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Farming in the Highway Shoulder
New Pilot Project on The Ray Presents Opportunity for
Erosion Mitigation, Economic Opportunity and Carbon Reduction

(LaGrange, GA, November 16, 2017) -- On The Ray's 18-mile stretch of roadway, maximizing all assets is a key strategy to creating a cleaner, safer highway. One of our largest assets is the land around the interstate, called the right-of-way. This space, designed to be a refuge of safe harbor for drivers in distress, can multi-task and fully utilize the land without threatening its primary purpose to drivers. This month, the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Kansas-based Land Institute, and The Ray implemented our newest pilot demonstration on the right-of-way: perennial wheat farming. For the next three years, the pilot project, which uses Kernza® perennial grain, will be monitored by UGA's Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Program Director and Associate Professor, Brad Davis, as well as a Master of Landscape Architecture student Matthew Quirey.

"The College of Environment and Design is proud to partner with The Ray, GDOT, and the Land Institute on this first trial of Kernza® in a southern locale," said Professor Davis, "We are keenly aware of the potential for perennial grains to transform agriculture and fiber farming, and to improve the way we manage millions of acres of land across the nation and around the world. As landscape architects, planners, and historic preservationists, we have long advocated for more sustainable land management practices and we are enthusiastic in our support of the research goals and mission of the Land Institute. We hope this first small trial will prove successful and pave the way for adoption and expansion across the region and to other innovative perennial seed crops in the future."

This 1,000 square foot pilot project uses Kernza® seed from The Land Institute. Kernza® plants are a breakthrough from traditional annual wheat grasses and have deep, 10-foot roots that helps to enrich the soil, retain clean water, and sequester carbon. The Kernza® pilot on The Ray is the first in the southeast and the first to be located in a highway roadside.

"Georgia DOT is always improving the management of our roadsides, which are acres of valuable land assets," said Chris DeGrace, Landscape Architect at Georgia DOT. "Over the past two years on The Ray, we have installed pollinator meadows, bioswales of native grasses, and now a pilot of fiber farming. The opportunity to conduct research on a working roadside with the Land Institute and The Ray is unique and unlike anything in the country."

"Wheat straw is increasing used as an alternative to trees and a more sustainable fiber source for making many of the highly disposable products we use every day - diapers, paper towels, toilet paper," said The Ray Founder and President, Harriet Langford. "By growing and harvesting wheat in the right-of-way, we're creating a new economic opportunity, all while drawing down carbon. I think my dad would say this is 'so right, so smart.'"

"This Kernza® perennial grain collaboration will help establish Kernza's® productive geographic range as demand for the grain continues to grow. We look forward to data from this project and are excited to collaborate with The Ray, Georgia DOT and other partners," said Tim Crews, Director of Research and Lead Ecologist at The Land Institute.

The Land Institute's Kernza® perennial grain is featured in *The New York Times* bestseller, *Drawdown* as a "coming attraction," for its potential to reduce carbon emission. "Eyes are opening to the power of soil for carbon drawdown – even in unlikely places and especially with deep-rooted, perennial crops like Kernza®," said Dr.

Katharine Wilkinson, Senior Writer at Project Drawdown, “The pilot is another exciting step forward for this corridor of testing, learning, and teaching."

This Kernza® perennial grain pilot is only the starting point for The Ray. The Ray hopes to expand this project into a vegetative laboratory that would support a variety of pilots over the next several years. These pilots would test different seed mixes for pollinators, weed control strategies, and other innovative agricultural solutions.

About The Ray

The Ray is a proving ground for the evolving ideas and technologies that will transform the transportation infrastructure of the future, beginning with the corridor of road that is named in memory of Ray C. Anderson (1934-2011), a Georgia native who became a captain of industry and was recognized as a leader in green business when he challenged his company, Interface, Inc., to pursue zero environmental footprint. Chaired by Ray’s daughter Harriet Langford, The Ray is an epiphany of the Ray C. Anderson Foundation. Learn more at www.TheRay.org.

About The Land Institute

The Land Institute is a science-based research organization working to develop an alternative to current destructive agricultural practices. Our work is dedicated to advancing perennial grain crops and polyculture farming solutions. Founded as a nonprofit organization in 1976, The Land Institute is committed to researching and developing food production methods that sustain the land and soil, a precious resource in an increasingly precarious state around the globe. Learn more at www.landinstitute.org.

About the Georgia Department of Transportation (Georgia DOT)

Georgia Department of Transportation plans, constructs and maintains Georgia’s state and federal highways. We’re involved in bridge, waterway, public transit, rail, general aviation, bike and pedestrian programs. And we help local governments maintain their roads. Our transportation network connects our interstates, state highways, county roads and city streets. Georgia DOT is committed to providing a safe, seamless and sustainable transportation system that supports Georgia’s economy and is sensitive to its citizens and its environment. Learn more at www.dot.ga.gov.

About UGA College of Environment and Design

Through teaching, research, and service in design, planning, and management of the land and its structures, CED will work to improve the environment by providing new and time-tested models for development and preservation. The college will educate the next generation of landscape architects, planners, and historic preservation practitioners to become experts in their areas of specialization with the capacity to collaborate and work effectively across traditional disciplinary and professional boundaries. Graduates of the programs will be equipped to practice in an increasingly complex and changing world characterized by global influences, local needs, and the imperative to create a more sustainable future. Learn more at http://www.ced.uga.edu.

About Project Drawdown

Project Drawdown is a nonprofit research institute that maps, measures, and models the most substantive solutions to reverse global warming and communicates the findings to the world in every way possible. The first generation of this work is captured in the *New York Times* best-seller *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global*, edited by Paul Hawken. Learn more at http://www.drawdown.org/.


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