



# *Annual Report*

2019

PROTECTING OUR LOWCOUNTRY SINCE 1971





## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Members,

What a crazy time we find ourselves living in! If there is one thing that I hope will come out of this experience, I hope it is an overwhelming feeling of gratitude. For me personally, I am grateful that my family and friends remain healthy; I am grateful for the kindness of others witnessed each day; and I am grateful to be in Beaufort, SC throughout this pandemic!

We have all been afforded more time to think and reflect on things that are important to us. The constant feeling of uncertainty can be incredibly overwhelming. In these unprecedented times, one thing remains and that is the unparalleled beauty of this place we call home. Each afternoon, after a day filled with zoom meetings, home schooling, managing deadlines along with managing temper tantrums (both from the adults and children), my family and I try to spend time outside. Our usual spot is the Green, one of our many protected open spaces in Beaufort. It is amazing what a few moments in nature can do for your soul.

Sitting on a blanket, watching my kids climb their favorite trees, which now all have their own names, chasing butterflies and playing hide and seek behind the sprawling oaks is what I hope to remember most when I reflect back on this time of COVID-19.

The OLT team has adjusted quickly to working remotely and we are continuing the important work of protecting our iconic places, providing access to land, water and wilderness in order to maintain our quality of life here in the Lowcountry.

As times continue to change, we will change with them and our work will continue. Thank you for your continued support. You make it all possible! Stay well and we look forward to seeing you all soon.

With appreciation,  
Kristin



## SPANISH MOSS TRAIL EXTENDED THROUGH PROTECTED CLARENDON PLANTATION

Bikers, runners and walkers are now using the Spanish Moss Trail as it traverses a portion of Clarendon Plantation adjacent to U.S. Highway 21 in northern Beaufort County. This 0.6-mile trail section between Poppy Hill Road and Clarendon Road was paved in the fall of 2019, after temporary closure while the details about public use were agreed to by Clarendon's owners, OLT and the Department of Defense (DoD). A total of 1,203 acres of Clarendon are protected by Open Land Trust conservation easements and DoD Restrictive Easements granted in 2009 and 2010. Although Clarendon Plantation is privately owned, the owners generously agreed to allow specific access through the property for the benefit of Beaufort County citizens and visitors.

The 12-foot wide paved Spanish Moss Trail runs along a former railroad bed from north of Ribaut Road in Port Royal to the Seabrook area and now allows users an unimpeded 20-mile round trip. Trail usage is estimated at 40,000 people per year. This public use of the Spanish Moss Trail is consistent with the conservation values protected by OLT's conservation easements, and we are pleased to work with Clarendon's owners collaboratively to allow public recreation opportunities on protected property.



# Comings & Goings



## *Haley Romeo*

Haley Romeo joined the Open Land Trust staff in January 2020 as the Office Manager. Prior to assuming this position, she worked in an administrative position in the medical field for 12 years and as an event planner. She grew up in Charleston and Lowcountry living has always been important to her. In 2017 her husband, Joseph, was promoted and relocated to Beaufort and she couldn't be happier. They live in Beaufort with their daughter, Brooklyn.



## *Vernita Dore*

A native of Beaufort, SC, Vernita Dore has dedicated her life to serving others and her professional career to improving the quality of life in rural communities. Ms. Dore is a retired Deputy Under Secretary of Rural Development for the U.S. Department of Agriculture where she was responsible for overseeing Operations and Management, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of Civil Rights, and forty-seven State Directors across the nation. Ms. Dore earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from the University of South Carolina. She has received additional professional development from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business, the Federal Executive Institute, and USDA Graduate School. Ms. Dore is a fellow of the Diversity Leadership Institute at Furman University.

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## *A Fond Farewell TO*



## *Beekman Webb*

Beek Webb has been a member of the Open Land Trust Board of Directors for many years and has served as former President and as a member of the Land Committee. Born and raised in Beaufort, Beek has an in-depth knowledge of the land and its history. He has played a vital role in protecting some of OLT's most prized properties such as The Green in the Old Point. Although Beek is not on the Board he continues to serve on the Land Committee and remains a valuable member of the OLT team.



## *Hampton Long*

Hampton Long served two terms on the Board and was a dedicated member of the Land Committee. Hampton was and is always thinking of the Trust and how to grow our portfolio of protected properties. Additionally, Hampton's expertise as a financial advisor was critical in OLT's fundraising efforts and financial planning. Hampton is a great mentor and continues to introduce the Trust to other valuable mentors and friends.





# 2019 Protected Properties

## Rural and Critical Update - Pineview



On February 7, 2020 Beaufort County closed on the purchase of a forested 108-acre property on Lady's Island spanning from Sams Point Road east to tidally-influenced Rock Springs Creek. The property was acquired below fair market value for \$2,980,000, at approximately \$27,091 per acre. Additionally, the seller donated \$50,000 to the County towards passive park expenditures on the property.

Beaufort County will manage the property for optimal ecological benefit and will consider future passive recreational opportunities on site. "Pineview is located very close to a number of residential neighborhoods and will provide opportunities for citizens to experience nature-based outdoor recreational activities without having to travel off Lady's Island," remarks Barbara Holmes, OLT's Director of Land Protection. "Convenient access to parks and trails ensures that our citizens are able to get out and enjoy the natural beauty of the Lowcountry."

"Conservation is a must in Beaufort County," stated Councilmember York Glover. "Beaufort County is changing, but we must do our part to preserve a sense of history for the generations to come. Acquiring this tract on Lady's Island will add to other tracts that have been preserved by the County over the years."

Pineview has over 2,200 feet of water frontage on Rock Springs Creek, is adjacent to a Open Land Trust protected property and is 700 feet directly across Rock Springs Creek from the 517-acre protected Holly Hall Plantation. The undeveloped land contains a mixture of forested uplands and wetlands, providing significant wildlife habitat and natural stormwater filtration and recharge benefits.

Beaufort County has permanently protected Pineview by placing restrictive covenants on the property. Pineview's purchase brings the acreage protected through the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program to 24,088 total acres. OLT is contracted by Beaufort County to manage land acquisitions for the Program.



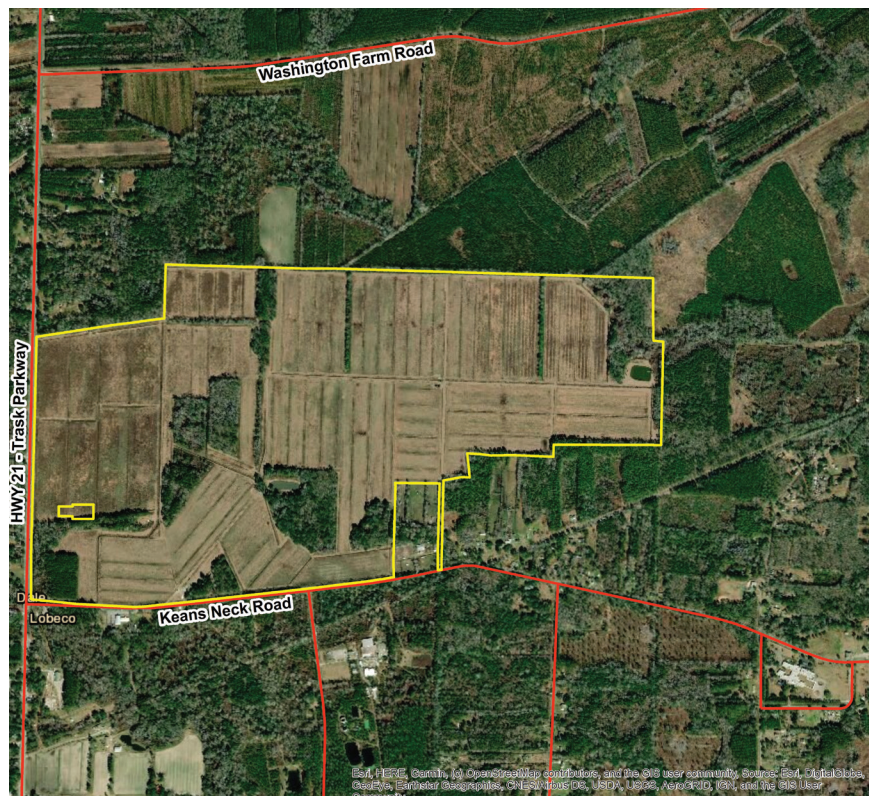


# 2019 Protected Properties

## SOLAR FARM EASEMENT

*“Our landscape in Beaufort County is changing and how we think about land use is changing too. What was once a tomato farm will now help support the growing clean energy industry. Our goal is to ensure that over the long-term, these sites vulnerable to residential, commercial and industrial development, are permanently protected.”*

*-Kristin Williams, Executive Director*



In a first of its kind deal for South Carolina, Open Land Trust, in partnership with Adger Solar, placed a conservation easement on a rural 634-acre property in Lobeco that will house a 72-megawatt solar generation facility. The project, which will be operated by Dominion Energy is expected to begin service in 2020 and will provide enough energy to power 9,000 homes for 25 years.

The conservation easement protects the conservation values of the property and allows for the site to be converted back to agricultural, timber production, or other rural uses should the current use for solar generation end. Additionally, a vegetative buffer along US Highway 21 will maintain the natural scenic viewshed of the well-traveled road.

Adger Solar worked closely with the conservation community and ACE Basin Task Force to understand local perspectives and address concerns. Charles Lane, Chairman of the ACE Basin Task Force commented, “This project provides a model for the business and conservation communities to work together and achieve mutually beneficial goals. For us, some of these goals included extensive vegetative buffering and permanent protection through a conservation easement. We couldn’t be more pleased to see this property not only providing the region clean energy, but also to know that it is also protected forever through a conservation easement.”





# 2019 Protected Properties

## Henderson Tracts

Open Land Trust was pleased to accept a donated conservation easement in late December 2019 from the owner of the Henderson Tracts, a 324.1 acre family hunting property in Hampton County. The property is located on the southwest side of SC Highway 68 and on Foxtrail and Fechtig Roads just south of Cummings, South Carolina. This property and adjacent properties have been in family ownership for many years. There are several residential structures located on the adjacent tracts, and the Henderson Tracts have been used primarily for timber production, rural recreation and wildlife habitat improvement.

The recently protected property is comprised of well-maintained loblolly pine stands, unpaved interior roads and firelanes, a system of drainage ditches, a well-defined USDA-NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program wetland, several areas of well-maintained wildlife foodplots and sustenance patches as well as an array of forested wetlands.

The Henderson Tracts are a perfect addition to the more than 2,500 acres of protected land located just over a mile away. The properties are protected in perpetuity through conservation easements held by Open Land Trust, The Lowcountry Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy. These properties are situated on the brink of two watersheds, one flowing through McPherson Creek, draining into the Coosawhatchie River, to the Broad River and ultimately to Port Royal Sound and the other through Tennants Branch, draining into the Salkehatchie River, through the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge into the Combahee River and ultimately into the St. Helena Sound. So, this assemblage of Protected Property contributes to the extensive network of protective wildlife habitat, the protection of water quality in the Salkehatchie and Coosawhatchie watersheds, and the scenic natural and rural character of the area.



## Bear Island Field Trip

On the brisk morning of February 27th, several OLT members and supporters bravely enjoyed a birdwatching tour of Bear Island and Donnelly Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), both owned by the SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). The properties are managed to provide quality habitat for wintering waterfowl and other wetland wildlife including threatened and endangered species such as Wood Stork and Bald Eagle, to provide habitat for upland game and nongame species, and to provide recreational opportunities for the hunting and nonhunting public. The two properties collectively protect more than 20,000 acres in the heart of the ACE

Basin. The field trip was led by author and naturalist, Pete Laurie, who also worked for SCDNR for 27 years. OLT Board Members Al Segars and Beek Webb both provided expert bird identification at the various stops along the route as members viewed a variety of wildlife through spotting scopes. In just a short period of time the birders were treated to sightings of a wide variety of species: Bald Eagle, White Pelican, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, Dowitcher, Dunlin, American Avocet, Willet, Ring Billed Gull, Mottled Duck, Northern Shoveler, Northern Harrier, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, White Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Common Gallinule, American Coot and various other shorebirds and waterbirds.



*OLT Board Member, Al Segars, describes identifying characteristics as OLT members gaze at the plethora of shorebirds near the Ashepoo River*



*ACE Basin author and Retired DNR manager, Pete Laurie, describes the functionality and history of a rice trunk water control structure that allows managers to finely tune the water level in wetland impoundments.*



# Farm to Table Event

The Open Land Trust believes strongly in the value of collaboration and we work closely with many partner organizations, such as the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League. In November we jointly hosted a Farm to Table event that was to be held at Three Sisters Farm, the only certified organic farm in Beaufort County and one of the many properties we protect through a conservation easement. Unfortunately, due to heavy rains and impassable farm roads the event was relocated to the Port Royal Farmers Market at the last minute, which is where the majority of the food served came from. It was an afternoon filled with amazing food, wine, art and a celebration of partnership and community.



## How we work Together

The South Carolina Coastal Conservation League and the Open Land Trust strive to better the lives of South Carolinians by protecting the natural resources we enjoy each day. We work together to improve land protection policies in the Lowcountry, and often strategize together on how to protect our most charismatic properties, whether that be through rural zoning, implementation of urban growth boundaries, or conservation easements.



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### Entertainment

Blue Mudd Members: Scott Kinsey, Vic Varner, Beek Webb

### Artists

Louis Bruce  
Susan Mayfield  
Eve Miller  
Mary Segars  
Beth Williams

### Volunteers

A special thank you to Kit Bruce for her time and infectious energy!

Louis Bruce  
Robin Koppernaes  
Jessie White  
Lloyd Williams

*And so many others!*





# ACE Basin Task Force

## 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The ACE Basin Task Force is composed of state and federal government agencies, private landowners, and regional land trusts. Established in 1989, the goal of the task force is to protect the natural resources of the ACE Basin, which consists of the Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto river basins. The task force is one of the most successful examples of what true collaboration in the conservation community can achieve and is recognized nationally for its efforts. On December 8, 2019 Charles Lane, president of the task force, and his wife Virginia opened their home at Willtown Plantation to roughly 400 guests to celebrate 30 years of success and 300,000 acres protected in the ACE Basin.



*Charles and Virginia Lane*



*Brad and Andrea Sadler and Caylor and Brett Romines*



*Katie Phifer, Caroline Jones, Kristin Williams, Ashley Jacobs*



*Kerri Forrest and Sharon Richardson*



*Hugh West*



*Mike McShane and Aurelia Skipwith, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*





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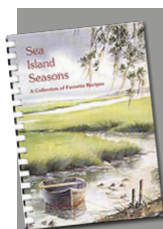


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OLT staff members travel a lot! With our commitment to protect 139 properties in perpetuity, we remain engaged and in communication with each landowner. With almost 25,000 acres in six counties, travel is an integral part of the job.

The donation of a truck appropriate for OLT travel and field use would improve our ability to carry out our mission. Generally, the donation of a vehicle to OLT can be considered a tax-deductible donation.  
Please contact Kristin Williams at kristin@openlandtrust.com or 843-521-2175.



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We know you believe in our mission because you have supported us in the past. Your annual membership is critical to the success of our organization.

**PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW TODAY AT  
WWW.OPENLANDTRUST.ORG.**

**CARES Act** includes provisions for charitable giving such as a universal charitable deduction and adjusted gross income caps for cash gifts in 2020.

\*Please contact your tax, legal or accounting advisor for more information.