



LAND PROTECTION BY THE NUMBERS

Making the economic case for conservation

Land Protection is a Crucial Partner when Building a Healthy Regional Economy

There could be a perceived conflict between natural resource protection and economic progress. But few places shatter this perception like South Carolina. In fact, the South Carolina coastal plain is one of the most charismatic and in demand landscapes in North America, growing in both its economic prosperity and its natural resource protection.

Economic development and environmental conservation can be complementary forces. Through our work at the Open Land Trust, we have a daily opportunity to engage in strategic land protection and both protect our natural resources and help our communities prosper. We turn to strategic land protection to guide this growth and support our natural communities. In fact, land protection can be the enduring foundation of our regional economy.

Statewide Numbers

Almost 3 million acres are protected statewide -

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Federal (28.3%) | Local (1.9%) and |
| State (20.6%), | Otherwise (14.6%). |
| Private (34.7%) | |

Locally, Beaufort County boasts 99,700 protected acres countywide, Jasper 85,100 acres and Hampton 70,000 acres.

Land Protection is Fundamental to Water Quality

Our region is best known for its many meandering waterways and the salt marshes that dominate the landscape and extend far inland. Half of all South Carolina’s salt marsh occurs in Beaufort County and the marshes of the Port Royal Sound represent a rare marine habitat that extends inland for 10 miles. In addition, our 56,915 acres of wetlands provide important habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

Strategic land protection to protect sensitive river headwaters in the New and Okatie Rivers, forested uplands in Jasper and Hampton counties that drain into the salt marsh, and protection of wetland resources will continue to benefit these industries. Land protection along rivers including the Broad, Wimbee and Coosaw and across our region further protects the view corridors and enjoyment of these beautiful places for all recreation.

The total economic contribution of freshwater fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing is \$2.74 billion and 31,958 jobs (SCDNR 2018).

When saltwater fishing is included, the total impact rises by \$329 million.

Land Protection supports Tourism

In 2020, 2.89 million visitors came to Beaufort County and created an economic impact of \$1.45 billion (Source: College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis 2021). Much of this tourism is driven by our region’s plentiful natural resources, clean waters and beaches and state park resources including Hunting Island State Park, which alone sees 1.2 million visitors annually. Strategic land protection, supports tourism and related activities including bird-watching, kayaking, and sightseeing that are in increasingly high demand.



Birdwatching on Harbor Island, 2021

Land Protection secures Military Operations

The Beaufort Chamber of Commerce reports the foundation of our regional economy, the three military bases – MCAS-Beaufort, Parris Island, and Naval Hospital Beaufort – represent 14,902 jobs and 1.744B economic impact. Land protection is essential to securing these operations, the human capital invested and the economic contributions of the bases. The Department of Defense agrees and through its Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program (REPI) is a funding partner for land protection. The REPI partnership in Beaufort County was one of the first nationally, and with over \$15 million invested, has protected over 15,000 acres around the MCAS-Beaufort installation.

Land Protection enriches Traditional Working Lands, Forestry, Agriculture

Forestry and Agriculture

Statewide, forestry creates 75,222 jobs and \$19.4 billion to the economy.

Combined with agriculture, to represent “agribusiness”, the two contribute \$42 billion and over 200,000 jobs to the state's economy (SCDNR 2018).

are followed, and this connected forested landscape is protected in perpetuity, even as valuable timber is harvested on a rotating basis.

Beaufort County is also home to 161 farms, according to the USDA-National Agricultural Census. These farms produce over \$20,287,000 in market value of all products sold including produce, animal products, and sod. Coosaw Blueberries, Adam's Farm and Garden produce, and Three Sisters Farm and U-Pick daffodils are all grown on protected property on Saint Helena (2) and Bluffton respectively.

Forestry and agriculture are the backbone of the state's natural resource economy and Beaufort County and our larger region play an important role. Beaufort and Jasper county represent forestry hotspots and areas of opportunity.

Connected, protected, working forests allow the larger industries to thrive, mills to locate, truckers to aggregate operations and other support services to exist in high demand. Easements on working forests allow for prescribed burns, ensure best management practices



Cattle on Protected Property, Burton 2021

Land Protection spurs Innovation

In addition to more traditional economic sectors, land protection is a complementary source to economic innovation. OLT holds a conservation easement on the 600-acre solar farm in Beaufort County, providing for its operation as a solar farm which creates 72MW of electricity to power homes. The easement also protects the high soil quality should this formerly significant farmland ever return to traditional agricultural use. Land protection that accounts for this type of innovation and flexibility is important and OLT is proud to plan with our landowners for innovative outcomes as the green energy industry, among others, grows in South Carolina. It helps decision makers on all levels choose how best to operate in concert with something proactively, instead of reactively.

Land Protection drives Business Recruitment

The Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation has attracted \$198 million in capital investment and 1,036 jobs in the past three years. During the business recruitment efforts of the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, the 'right' kind of companies and the balance between environment and industry is stressed. One of the pillars of Beaufort County's business recruitment pitch is the exhilarating environment. Often times the 'best' leads are closely held firms where the decision maker wants to move the company to Beaufort County due to the superb quality of life. These firms come in a variety of sectors - healthcare, back-office, small corporate headquarters, clean light manufacturing, aerospace, green industry, and supply chain to hospitality and tourism. The Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation fondly calls them 'beach house projects.'

OPEN LAND MAKES AN IMPACT

Join us to create our regional greenbelt and protect special places



OLT is proud of the impact of our work on the regional economy – we protect beautiful places that visitors flock to, and residents enjoy, and we protect landscapes that are the backbone of our fishing economy, are utilized by our farmers and foresters, and are essential to our military partners. Land protection is essential to our regional prosperity.