

# Annual Report

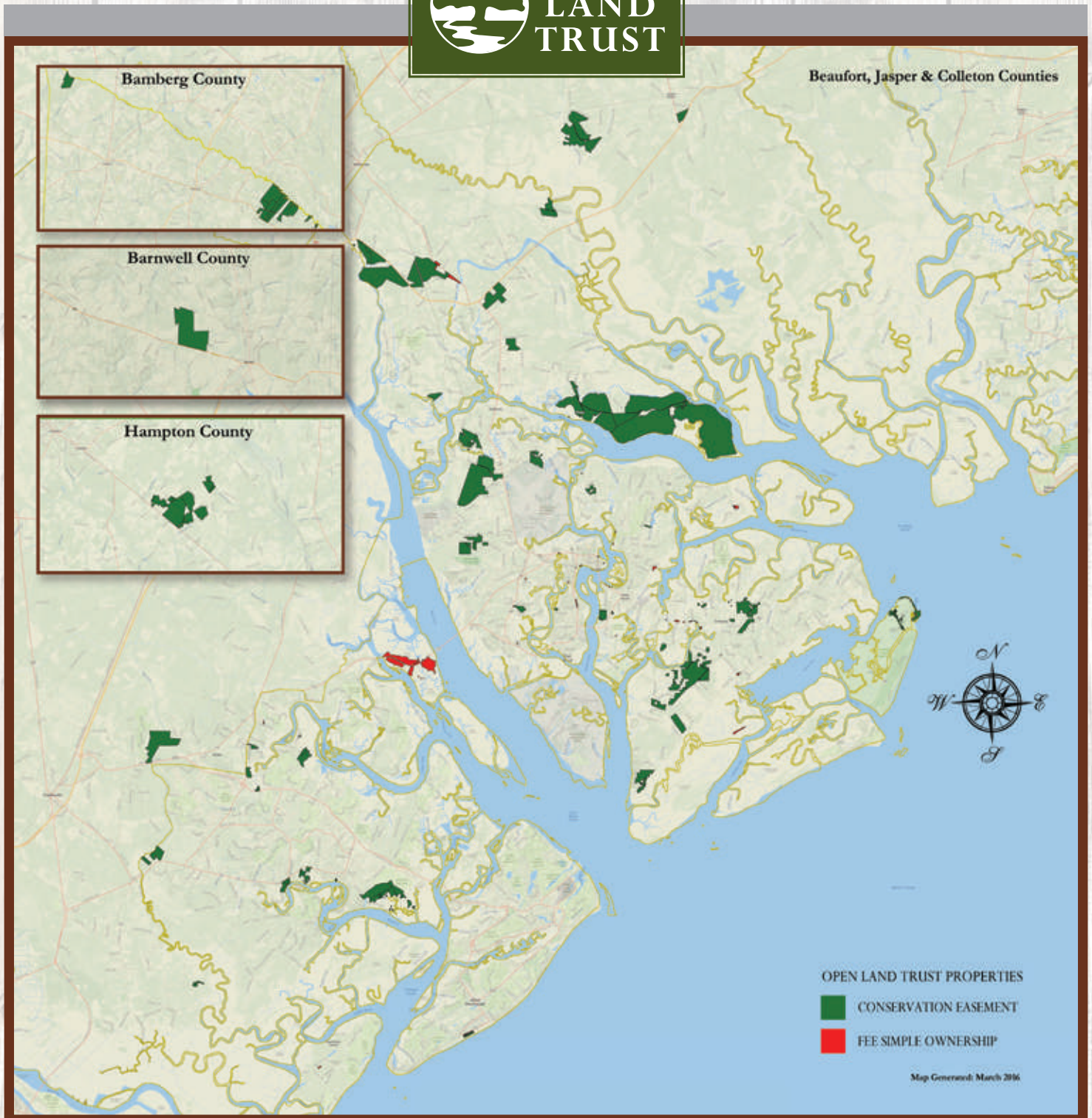
2015

PROTECTING OUR LOWCOUNTRY SINCE 1971

BEAUFORT COUNTY



OPEN  
LAND  
TRUST







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## Letter from the Executive Director

I am proud to announce that Beaufort County Open Land Trust has been awarded accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is a mark of distinction, recognizing land trusts that meet the national quality standards established by the land conservation community. Land trusts applying for accreditation submit extensive documentation and make a significant commitment of time and money to participate. In a rigorous review process, the Commission examines each application, interviews the land trust and evaluates multiple sources of information, including comments from the public. Accreditation recognizes a land trust's commitment to continuous quality improvement. To ensure that accredited land trusts continue to meet national standards, accreditation is reviewed every five years. Accredited land trusts are making sure that the places we love today will be loved by generations to come.

The necessity of the work that we do at the Open Land Trust stems from the interaction of two indisputable facts. The first is that Beaufort County is a place of unique but fragile natural resources. The second fact is that Beaufort County, as does all of the Lowcountry, faces the reality of growth. The 1980 census placed Beaufort County's population at 65,364. The estimate for 2017 is 181,968 and by 2030 the population of Beaufort County is expected to be 261,017.

This combination of sensitive natural resources and rapid growth poses a challenge to Beaufort County. It must strike a balance between its natural legacy and a prosperous future. Little tolerance exists for environmental degradation while economic growth is critical to the quality of life of residents. Maintaining this balance is a key reason for the establishment of the County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program which is administered by OLT.

Thank you, our members, for joining us in the challenge of managing growth and protecting the special places in Beaufort County. We must not "take our eyes off the ball."

Cindy Baysden



Staff, left to right. Jamie Miller, Cindy Baysden, Josh Bell and Debbie Quirin

# Special People



## *New Board Member*

### **PATRICIA ANNE DENKLER**

30 years an International Captain for Delta,— could live anywhere, but chose Beaufort for the beauty and unique character of the Lowcountry.



*Sally Pringle and daughter Frances Cherry host an Open Land Trust luncheon.*



Mac Griffith, a senior at Beaufort Academy, helps post property boundary signs while interning with the Open Land Trust in March. Mac will attend Wofford College in the fall.

## *Protecting our Lowcountry SINCE 1971*



### **MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**

Regular OLT communications (via email and print)

Invitations to Member-Only events

Copy of OLT Newsletters

Piece of mind knowing you are helping to protect the lowcountry

## **Have you ever considered giving a Gift Membership?**

It's the perfect present for Mother's Day, Father's Day, Birthdays, Anniversaries, or just because!



# Reviving an Iconic St. Helena Landmark

Breaking ground during the early months of 1955, Mr. Leyonard Blocker and his beloved wife Barbara began construction on a small country store just over Cowan Creek at the front door of St. Helena Island. Officially opening for business on October 15th of that same year, Blocker's Grocery Store quickly became a favorite, and for many years, the only, one-stop-shop for local sea island residents. As decades rolled by and more and more visitors discovered St. Helena and the islands and beaches just beyond, the store evolved into an iconic landmark where visiting became more than just a stop at a gas station



*St. Helena Market photographed during the snow of 1989.*

*As decades rolled by  
and more and more visitors  
discovered St. Helena and  
the islands and beaches just  
beyond, the store evolved into  
an iconic landmark where  
visiting became more than  
just a stop at a gas station  
— it became an experience  
reminiscent of times gone by.*



*St. Helena Market, circa 1988.*

— it became an experience reminiscent of times gone by. From a full service fuel station to shelves and baskets filled with locally grown produce and plants and nearly anything in between, patrons could always count on the market to have something they needed. The Blockers ran and managed the store for over



*St. Helena Market, circa early 2000s.*



# Reviving an Iconic St. Helena Landmark

thirty years until they decided to retire and lease it in 1988. When the new operator took over, he changed the name of the store to the St. Helena Market but continued the tradition of selling local produce, plants, and other goodies commonly found in old fashioned general stores.

Fast forward to 1997 when the opportunity arose for the Land Trust to purchase the property from the Blockers to prevent any further development of the land. By partnering with Beaufort County and others, as well as receiving generous private donations from our members and local residents, the Land Trust was able to successfully close the deal by the summer of 1998. Upon the Land Trust's acquisition of

the property, with the same tenant in place, the St. Helena Market continued to operate until late 2012 when the doors closed for the first time in well over half a century.

The Land Trust began renovations to the old market in the fall of 2015 as a result of an overwhelming response from local residents, long time visitors to the islands, and others passionate about reviving this historic icon and St. Helena institution. In keeping with the old country store theme, the Land Trust has entered into a long-term lease agreement with the Carolina Cider Company to operate the market once renovations are complete. Similar to their other two locations (one in Gardens Corner and the other in Point South, both

on Highway 17 just north of Beaufort), the St. Helena location will specialize in carrying locally made ciders and other small batch southern delicacies such as jams, jellies, pickles, relishes, homemade pies (the best you will ever eat!) and other sweets, stone ground grits, Carolina Gold rice, and much more. They will also offer premium fresh ground coffee which can be enjoyed while browsing through the store or while relaxing on the patio out front. So this summer when you head out to the beaches, stop in and take a look...there's a good chance there will be something that suits your fancy.

*Written by Josh Bell*



*Renovation of the market is nearing completion. Progress as of April 2016.*



# *More Land Near the Marine Corps Air Station-Beaufort Protected*



Earlier this year, 108 acres on Port Royal Island between the Laurel Bay residential community and the Marine Corps Air Station-Beaufort (MCAS) were protected permanently with a conservation easement. The land has historically been and will continue to be utilized for agriculture and livestock pastureland.

This property is one of a growing number of conservation easements held by the Land Trust in the area which further establishes a conservation stronghold on Port Royal Island, protecting farmland, traditional rural land use, habitat and water quality while maintaining wildlife corridors and fulfilling MCAS goals of keeping

encroachment and high density residential development away from the Air Station to protect flight operations and safety. This conservation easement was purchased jointly through the County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program and the MCAS Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative Program.

## The Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program



On April 25, 2016, Beaufort County Council approved funds from the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program for the purchase of two properties within the Port Royal Sound area and the Chechessee River watershed. The Port Royal Sound is a delicate embayment that is extremely sensitive to changes in the land, including development.

The Mobley tract was annexed by the Town of Port Royal in 2006 and subsequently a Development Agreement was put in place which allows for 125 residential units. Funds from the Program will be used to purchase 95 acres of the property, located directly across from the Port Royal Sound Maritime Center. The Port Royal Sound Foundation and the Program will share in the cost of the purchase and the existing density will be removed, preventing future development. The Town of Port Royal is supportive of this purchase.

The preservation of the Mobley tract will protect ecosystem health, water quality, habitat for marine organisms such as shellfish and oysters, and preserve the rural character and scenic quality of the surrounding area. "This partnership allows for the protection of the Sound and the opportunity for the Port Royal Sound Foundation to continue its mission of advancing the awareness of the unique Port Royal Sound system," says Dean Moss, Chair of the Port Royal Sound Foundation.

The use of the property will be managed through a Joint Use Agreement between Beaufort County and the Foundation and will provide opportunities for the Foundation to conduct ecological research and provide environmental education programs to the public.

In addition, funding for the purchase of a 24-acre property known as the Jeter tract, on Highway 170 across from the area known as Manigault Neck, was approved. The

permanent protection of this property will add to the existing mosaic of conservation lands.

Six properties for a total of 725 acres in the Chechessee River watershed have been protected. Beaufort County continues to make an important investment in land protection within this focus area, culminating in a significant corridor of protected land, and the creation of a mid-county greenway. "The Sound and the Chechessee River watershed provide critical habitat for ecologically and economically important wildlife species, and the protection of key tracts that preserve the health of our local watersheds continues to be a focus of the Program," says Lisa Lord, Rural and Critical Lands Program Administrator.

For more information go to [www.ruralandcritical.org](http://www.ruralandcritical.org) or contact Lisa Lord, Beaufort County Open Land Trust, (843) 909-2343, [lisajlord1@gmail.com](mailto:lisajlord1@gmail.com)



# LANDSCAPE OF CONSERVATION: *Managing and Appreciating the Rural Lowcountry*

At the annual luncheon on Wednesday April 6, 2016, the Open Land Trust hosted guest speaker Dr. Travis Hayes Folk. He has a Ph.D. in Wildlife Sciences from Auburn University. Dr. Folk is a consulting forester and biologist with Folk Land Management, Inc. in Green Pond, SC.

His speech titled "Landscape

of Conservation: Managing and Appreciating the Rural Lowcountry" explained the importance of managing our natural environment in the Lowcountry.

Photography at the luncheon featured the beautiful work of David Soliday.

Those attending enjoyed good food and good fellowship.



Speaker Dr. Travis Hayes Folk



Members enjoying the luncheon



Trish Irwin, President



Don and Nancy King



OLT Founding Member Betty Waskiewicz.



Dr. Travis Folk, Guest Speaker captivating the audience.



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