

Annual Report
2018
PROTECTING OUR LOWCOUNTRY SINCE 1971



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Letter from the Executive Director



The Beaufort County Open Land Trust is South Carolina's first and oldest land trust. For almost 50 years the organization has worked tirelessly to protect open space, scenic vistas, working farmlands and rural landscapes and those efforts have contributed to the quality of life we enjoy today. Every time I drive along Bay Street Bluff, which was the first piece of property purchased by the LandTrust in 1971, I am reminded of how very lucky I am to live in this very special place and more importantly, how lucky my children are that they will grow up here.

The year 2018 was testament to the fact that we, in partnership with local government and with support from the community, have continued the important

work that began so many years ago. As you read through this report, I hope you are as proud as we are of all that was accomplished in 2018. From a park at Whitehall to another successful bond referendum for the County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program, we are making a difference!

None of this work would be possible without the participation of our members. Thank you for being part of the Land Trust family!

Kristin Williams



Truck Donation Needed

our ability to carry out our mission. Generally, the donation of a vehicle to OLT

MILESTRAVELLED = LAND PROTECTION IN ACTION

Comings & Goings

NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Terry Murray

Terry Murray has been involved with the Open Land Trust for over 25 years. As a past president of the Trust, Terry was instrumental in a number of successful conservation projects, most notably, her role in preserving Lemon Island and Widgeon Point. Terry is retired from her position of chief financial officer of Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority and the Land Trust is grateful to have her back on the Board.



The Land Trust is excited to welcome Al Segars to the Board. Al recently retired from a long career at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and brings with him extensive knowledge of Lowcountry ecosystems and wildlife. A veterinarian by trade, Al was the lead scientist for SCDNR on the In-Water Loggerhead Sea Turtle Project and was the Stewardship Coordinator for the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve.



Thomas Tayloe

Originally from North Carolina, Thomas Tayloe graduated from UNC-CH with a BS in American History. Since moving to Beaufort in 2013, Thomas has worked at Kinghorn Insurance specializing in commercial insurance. He is married to his wonderful wife Ainsley, and they have two sons, Berry and Archie. Thomas enjoys spending time with his family on the water, inshore fishing, hunting, and he is very involved with his church, First Presbyterian Church of Beaufort.

A Fond Farewell TO



Garrett Wreden rotated off of the Open Land Trust Board of Directors at the end of 2018. Garrett served as Vice President for two consecutive terms and was a dedicated member of the Land Committee for many years. Although Garrett is no longer on the Board he is still closely involved with the Trust and continues to offer his time and energy whenever possible.



Trish Irwin joined the Board in 2013 and was President from 2015-2017. Her experience in non-profit management, education, and fundraising was invaluable to the Open Land Trust. Trish moved to North Carolina in 2018 to be closer to her children and grandchildren.

Annual Meeting

The 48th Annual Meeting of the Beaufort County Open Land Trust was held on April 3rd at the Beaufort Yacht and Sailing Club. The annual meeting is not only a time to reflect on the previous year's success but, more importantly, it is a time to thank the members that make the important work of the Land Trust possible.

















WIDGEON POINT PRESERVE ECOLOGY TOURS

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute



On two Lowcountry-perfect mornings, September 25 and October 4, 2018, Director of Land Protection Barbara Holmes led two "Widgeon Point Ecology Tours" to approximately 40 adult participants in the OLLI Program. The 162-acre historic farm property known as Widgeon Point Preserve provides established walking trails and a mix of various habitats supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and plant species. Purchased through the County's Rural

& Critical Land Preservation Program and jointly owned by Beaufort County and the Open Land Trust, this property provides an extraordinary opportunity to observe and absorb the natural beauty of the Lowcountry. Surrounded by the pristine marshes of the Broad River, participants enjoyed the nature walk on the circular path around the property, observing and learning about the unique natural resources of the Preserve.

Widgeon Point is currently not open to the public as the site is undergoing renovations and improvements including an expanded parking lot, a repaired bridge, a new birding blind and permanent restroom facilities. The Preserve is expected to be open by 2020, and we will keep you updated on progress!







BEAUFORT COUNTY VOTERS APPROVE ADDITIONAL \$25 MILLION FOR LAND PRESERVATION

On November 6, 2018, Beaufort County voters approved by 70% an additional \$25,000,000 for the County's long-running Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program. The program originated in 1998 when County leaders recognized the potential for uncontrolled and detrimental development and has been funded since 2002 by general obligation bonds. November's bond referendum is the fifth bond referendum for the program that enjoys strong support by Beaufort County citizens. The program has protected 23,926 acres, over half of that acreage through the purchase of development rights and conservation easements.

Rural & Critical funds have facilitated the protection of iconic places in Beaufort County including Lemon Island and Widgeon Point, the Bluffton Oyster Factory, Pinckney Point and Whitehall Park. The SC Department of Natural Resources, the SC Conservation Bank, the Department of Defense, USDA/NRCS and our municipalities have been instrumental partners in the Rural & Critical Program, providing over \$40,000,000 in cost-share funds to leverage \$135,000,000 in County purchases.

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2018 Protected Properties









"Owr Time" OLT'S DEBUTVIDEO

During an iconic Lowcountry fall evening in October, we celebrated the premiere of the Open Land Trust's first video at the Beaufort Yacht and Sailing Club with our supporters. The video, entitled "Our Time," reflects on the experience of living in a place that provides open spaces that belong to all of us. It honors the planning and efforts of those who came before us, and reminds us of the responsibility we have, right now, to preserve and protect those spaces so they can be passed down.

The video was conceived last year as a project that coincided with our publicity efforts associated with the Rural & Critical bond referendum. EK Collaborations, an experienced and nimble production team based in Charleston worked with OLT staff



to conceptualize, write and produce "Our Time" in addition to four shorter promotional videos used for the referendum. Last summer the team of Elizabeth Brown and Katherine Kelly taped interviews with OLT founders and others including County Councilman York Glover, former County Councilmember Dot Gnann and the Bluffton Oyster Company's owner Larry Toomer.

We are indebted to Elizabeth and Katherine for their guidance and efforts in capturing the spirit and essence of OLT's mission. More good news is that we are planning future videos. All of the OLT videos can be seen on The Beaufort County Open Land Trust You Tube page.

Calhoun Plantation's Family Farming Legacy

Three Sisters Farm and U Pick Daffodils

"After quite a bit of thought and consultation with my children, we decided we wanted to preserve this land as we had inherited it. We didn't feel that it was our privilege to do anything else than that. And we're very happy that we did."

-Mary O. Merrick in 2007



Mary Olive Pinckney Merrick, born in 1921, recognized the immeasurable value of what she had been given and the responsibility that came with that gift. Her family first inhabited Calhoun Plantation, just outside the Town of Bluffton, in 1848, farming cotton, rice, corn and other crops. Despite the development pressure resulting from the significant growth of southern Beaufort County during her lifetime, Mary wanted to remain at Calhoun Plantation with her family and maintain her rural lifestyle. Mary became one of the first landowners in Beaufort County to participate in the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program by granting a conservation easement to the Open Land Trust and selling the future development rights on her 145-acre property to Beaufort County.

Mary's commitment to protect Calhoun Plantation lives and continues to benefit her community through the efforts of her children. Ten years ago, her daughters Mary Connor, Beth Lee, and Priscilla Coleman established Three Sisters Farm that now produces a wide variety of certified organic vegetables, berries, herbs, flowers, sugarcane, indigo and mushrooms. They sell produce to several select local restaurants, run a small Community Supported Agriculture program and operate booths at local farmer's markets. Additionally, Mary's son Chuck Merrick and his wife Diane opened U Pick Daffodils in 2017, providing local families a window of opportunity each spring to visit Calhoun Plantation for the spring rite of selecting a personal bouquet from the property's field of approximately 100,000 daffodils.

This family embodies stewardship ethics and community value nurtured through generations, showing us what it means right now to live a legacy of love of family land.

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*To the best of our knowledge, this list reflects donations received from our 2018 membership appeal. If there is an error or omission, please contact our office and we will make the appropriate changes in our database

Dot Gnann



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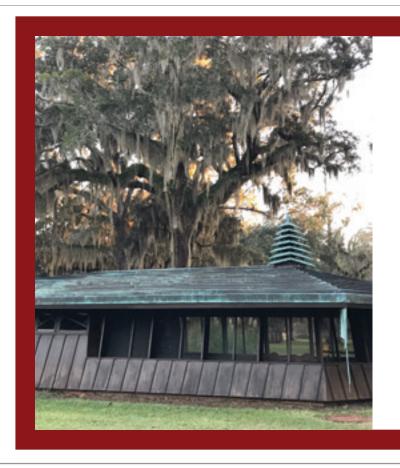














NOVEMBER 1 & 2, 2019

Tickets: \$175

Tickets Available on Eventbrite.com

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