

# Annual Report

2016

PROTECTING OUR LOWCOUNTRY SINCE 1971

BEAUFORT COUNTY



OPEN  
LAND  
TRUST



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Letter from the Executive Director

BCOLT Proud Part of Growing Network

At a time of political change, one thing is clear and consistent: Americans strongly support saving the open spaces they love. Since 1971, BCOLT has been doing that for the people of the Lowcountry. And since February, 2016 it has been doing so as an accredited land trust. Today, BCOLT is proud to welcome an additional 15 land trusts into the growing network of accredited land trusts across the nation that have proven their commitment to professional excellence and to maintaining the public's trust in their work.

Accreditation demonstrates BCOLT's commitment to permanent land conservation in Beaufort County and the surrounding area. We are a stronger organization for having gone through the rigorous accreditation program. Our strength means special places such as Lemon Island and Factory Creek Park will be protected forever, making Beaufort County an even greater place for us and our children.

BCOLT had to provide extensive documentation and undergo a comprehensive review as part of its accreditation application. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded accreditation, signifying its confidence that BCOLT's land will be protected forever. Almost 20 million acres of farms, forests and natural areas vital to healthy communities in the U.S. are now permanently conserved by accredited land trusts.

BCOLT was founded over 45 years ago by concerned citizens who wanted to protect the scenic open vistas that are so special to Beaufort. To date we have protected over 23,000 acres of land that includes farmland and family lands in the Lowcountry. We have also partnered with the City of Beaufort and Beaufort County to create parks such as Battery Creek Park on Boundary Street between Applebee's and Battery Saxon Park.

"Accredited land trusts such as BCOLT are united behind strong ethical standards ensuring the places people love will be conserved forever," says Tammara Van Ryn, executive director of the Accreditation Commission. This network of 1,363 land trusts across the United States has demonstrated sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.

We thank you, our faithful members, for supporting BCOLT as we continue our work to preserve the Lowcountry landscape!

*Cindy Baysden*



Moving to the new office located at 124 Lady's Island Drive on June 12, 2017.

Birds of Prey



We thank Board Member Alison Guilloud and her husband, veterinarian Dr. Mark Guilloud for arranging a "Birds of Prey" demonstration for new Open Land Trust members at the athletic field at Beaufort Academy on March 25th.

The mission of the Birds of Prey Center in Awendaw is to identify and address vital environmental issues by providing medical care to injured birds of prey and shorebirds, and through educational research and conservation initiatives.

Bird of prey or predatory bird, also known as raptors, refers to several species of birds that hunt and feed on rodents and other small animals. The term raptor is derived from the Latin word rapere, meaning to seize or take by force.



*“As growers, we look at our native soil and climate patterns to plant crops that compliment the natural environment established thousands of years ago.”*



Angela O'Neal

## Blueberries Look for delicious Coosaw Farms blueberries at our local grocery markets!

The Open Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 149 acres on St. Helena Island owned by Bradley O'Neal of Coosaw Farms. The easement ensures that the land will never be developed but will continue to be used for agriculture. At the present time the fields are planted in blueberries. Angela O'Neal of Coosaw Farms has written the following about growing blueberries:

As growers, we look at our native soil and climate patterns to plant crops that compliment the natural environment established thousands of years ago. On St. Helena Island we have found perfection for growing Southern Highbush blueberries. The acreage is on an insulated peninsula surrounded by meandering tidal creeks, thick black pluff mud and ancient marsh. The area has its own microclimate, often averaging 6 to 10 degrees warmer than our main farm in Fairfax, South Carolina (an hour inland). This additional warmth translates into a natural protection from cold weather during bloom, pollination and fruit set.

The second ideal condition is the soil. There are rare pockets of a spodic sand called Leon strung along the Carolina Bays and coastlines of north Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas. Leon is the most ideal soil type for growing Southern Highbush blueberries and is unique only to this specific variety. Rabbiteye for example, cannot tolerate Leon series soil.

The genius of Leon is in its three layers working in symphony for the Southern Highbush plant. The dark speckled sandy topsoil is naturally very high in organic matter. The second layer is a gray/white sand that allows optimal drainage. Oxygen is able to quickly reenter the root zone after watering. Leon's third layer, a chocolate hard pan, slows drainage so plants maintain a stable moisture level without drying. Sustainability is fully optimized with the air, soil and water on St. Helena Island. The warm microclimate protects the blueberries from frost in most seasons. The soil composition allows optimal growing without excessive watering. Recognizing this extraordinary convergence of elements, we're enabling nature to cultivate an exceptional blueberry at Coosaw Farms.

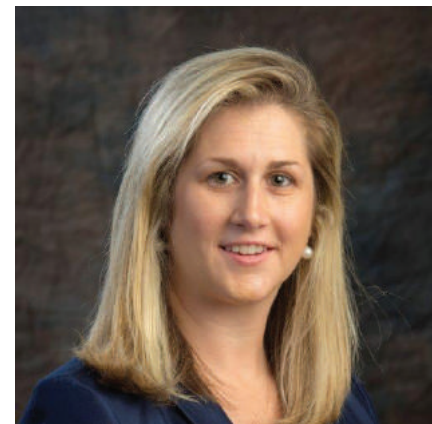


Brad and Christie O'Neal with their children Tyler, Sanders, and Gibson

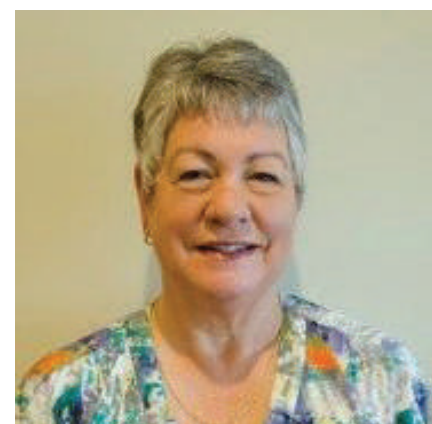
# New Board Members



**DEAN MOSS** is the former General Manager of the Beaufort Jasper Water and Sewer Authority. He retired in 2011 after holding that position for 25 years. He has previously served as a member of the South Carolina Water Law Review Committee and as a member of the Board of Trustees of the national Water Research Foundation. He is the Governor's appointee to and Chairman of the Savannah River Maritime Commission. He is also Chairman of the Board of the Port Royal Sound Foundation. Dean has a long history with the Open Land Trust having served as its President for over six years in the past. We are happy to welcome him back to the Board.



**KATIE CUPPIA PHIFER** grew up in Beaufort and settled back in the Lowcountry after graduating from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance. Katie is a Financial Advisor and Certified Financial Planner with the Bezilla Kinney Wealth Management Group of Wells Fargo Advisors. As a native of Beaufort, it has always been important to Katie to give back to her home town. In addition to joining the Board of OLT she has volunteered with the Junior Service League of Beaufort, Thumbs Up, and the United Way of the Lowcountry. She and her husband, Matt, have a daughter and in her spare time Katie enjoys spending time with family on the river and at the beach.



**DENISE SULLIVAN** retired from the commercial printing business in Maryland and moved to Beaufort with her husband in 2009. She spent most of her adult life in Anderson, SC where she was Vice President and Director of Advertising and Marketing, Publisher of the Oconee Leader and Shopping Guide. She has been very involved in her community on Dataw Island having served, most recently, as President of the Dataw Island Owners Association. She is also a member of the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Commission and Vice Chair of the Lowcountry Habitat for Humanity affiliate. Denise and her husband have four children and five grandchildren. OLT is pleased that she is bringing her business experience to the Finance Committee.

# Burris Family

The Burris Family donated a bargain sale conservation easement on a 563.4 acre portion of their property Cypress Bay, known as the Gopher Woods tract. The Burris's purchased the original 95-acre Cypress Bay tract in 1986. Since that time, they have purchased over 2,500 contiguous acres, most of which have been placed in conservation easements with the Beaufort County Open Land Trust. The property is nationally recognized for exceptional forestry, wildlife management and conservation. Gopher Woods is excellently managed as a working forest, wildlife habitat, and an outdoor recreational property. The property is located within the Lower Coosawhatchie River watershed in Hampton County.





Edwin and Sue Olsen generously donated a 10-acre conservation easement on a portion of their Okatie River property. The remaining 109 acres were purchased through the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program, protecting a grand total of 119 acres from commercial and residential development. The property contains mature mixed-hardwood pine forest, maritime forest, and salt marsh that provides abundant habitat for many important species of wildlife including bald eagles, osprey, wading birds, and migratory songbirds. This unique property with over 11,000 linear feet of frontage on the Okatie River and Malind Creek, is the origination site for one of the headwaters of the Okatie River. The conservation of the Olsen's land will continue to protect the water quality of the Okatie River into the future.



## Glenn Stanford

As the holder of conservation easements, one of our responsibilities is annual monitoring and inspection of the property subject to the easement. Currently we have a contract with Glenn Stanford, who owns Conservation Consulting Company, to conduct these inspections. Glenn, a resident of Beaufort County since 2006, is a retired lawyer who moved to the Lowcountry, fell in love with the area and started a new career. He became part of the team charged with finding land in the County that fit the goals of the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands program. In that role he contacted landowners, negotiated terms of the proposed easements, drafted terms of the easements, and helped bring them to closing. Glenn is already familiar with quite a few of our properties since many of the easements held by the Open Land Trust came from the County program. Conservation Consulting Company is now inspecting our conservation easements to assure compliance and continued protection of the land.



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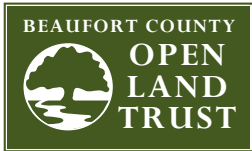
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## Annual Meeting

The Open Land Trust welcomed Dr. Rodell Lawrence, Executive Director of Penn Center, as speaker at the 46th Annual Meeting. Dr. Lawrence announced that Penn Center is a part of the new Reconstruction Era National Monument that was established as a unit of the National Park Service by Presidential Proclamation on January 12, 2017 in recognition of the role Beaufort County played in shaping the historic period of Reconstruction. The national monument protects and interprets historic buildings and landscapes in Beaufort, St. Helena Island and Port Royal. Dr. Lawrence plans to shape Penn Center's future by setting a framework for its sustainability; preserving the unique history, culture and environment of the Sea Islands and by sharing Penn Center's resources locally, nationally and internationally.



Geni Flowers-Buquet, Patsy Hand, Stuart Heath



Lisa Lord and Dr. Rodell Lawrence

