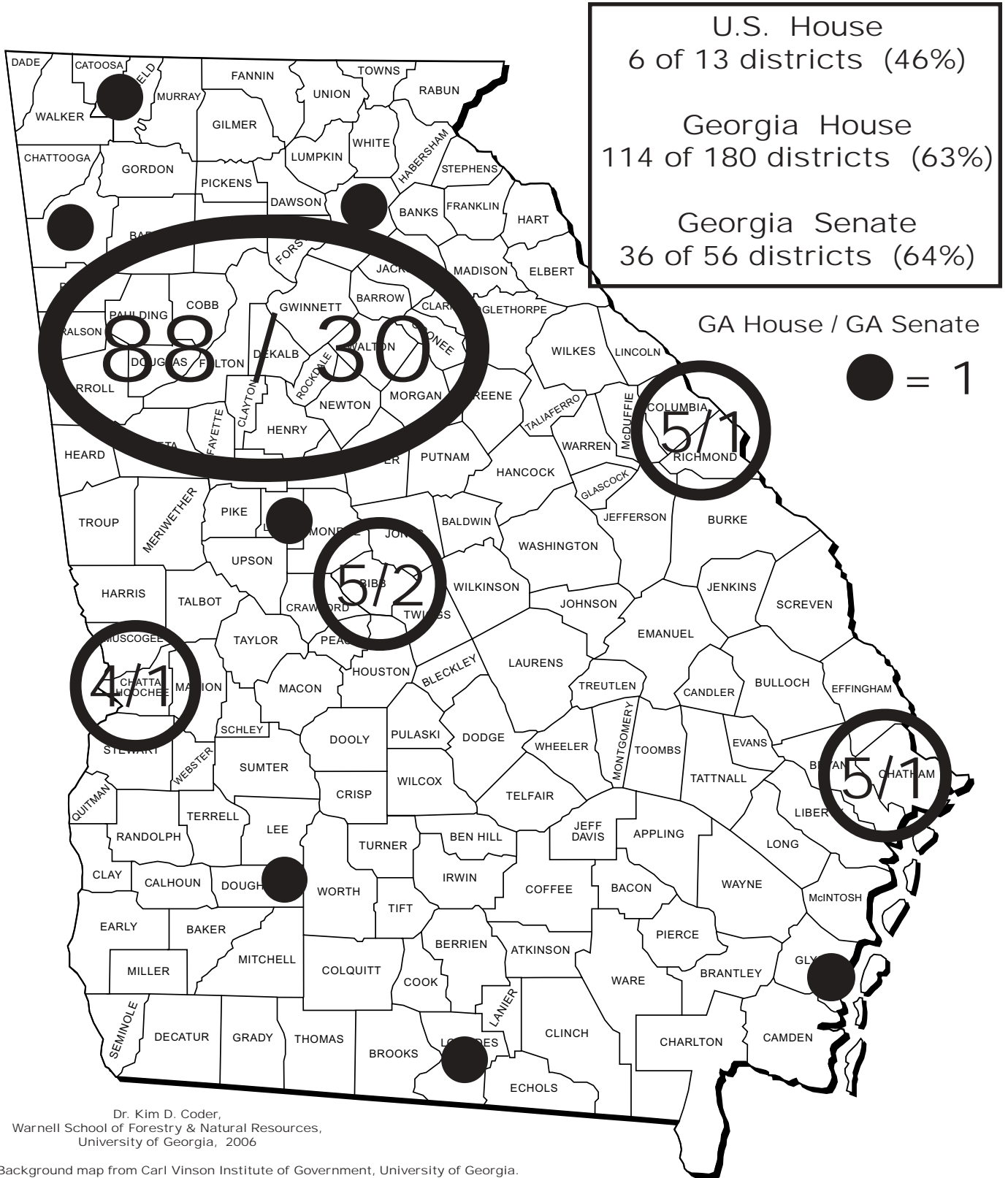
Map #6: Islands and Corridors Where Voters, Their Elected Represeneatives and Economic Development Are Concentrated

Atlanta metro = 52% of Georgia's population

DADE TOOSA FIELD FANNIN TOWNS RABUN
WALKER MURRAY UNION
CHATTOOGA GILMER WHITE HABERSHAM STEPHENS
GORDON LUMPKIN
PICKENS DAWSON BANK HART
CHERO JACKSON MADISON ELBERT
POLK WALTON GLETHORPE
PAULDI WILKES LINCOLN
HARALSON DO
CARROLL GREENE
NEWTON FERRO UFFIE
COW WARREN
HEARD JASPER PUTNAM HANCOCK
SPA NG TTS GLASCOCK
MERIWETHER PIKE MO DE JONES BALDWIN JEFF SON BURKE
UPSON WASHINGTON
HAR ALBOT CRAWFO WILKINSON JOHNSON JENKINS
TAYLOR PEAC SCREVEN
MARION MACON STON BLECKLEY LAUR EMANUEL BULLOCH EFFINGHAM
SCHLEY DO PULASKI DODGE TRE CANDLER
STEWART WEBSTER SUMTER WILCOX WHEELER MONTGOMERY TOOMBS EVA TATTNALL
QUITMAN CR TELFAIR
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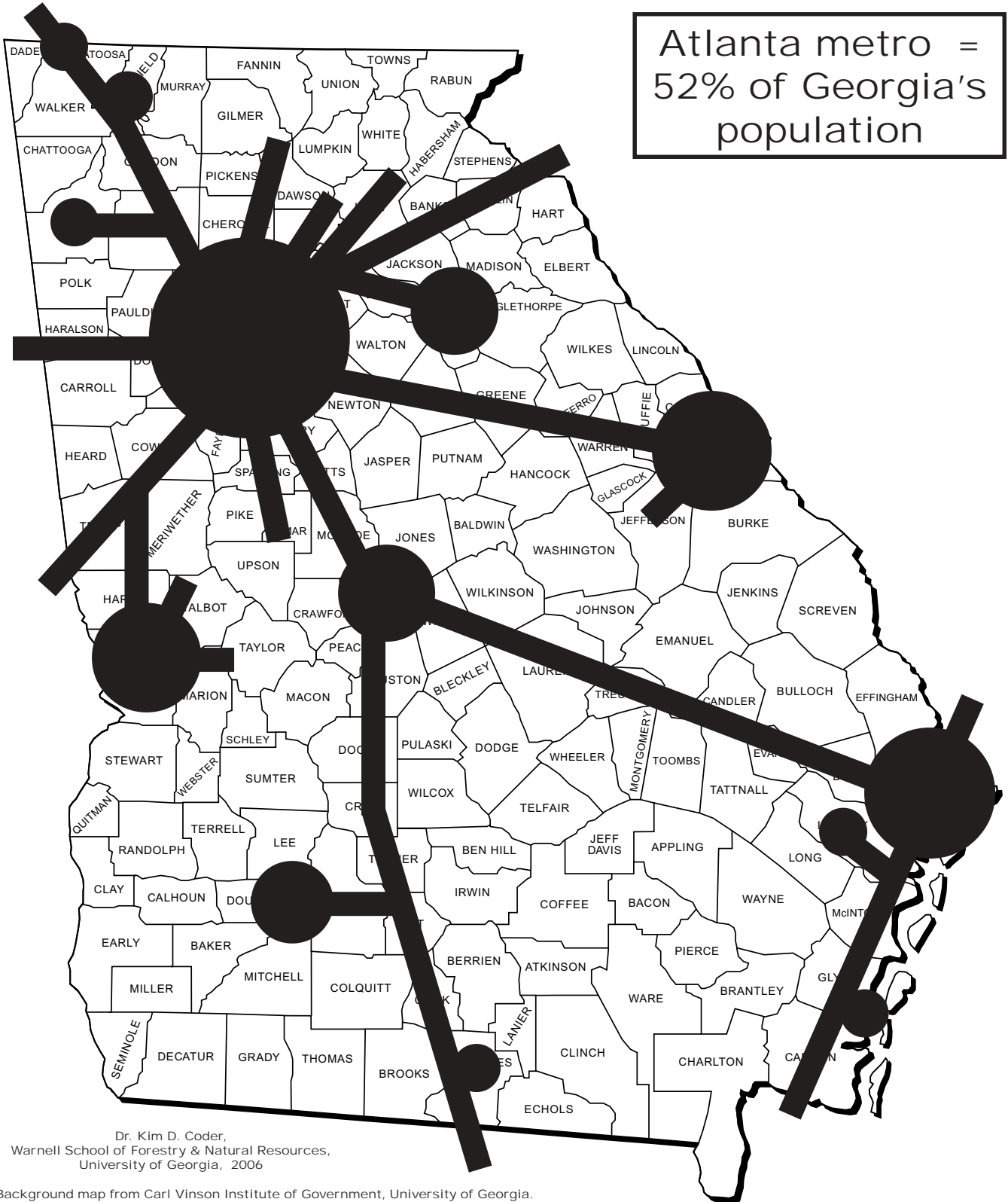Background map from Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

Map #7:
Expected Production Forest Management Intensities Zones

1 -- reserved / development
2 -- development
3 -- improvement
4 -- agriculture
5 -- high intensity
6 -- reserved / development

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