

OPEN LAND TRUST

Beaufort County, SC

FALL NEWSLETTER 2014

Building on the Success of the Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program

Beaufort County's Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program has been a successful and popular program. Stakeholders have overwhelmingly expressed the need for additional land protection. Goals of protecting the Beaufort Marine Corps Air Station, protecting rural farmland, and providing passive park opportunities to enhance the quality of life continue to be important to the community.

On November 4th, the voters of Beaufort County will be asked to consider a bond referendum which, if approved, would authorize \$20 million in continued funding for the Beaufort County Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program. The R & C program is one of the most forward thinking and innovative programs in the country and has protected 22,500 acres of rural and critical land in Beaufort County.



Photograph by Lauren Armstrong

The Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program has attracted \$39 Million dollars of outside funding through 2013 for land purchases through these partnerships. When the real estate market slowed, land was purchased through the program at significantly reduced prices. Several properties purchased through the program will be opened for public use as passive parks in the next year giving citizens new opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.

With a new Greenprint Map guiding the process, and a rigorous analysis and approval process to evaluate candidate lands, the program is prepared to continue its success by targeting only the highest priority lands to protect the Beaufort County landscape. *Written by Lisa Lord, Administrator.*

The Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program was initially created in response to the tremendous growth experienced in the late 1990's. It was designed to stabilize rural land, protect working farms and timberland, and ameliorate development problems — including traffic congestion and water quality decline in critical areas of the County. Matched funding is frequently provided through the Beaufort Marine Corps Air Station's Readiness Environmental Protection Program (REPI) to protect the land around the Air Station, thus allowing the continuation of their mission.

The Brewer Memorial Park is located adjacent to the Factory Creek public boat ramp on U.S. Highway 21 on Lady's Island. We would like to send a special thank you to Henry Farms for the generous donation of sod which was used to beautify the Park. We would also like to thank our partners at Beaufort County Public Works for all of their help in transforming the Park into what it is today.



Photograph by Lauren Armstrong

Preserving Natural Beauty

As we move from the sunburn of summer to the golden hues of Fall in the Lowcountry, the OLT is working diligently toward opening the gates of the 162 acre Widgeon Point Preserve to the general public. Located in the heart of Beaufort County and surrounded by the pristine marshes of the mighty Broad River, Widgeon Point Preserve is the crown jewel of a series of islands collectively known as Lemon Island. Situated between the Chechessee River and the Broad River, the Preserve's unique geographic location adjacent to Highway 170 provides convenient access to an otherwise isolated, hard to get to island. With a mix of various habitats supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and plant species, the Preserve, once opened, is sure to provide the public with extraordinary opportunities to observe and absorb the natural beauty of our beloved Lowcountry that Mother Nature has been so gracious to provide for us all.

Working in close partnership with Beaufort County and others, site plan details such as designated parking, a covered picnic pavilion, and the potential for a wildlife viewing platform are being fine-tuned and finalized with the goal to begin work before the end of the year. Previously



established walking trails will be enhanced with interpretive signage educating visitors on the Preserve's native flora and fauna, the importance of land preservation as it relates to protecting critical wildlife habitat and ensuring water quality, the ecological importance of the Port Royal Sound, and other bits of useful and interesting information pertaining to the Preserve and the surrounding environment. It is the OLT's vision to work in partnership with other organizations such as the Port Royal Sound Foundation, local Audubon Society chapters, South Carolina Native Plant Society, Master Naturalists, area schools and universities, and many more to host and conduct educational tours of

the Preserve. Upon opening to the public, the OLT plans to reach out to members of our "Trailkeeper Program" to help monitor and maintain the Preserve by routinely walking the trails, policing the property for litter, and notifying OLT of any potential problems or concerns. Due to our small staff, the OLT truly hopes to be able to rely on these dedicated volunteers to help ensure Widgeon Point Preserve remains a clean and safe place for the enjoyment of all. To become a Trailkeeper or find out about other volunteer opportunities, please call us at (843) 521-2175 or email info@openlandtrust.com.

Written by Josh Bell, Stewardship Director.

A Change in Staff

In June, Cindy Baysden returned to the Open Land Trust as Executive Director when Patty Kennedy decided that she needed to have more time with her family. Patty led the Trust for three years and was particularly effective in administering the Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program for Beaufort County. Most recently she completed the Greenprint Map after working with many stakeholders to determine which properties in the County still need to be protected in order to preserve water quality, rural lands, habitat and the Marine Corps Air Station. The Trust is most grateful for her hard work and dedication to preserving the environment of the Lowcountry.

Cindy opened the first office for the Open Land Trust in 1992 and served as Executive Director until 2008. During that time she was able to grow the membership and initiate a conservation easement program which greatly increased the capacity of the Land Trust to protect property in Beaufort County and surrounding areas.

She says, "I am thrilled to be back at the Trust because of the wonderful support from a great staff and an engaged Board of Trustees. I am proud of the role that we have played for over 40 years in protecting our very special landscape."

Lisa Lord has taken over the administration of the Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program and Josh Bell works as Stewardship Director, monitoring the 116 properties that we own or protect through easements. Debbie Quirin, who has been with OLT for 11 years as Administrative Assistant, continues to be in charge of membership. Jamie Miller, a student at USCB, is the Accreditation Coordinator.



Ace Basin Property Preserved

The 336 acre property in Gardens Corner owned by the Campbell family has recently been protected through The R & C Land Preservation Program. The Open Land Trust holds an easement on the tract ensuring that this rural land, which is an important habitat for native plants and wildlife, will remain undeveloped.

Open Land Trust Accreditation



As the result of a culmination of efforts that began in 2012, the Beaufort County Open Land Trust (OLT) is now approaching the home stretch in becoming Land Trust Alliance (LTA) accredited. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of LTA, recognizes and distinguishes land trusts that are committed to long-term protection of land in the public's best interest. The accreditation seal from the Commission ensures the public that the OLT has met stringent national standards for excellence.

As part of the final steps in the accreditation process, the Commission and OLT welcomes public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending LTA applications. Comments must relate to how OLT complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see www.landtrustaccreditation.org/tips-and-tools/indicator-practices.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org or email your comments to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: fax (518) 587-3183; mail - 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Comments on the Beaufort County Open Land Trust's application will be most useful by May 22, 2015.

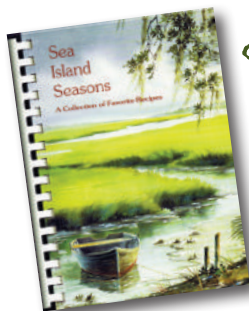
We are very excited about the future of our organization and extremely fortunate to have the support from members like you who are vested in the continuing preservation of our beloved Lowcountry.

25th Anniversary of the ACE Basin

The ACE Basin Task Force was formed in 1989 with a goal of protecting 90,000 acres. To date that number is almost 220,000 acres! The Open Land Trust is a member of the Task Force which is a unique public/private partnership including private landowners, non-governmental organizations, regional land trusts, local governments, the SC Department of Natural Resources and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The name was coined in recognition of the importance of the Lowcountry's three major rivers, the Ashepoo, the Combahee and the Edisto.

The term ACE BASIN became a rallying cry for those who treasure the area's rich diversity of habitats including remnant rice fields, fresh and brackish water marshes, pristine rivers, upland pine and hardwood forests, bottomland hardwoods and cypress/tupelo swamps, all home to an incredible array of birds and wildlife. The Nature Conservancy has named it one of the last great places on earth. In early November, Nemours Wildlife Foundation will host Task Force members and private landowners who have placed conservation easements on their property at an event to celebrate this grand vision for conservation which has become a reality.

The Perfect Recipe for Support!



Enjoy your own cookbook for \$20. Available at our office and local businesses.

Email Reminder



Please make sure we have your current contact information. Email us at info@openlandtrust.com

A Year of Support



"A Lowcountry Redbud" by Gregg Hunt.

The Open Land Trust will be selling the 2015 Preservation Calendar for \$15, available by late November. Contact us today to reserve your calendar for a year of support!

4th Annual Arts-in-the-Barn



Photograph by Richard Snell

Spend an afternoon enjoying the work of Lowcountry Artists.

Sunday, November 2, 2014 ♦ 2-5pm
Widgeon Point Preserve ♦ Lemon Island, SC
A portion of the proceeds from sales benefits Open Land Trust.

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Debbie Quirin – Administrative Assistant
Josh Bell – Stewardship Director
Jamie Miller – Accreditation Coordinator

Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program

Lisa Lord – Administrator
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