

Annual Report

2020

PROTECTING OUR LOWCOUNTRY SINCE 1971



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Members,

This year we are celebrating 50 years of land protection! The work of the Beaufort County Open Land Trust is all around us. As you drive over the Broad River Bridge and look out over Lemon Island, you don't see hundreds of rooftops. Instead you see miles of marsh and those quintessential lowcountry hummock islands, none of which will ever be developed. When you drive down Carteret Street, rather than multistory homes or office buildings at Bellamy Curve you have a breathtaking view of the Beaufort River. Beyond those properties that you helped purchase to protect our views and sense of place are the 25,000+ acres of private land that are protected forever through conservation easements. These conservation easements prevent inappropriate large scale development, provide us with road and river buffers, protect and enhance water quality, provide wildlife habitat and help sustain South Carolina's thriving agricultural and timber industries.

Beaufort has so much to be proud of when it comes to protecting what we love. We have a community that takes great pride and effort in protecting our unique and critical places. But our world is changing quickly and the role of land protection has never been more important. The growth brought on by the pandemic is unprecedented and we must continue to do everything we can to protect what we have because once it is gone, we don't get it back. We speak more on growth and the role of land protection on page 9 of this newsletter.

Serendipitously, with the influx of growth and its challenges, the Open Land Trust has also had an influx of new talent and energy. Over the past three years the organization has gained an entirely new staff. In addition to the expertise our team brings to the organization, we are incredibly passionate and passion is what drives the work that we do. This is more than a job to us. We live here and we are raising our families here. Our work has far reaching implications for those who matter most to us, and we carry that responsibility with us every day. Complimenting the new energy that the staff brings are our dedicated board members who have deep roots in and intimate knowledge of the area, each of whom are actively engaged in the work and direction of the organization.

We are committed to carrying on the legacy of those who came before us and to raising the next generation of land stewards who will be a part of the next 50 years of land protection success. With great challenge comes great opportunity and I think we as a community are ready for that challenge. Thank you for your support, we cannot do it without you!

With appreciation,
Kristin



Comings & Goings

A Warm Welcome TO



Kate Schaefer Kate joined the Beaufort County Open Land Trust in December 2020. She earned her bachelor's degree in Conservation Biology from Clemson University and master's degree from Kenan-Flagler business school at UNC-Chapel Hill. You may know Kate from her work with the Coastal Conservation League in Beaufort. She is passionate about local land conservation policy and loves speaking with others about the positive role land protection plays in protecting water quality and our quality of life.

At OLT, Kate will work with landowners, partners, and local and state government programs to identify strategic land protection opportunities in the region. Currently, OLT manages Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Lands program and Kate serves as the staff liaison.

Kate lives in Beaufort with her husband Paul and two children and you can contact her at kate@openlandtrust.com



Ashley Rhodes Ashley Rhodes has been a part of the Open Land Trust team both as a volunteer and a special events contractor for the past 3 years. Her passion for our work is evident in everything she has done for the organization and as of July 1, 2021 Ashley officially joins the team as the Director of Development. A native of the southern lowcountry,

Ashley has an innate passion for the land and all it has to offer.

Ashley began her career in special events as the first resource development director for Nemours Wildlife Foundation. She then established Ashley Rhodes Event Designs in 2008 and grew her career to become one of the most sought-after wedding planners in the region. Now a mother of two young boys, Ashley has decided to take a step back from the fast pace of luxury weddings and focus her energy on advancing the important work of the Open Land Trust.

You can contact Ashley at ashley@openlandtrust.com.



Beek Webb Beek was born and raised in Beaufort and 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. Beek 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. In addition to the Open Land Trust, Beek also serves as a member of the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Board for Council District 2.

Al Stokes Al retired from the SCDNR as Manager of the Waddell Mariculture Research and Development Center, where he spent more than 40 years



developing spawning and production techniques for several commercial and recreationally important finfish and marine shrimp species. He is currently employed as a shrimp production consultant for Zeigler Bros Inc., an international aquaculture feeds company. Al is a member of the May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee and a Deputy State Law Enforcement Officer. He is a volunteer for the Port Royal Sound Maritime Center, the SCDNR Victoria Bluff Heritage Trust Preserve and the Victoria Bluff Marine Reserve.

Colden R. Battey, Jr. Colden has been a partner in the law firm of Harvey & Battey since 1963. In addition to his legal practice, Colden served as chairman of Beaufort County Council for 8 years; he is a past president of the Beaufort County Bar Association, past director of the South Carolina Bar Association and of the South Carolina Trial Lawyers Association. Colden is a director of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation and served as Chairman of the Foundation from 2008 to 2020. We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Battey back to the Board.



Comings & Goings

A Fond Farewell TO



Alex Shuford During Alex's two terms on the Board he served as both President and Vice President and was an active member of both the Finance Committee and Land Committee. Alex has a deep love of the land and continues to serve on the OLT Land Committee where we are grateful to have his knowledge, passion and leadership.



Alison Guilloud Alison served two consecutive terms on the Board and was the Chairwoman of the Development Committee. Alison's experience in administration, financial management, and marketing coupled with her love for Beaufort contributed greatly to the organization. Alison has remained extremely active in the Development Committee and is a key volunteer in the 50th Anniversary Celebrations.



John Trask, III The Open Land Trust has been part of John's life long before he served as a board member and he remains involved after his board term expired. Growing up on St. Helena, John has an inherent love for the land and for the salt marshes and rivers that surround us. He continues to support the organization's efforts to protect this place we love.

New Property: Holly Hall Plantation, Lady's Island

Earlier this year, the Open Land Trust was honored to accept a conservation easement transfer from The Nature Conservancy on 518 acres located in the heart of Lady's Island. Holly Hall Plantation has been protected since 1991 and has been stewarded by The Nature Conservancy. The Open Land Trust is excited to add this pristine property to its array of protected lands in and around Beaufort County. Holly Hall is currently managed for wildlife, recreation, and timber production. Approximately 16% of the property is set aside for rural preservation, 11% of the property is agriculture open space, and the remaining 73% of the property is actively managed timberland. The conservation easement contains three diked fresh-to-brackish water impoundments that are best described as types of tidal freshwater marsh communities featuring rushes, sedges, grasses, and cattails. These impoundments and surrounding brackish marshes are used heavily as feeding areas for herons, egrets, wood storks, and ospreys. The property features over 4 miles of river frontage enhancing public views from the Morgan River, Point Creek and Rock Springs Creek thus also protecting and enhancing the overall water quality.



2020 Protected Properties



Oak Island – Conservation Easement

33.4 Acres • St Helena Island

Protects 7,000 feet of marsh frontage on Jenkins Creek leading to the St Helena Sound. Partnership with The Nature Conservancy.



Longwood – Conservation Easement

227 acres • St Helena Island

Protects 6,000 feet of marsh frontage on Station Creek and 5,000 feet of road frontage on Lands End Road and Seaside Road. Partnership with Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program.



The Rivers Place – Conservation Easement

65 acres • Hampton

Protects a large cypress wetland and significant road frontage on either side of Hwy 601.



Henry Farm North – Fee Purchase

88 acres • St Helena Island

Protects over 1,000 feet of river frontage on Eddings Point Creek leading to the St Helena Sound as well as 80 acres of prime farmland. Partnership with Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program, the South Carolina Conservation Bank and The Center for Heirs Property Preservation.



Grace Tract Addition – Conservation Easement

4 acres • St Helena Island

Increase to currently protected agriculture land and 300 feet of additional marsh frontage on Jenkins Creek leading to the St Helena Sound.

Celebrating 50 Years of Land Protection

50 years ago, the Beaufort County Open Land Trust was founded so citizens who cared about preserving the spectacular scenic vistas that define Beaufort County would have a non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds to protect key parcels of land from development. Since 1971, the Open Land Trust has grown to protect over 25,000 acres in seven counties.

Festivities began on May 1, 2021 with **Brunch on the Bluff** – on the Bay Street site where it all began. The year-long party continues with a **Chicken Salad Lunch series**, the ever-popular **Auldbress Tours** in November and the full year will wrap with a **Chef's Dinner series at Widgeon Point** in April of 2022.

As Beaufort continues to grow, and as environmental pressures increase, the leadership role of the Open Land Trust will be more important than ever.



Chicken Salad Lunches

In the early days, members of the Trust did everything they could think of to raise money, including selling potholders on Bay Street and hosting luncheons for tour groups in private historic homes. The luncheons featured the “Hot Chicken Salad” that is in the Open Land Trust cookbook, *Sea Island Seasons*. Unlike today’s popular cranberry chicken salad, the Open Land Trust chicken salad featured crushed potato chips! An army of faithful volunteers made sure that the luncheons happened every Spring and Fall for over 25 years. The funds raised helped protect Bay Street Bluff, Bellamy Curve and Lemon Island.

The concept was simple and the fundraising effort was extremely successful! As we celebrate 50 years, we are bringing back this successful tradition of Open Land Trust Luncheons. There is no better way to raise awareness and fundraise, than (safely) with friends at your home.

SIGN UP AS A HOSTESS: You select any Tuesday or Thursday, May-November 2021 from 11:30 am - 1:30 pm. As a “CSL” host, you will prepare a boxed or plated chicken salad lunch for 12. We leave all of the details to you. We simply need a hospitable hostess(es), seating to dine al fresco, and food and beverage. The Land Trust will provide you with six bottles of white wine for your luncheon. You can call the office at 843-521-2175 or email Haley Romeo for more information at haley@openlandtrust.com.

SIGN UP AS A GUEST: Visit our 50th Anniversary page on our website for a list of the upcoming Chicken Salad Lunches. Tickets can be purchased on Eventbrite or you can call the office at 843-521-2175.



The Beaufort County Open Land Trust's
2021 Auldbress Tours will be held
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4,
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5 AND
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6.

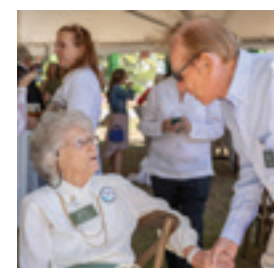
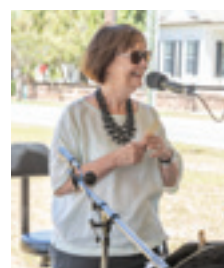
Daily tours to run from
8:30 am - 5:30 pm

TICKETS ON SALE NOW:
WWW.OPENLANDTRUST.ORG



Brunch on the Bluff

KICKING OFF A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS



Out & About

“New on the New” Paddle Trip

Fourteen members of the Open Land Trust brought in the New Year on the New River with Jody and April Tinsley, Master Naturalists, as guides. We paddled upstream on the New River to the base of the Great Swamp and stopped for lunch on one of our conservation easement properties to talk about landscape-scale conservation and its importance to the Lowcountry.



Combahee River Hunt for Spider Lilies

In April, twelve members gathered at Sugar Hill landing near the Combahee River on the hunt for blooming Spider Lilies led by guides Jody and April Tinsley as well as Dr. Al Segars. Although we were a few weeks early for a bloom, members enjoyed the ACE Basin and learned where to take a look for the blooming flowers.



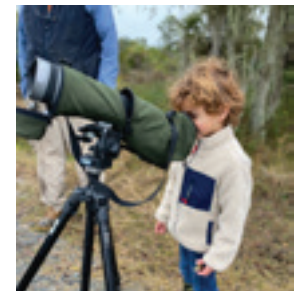
Nemours Wildlife Foundation Property Tour

Dr. Ernie Wiggers and Biologist Beau Bauer led a group of Open Land Trust members on a tour of Nemours, one of the largest properties in Beaufort

County. We learned about the history of rice cultivation and how that shaped the wildlife habitat we have come to know, love and pursue over the years. Thank you to the Nemours Wildlife Foundation Board for sharing your expertise and property with our members!

American Bald Eagle Presentation by Tom Murphy

Wildlife Biologist and American Bald Eagle expert, Tom Murphy, presented to a group of Open Land Trust members about the history, recovery, and ecology of the American Bald Eagle at Widgeon Point Preserve on Lemon Island. After the presentation, folks viewed the eagles from a spotting scope and the eagles gave us quite the show. Beaufort County Passive Parks program recently opened Widgeon Point Preserve for public enjoyment.



Bear Island



Donnelly



Botany Bay

Your South Carolina with Dr. Al Segars: Botany Bay, Donnelly and Bear Island Wildlife Management Areas

In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, in October 2020 Dr. Al Segars offered to host a webinar series focused on public lands in South Carolina that can be visited by the general public. Dr. Segars explained the best time to go and what you may experience at the two locations. *Scan the QR code to access recordings of these webinars.*

Census Data Highlights

THE URGENCY OF LAND PROTECTION

The South Carolina lowcountry is home to one of the most charismatic landscapes in America – and also one of the fastest growing. In fact, the 2020 census showed growth across South Carolina at 10.8% over ten years: Beaufort and Jasper topped that with 18.4% and 21.3% growth respectively.

From the 2020 Census, we know that coastal development is outpacing non-coastal development, that more land is being used per person than ever before, and that this means coastal residents are building more, driving more, boating more, and generally using more resources than they were 10, 30 or 50 years ago.

Beaufort County conservation efforts, whether through private conservation easements, the County's Rural and Critical Program, and federal partnerships with the National Park Service, USDA, and Department of Defense to protect land, water and quality of life have been broadly successful. As we look back on our 50 years as a land trust, we must also look forward to what the next 50 years will bring and how land protection benefits the growing population who will share this landscape.

Where we protect land shapes how we grow.

When we protect land on St Helena, we are not just protecting prime farmland and an agrarian economy, we are protecting a rural landscape across Chowan Creek from a burgeoning Lady's Island. We are protecting family land and preventing encroachment from speculative development and an influx from out of region development interest.

When we protect land in Dale, Gardens Corner, and Sheldon, we are supporting multi-generational families who can stay on their land, raise crops, trees and children underneath military flight space. These properties connect over 300,000 acres in the ACE Basin to the landscapes throughout Hampton and Jasper Counties, all draining into the Port Royal Sound watershed, the next frontier for landscape conservation.

When we protect land in Okatie and in Southern Beaufort and Jasper Counties, we help cement an urban growth boundary for the mushrooming City of Hardeeville and ensure that sprawling residential or commercial development does not jump over the Okatie, New or even Savannah Rivers.

Of course, by protecting land we protect habitat corridors, farms, forests, and water quality. But we can't ignore the impact to people and places: Land protection in the presence of rapid coastal development is a growth management solution, helping to contain cities and towns and hopefully forcing better development patterns within those communities.

In Beaufort County, we're proud of a successful history of protection of watershed views and vistas – from Bay Street Bluff, Bellamy Curve and Oyster Factory Park – that have shaped our communities and identity. But we also set our sights on the future of land protection throughout the Port Royal Sound region, bifurcated by the Broad River – an area that represents the next piece of our large coastal greenbelt and a key asset to our ability to preserve water quality and our quality of life. These successes and potential converge here, and the recent growth only adds urgency to our pursuit.



Credit: Post and Courier.

The Greenbelt in aerial form

An aerial image of protected land surrounding Drayton Hall in West Ashley, outside of Charleston. In response to rapid growth and several new housing developments, over 13,000 acres were protected in the Ashley River Corridor in the early 2000's. Without strategic land protection, the encroaching suburban development would overwhelm cultural resources like Drayton Hall and the Ashley River itself.

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