

# *Annual Report*

2014

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PROTECTING OUR LOWCOUNTRY SINCE 1971



*Photo by South Carolina Wildlife*





OPEN  
LAND  
TRUST  
Beaufort County, SC



PHOTO BY ERIC HORAN

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## Letter FROM THE PRESIDENT

Beauty surrounds us, and that is why three concerned citizens pulled together to form the Beaufort County Open Land Trust in 1971 to preserve our open space and natural habitats. Over the years we have expanded our preservation efforts to include lands along rivers and marshes and working farms in the rural communities.

In November 2014, Beaufort County voters spoke loud and clear that the County's Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program should continue. By a landslide (73% of the votes cast), the voters showed their continued support of land preservation efforts by passing a \$20 million bond to champion land protection and conservation. BCOLT has administered Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Lands Program since 2009. Please see "2014 Land Protection Recap" for the details of our most recent successful projects.

New initiatives planned for 2015 include work on the creation of "Battery Creek Park" on Boundary Street between Applebee's and Battery Saxon Park. As a first step in that project, which is planned as a partnership between BCOLT, the City of Beaufort, and Beaufort County, we are purchasing the United Way property and will remove the building to open the view as soon as possible.

The Trust is also excited about beginning renovation of the St. Helena Market building by Chowan Creek at the entrance to St. Helena Island. We plan to lease the building to a business that will sell local jams, jellies, ciders, and plants, which will be compatible with the rural character of the island.

I am proud to report that BCOLT has completed an extensive application process for accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. To achieve accreditation, a land trust must show its ability to operate in an ethical, legal and technically sound manner and ensure the long-term stewardship of lands that it has protected. Becoming an accredited land trust will certify that BCOLT meets national standards for excellence and permanence in its conservation work.

Thanks to you, our members, BCOLT has made excellent progress over the past year. I see many opportunities ahead as we continue our efforts for land preservation and conservation. Thank you for making a lasting impact for the people and places of Beaufort County.

Trish Irwin



# 2014 Land Protection Recap:

## YEAR IN REVIEW

The Open Land Trust had another successful year protecting land in Beaufort County. Six properties totaling 885 acres were placed in conservation easements and will be protected in perpetuity. One of the easements was a donation and the others were purchased through Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Lands Program, which is administered by the Trust. The \$1.7 million from Rural and Critical funds was leveraged with \$857,000 from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Beaufort Marine Corps Air Station for the purchases.

Land Protection highlights include:

- Protection of Gardens Corner Preserve, owned by the Campbell family, is the "unofficial" entrance to Beaufort County. This project helps maintain the rural character of the ACE Basin and protects water quality of the "west fork" of Huspah Creek whose system feeds into the Whale Branch.
- Continued partnership with the Beaufort Marine Corps Air Station to buffer the Air Station and protect the flight paths through conservation easements in northern Beaufort County. An easement on the

Harvey family property protects the headwaters of Habersham Creek, and an easement on the Dopson property protects the marshes and tributaries of the Coosaw River.

- Continued partnership with the USDA NRCS to protect prime farmland through conservation easements on St. Helena including two active farms, the Charles King and the Christian Trask properties.
- Protection of the Grace property on St. Helena Island through a conservation easement thereby safeguarding Jenkins Creek and the St. Helena Sound watershed.



Volunteer Sally Mayse spends time helping out in the office when she is not traveling the world. Last summer she went to Mongolia and this August she will go to Kyrgyzstan to work on a Habitat for Humanity project. Michael Brim is a senior at Beaufort Academy and spent a week in February as an intern with BCOLT. He will attend Erskine College in the Fall.

On February 6, 2015, Lois Pigler Jenkins and Vivian Pigler graciously donated an "Arbor Day Foundation" crape myrtle that we planted together at the Brewer Memorial Park on Lady's Island.





# Open Land Trust Annual Meeting

NOTES BY JOSH BELL

Bright sunshine and blooming azaleas welcomed members and friends of the Open Land Trust to downtown Beaufort for the 44th Annual Luncheon on April 8. Within walking distance from the iconic Bay Street bluff, the location of the Land Trust's very first land acquisition back in 1971, a packed house gathered to celebrate yet another year of successful land protection in the Lowcountry. Following a review of BCOLT's accomplishments in 2014, attention shifted to the guest speaker, renowned South Carolina botanist, professor, author, and conservationist, Dr. Richard Porcher, Jr.

Delivered with splendid bravado and extraordinary passion, Dr. Porcher's presentation highlighting the history of rice culture in the Lowcountry from its beginnings in the late 1600s through its demise in the early years of the twentieth century captivated the crowd leaving all present hanging on every word. Referencing excerpts and diagrams from his recently published book *The Market Preparation of Carolina Rice* (coauthored by William Robert Judd and published by USC Press), Dr. Porcher expertly breezed through over 200 years of advancements and innovations that propelled the Lowcountry's rice kingdom to the most advanced in the world during its prime.

Although long ago abandoned from rice production, many of the historic rice fields associated

with numerous plantations throughout the Lowcountry remain intact. These impoundments, once full of Carolina Gold rice, are now primarily managed



**DR. RICHARD PORCHER, JR.**

for ideal waterfowl and wading bird habitat creating a mecca for migratory ducks to Roseate Spoonbills and hundreds of other wildlife species in between. Making up a significant portion of the ACE Basin, many,

if not most, of these plantations are permanently protected with conservation easements or are wildlife management areas open for public use and enjoyment including Donnelly WMA, Bear Island WMA, and the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge. Due to the tremendous conservation effort resulting from partnerships between private landowners and various non-profit organizations and public agencies, many of these historic rice plantations from an era long past will remain largely undeveloped and a magnet for wildlife forever.

As we look forward to another great year of protecting the landscape of the Lowcountry and beyond, we must recognize and sincerely thank the Land Trust's founding trustees for their incredible vision and the continued support from each of our current members, for it is you who make all of our work possible.





# Scenes from the Luncheon



## COOKBOOK

BCOLT is pleased to announce that Tierney Stone is the new coordinator for the Sea Island Seasons cookbook. Tierney, who is known as "T," has recently returned to South Carolina from the UK where she worked in finance for 18 years. She says, "I am thrilled to be volunteering for the Open Land Trust and supporting the vital work of protecting the beauty that is around every corner in our special town of Beaufort."



Look for our wonderful cookbook in local bookstores and retailers or call the office for details.

**PRICE IS \$20**





# *Meet Dr. Gene Grace & Family*

## LANDOWNER HIGHLIGHT



Nestled at the end of a long dirt road overlooking vast expanses of saltmarsh and tributaries born from Jenkins Creek, Dr. Gene Grace's St. Helena Island hideaway has served as a family retreat for over a decade. The Grace's "little piece of heaven" located near the historic community of Frogmore has been the setting for numerous family events over the years ranging from weddings to dove hunts to countless oyster roasts and Lowcountry boils (or should I say Frogmore Stew?). Blessed and proud grandparents six times over, Gene and his wife Beth are focused on doing their part

to ensure generation after generation has the same opportunity to experience and enjoy the natural beauty and wide open spaces of their beloved property. With the future in mind, in late 2014, the Grace family retreat was permanently protected with a conservation easement.

Now preserved in perpetuity, the Grace tract has become part of a significant conservation community comprised of nearly 1,900 acres of Open Land Trust protected properties on St. Helena Island. From the iconic roadside vista parcels along Sea Island Parkway to active agricultural fields

and fragile maritime forest habitat, the diverse complex of permanently protected lands on the Island is greater now than ever before. However, in order to safeguard the historic rural character of St. Helena Island as it currently exists, we must continue to recognize the importance of land preservation and how our conservation efforts today can and will dramatically influence the landscape of the Island for many generations to follow. We applaud the Grace family for their generous contribution which will benefit us all, including the land and wildlife, forever.



# Beaufort County Greenprint

## A TOOL TO GUIDE LAND PRESERVATION IN BEAUFORT COUNTY

The Greenprint is an important tool that utilizes natural resources information layers and color coding to identify parcels that are candidates for land protection through the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program (RCLPP). The map identifies parcels that might be candidates for protection. After further investigation, certain land can be excluded because of cost, location, or a variety of other reasons.

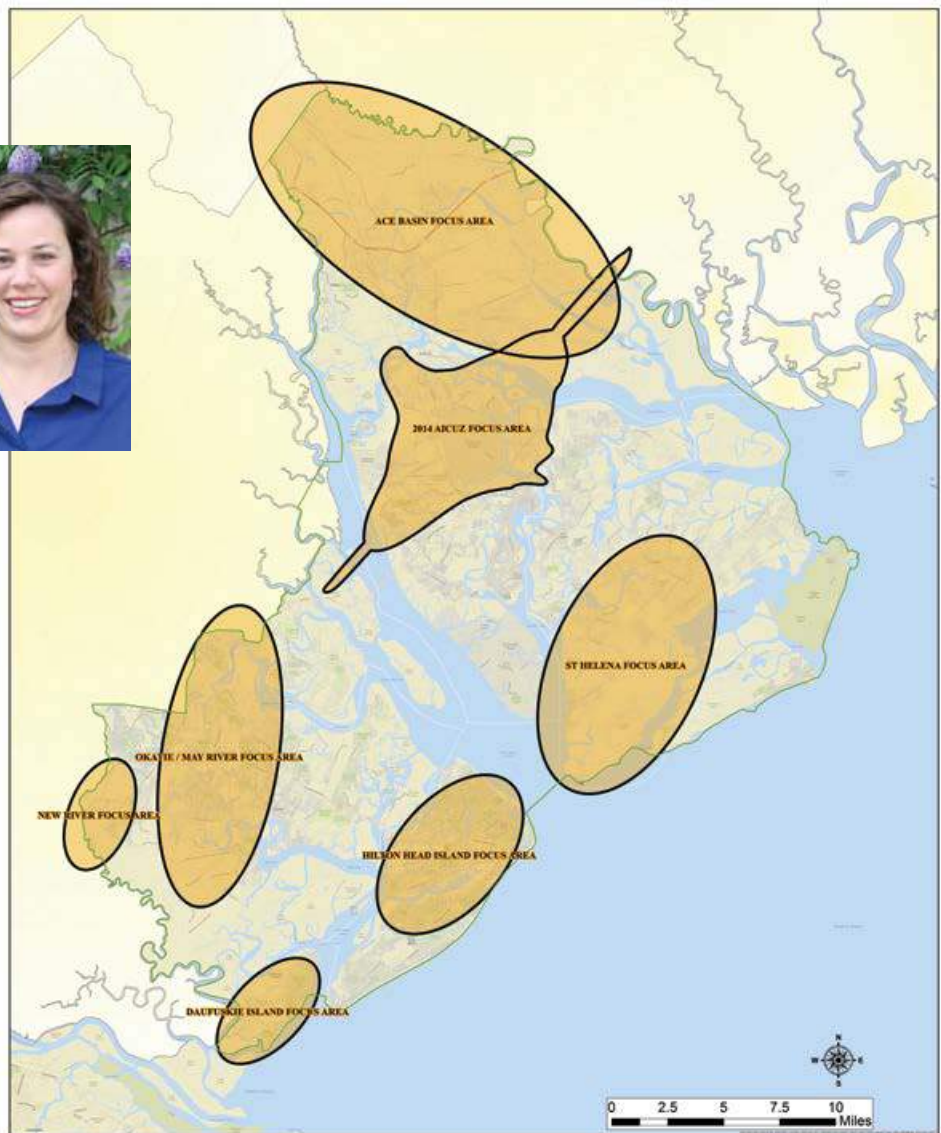
Following Beaufort County's development of a Comprehensive Plan in 1999 and the development of the RCLPP in 2000, County Council sought a way to refine land protection and guide future conservation decisions. The Trust for Public Land, which was administering the RCLPP at that time, led a Greenprinting effort in 2003 and in 2006. Both maps were adopted by County Council. These two maps highlighted focus areas that were considered environmentally sensitive, historically significant, or culturally important and they helped to guide early land protection efforts in Beaufort County.

In 2014, Beaufort County Open Land Trust began yet another Greenprint mapping effort. This new Greenprint took into account a more comprehensive set of criteria. It prioritized important wildlife habitat, potential parkland, scenic vistas, farmland and timberland, historically and culturally important properties, land important to maintain water

quality, and land vital to preserving quality of life and access to the water. BCOLT staff gathered important existing map data layers and held numerous facilitated discussions with stakeholders including elected officials, real estate brokers and developers, business owners, private citizens, natural resource professionals and others to determine if the current

criteria and priorities still apply.

The extensive stakeholder input, use of available scientific data and information layers and analysis helped to create a list of top priorities and to put a dollar figure on purchasing those properties. The map will help leverage and stretch dollars, protect the most qualified properties and assist with sustainable growth in Beaufort County.



Greenprint Map 2014: Beaufort County



## *Spotlight on* NEW BOARD MEMBERS



### *Meet Alison Guilloud*

Alison says that she thinks Beaufort is one of the prettiest places in the world and that she feels privileged to have the opportunity to help preserve it. She has experience in financial management and marketing, and she manages her husband Mark's veterinary clinic. She also recently became a master naturalist in order to be able to readily identify the flora and fauna native to the Lowcountry.

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### *Meet Alex Shuford*

Alex loves the Lowcountry and has long had an interest in conservation. He is a Vice President with South State Bank and brings great experience in financial management, marketing, and non-profit organization to the Trust. He currently serves on the Board of the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation and on the SCANA Lowcountry Advisory Board. He is also a past president of the University of South Carolina Alumni Association and a past member of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees. Alex and his wife, Sue, enjoy having their two married sons and their families visit from Charlotte. They intend to introduce their two baby grandsons to the enjoyment of life on the water in Beaufort.

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### *Meet John Trask III*

John grew up on St. Helena Island and is a partner at Lowcountry Real Estate. He went to Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia, studied as an English Speaking Union Scholar at Oundle in Northamptonshire, England and graduated from Vanderbilt University. Of course the charms of the Lowcountry lured him back to Beaufort where he enjoys the woods and the waters with his three children, Isabelle, Peter and Josephine. His appreciation of local culture and history and his interest in local civic affairs make him an asset for BCOLT. John lives downtown in MidTown Square, where he and his children attempt to garden and raise bees.



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**AULDBRESS**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**November 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> 2015**



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