

The economic benefits of parks, trails, and conserved open spaces in Beaufort County, South Carolina

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The parks, trails, and conserved open spaces in Beaufort County provide substantial economic benefits to the community's residents. Many people understand that parks, trails, and conserved open spaces are a valuable component of healthy communities, but this value is rarely quantified. A new report by The Trust for Public Land analyzes these amenities in Beaufort County for the first time and documents a selection of the significant economic benefits that they generate.

For the full report, visit
www.tpl.org/beaufort-county-economic-benefits

Places like Hunting Island State Park, Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park, the Spanish Moss Trail, Oyster Factory Park, and Chaplin Community Park as well as lands acquired through the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program create diverse economic benefits for Beaufort County's residents, businesses, and government. These lands enhance property values, infiltrate stormwater, improve air quality, attract visitors to the county, provide recreational opportunities for residents, improve human health, boost economic development, and bolster the farming and defense industries.

Enhancing property values

People in Beaufort County enjoy living close to parks, trails, and conserved open spaces and they are willing to pay for this proximity. These amenities raise the value of nearby homes by a total of \$127 million and increase property tax revenues by \$1.12 million a year. A subset of this total, Rural and Critical Lands (RCL) increase property values by \$22.5 million and boost annual tax revenues by \$174,000.

Providing essential natural goods and services

Beaufort County's parks and conserved lands reduce stormwater by capturing precipitation and slowing its runoff. These spaces also remove air pollutants that endanger human health and damage structures. Throughout the county, these lands provide stormwater infiltration services of \$27.4 million annually, \$8.10 million of which is generated by RCL. They also provide air pollution removal benefits of \$317,000 per year, \$72,900 of which is generated by RCL.

Boosting tourism

Tourism is a key component of the Beaufort County economy. At least 9 percent of visitors to the county come primarily to visit parks, trails, and conserved open spaces. These visitors are estimated to spend \$116 million annually and generate \$3.46 million in local tax revenues.

Enabling recreation

Residents of Beaufort County also enjoy parks, trails, and conserved open spaces. Each year, county residents make hundreds of thousands of visits to these places to walk, hike, relax, visit with friends and family, and engage in other activities. In total, residents receive an annual benefit of \$16.8 million for the recreational use of these amenities.

Increasing public health

Research shows that park and trail use increases physical activity and results in medical care cost savings. While all Beaufort County residents who visit parks, trails, and conserved open spaces improve their health by visiting, approximately 5,790 adults use these spaces for enough physical activity to result in measurable medical cost savings, totaling \$7.91 million per year.

Propelling economic development

Parks, trails, and conserved open spaces contribute to the high quality of life in Beaufort County, which attracts businesses and employees. By providing opportunities for recreation, these amenities also support \$12.8 million in resident spending on sports, recreation, and exercise equipment annually.

Bolstering the farming industry

Land conservation supports the farming industry in Beaufort County by helping to maintain the working landscape on which this industry depends. Together, the county's 137 farms generate over \$28.3 million in agricultural products annually.

Supporting military bases and the economy

Defense is a key industry in Beaufort County, where three major installations support 14,900 jobs. Land conservation helps the U.S. military create safe buffer zones around installations, separating growing communities from land needed for vital training missions and base operations.

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The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

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