



# Open Land Trust

*Fall 2021 Newsletter*





# *282 acres protected* in the Headwaters of the Port Royal Sound

In February, Odette Strahan began conversations with the Open Land Trust to donate an easement on her property in Hampton County, now known as the Strahan Timber Tract. As an outdoor refuge for her and her late husband, the property held significant personal and ecological value. Filled with longleaf pine, other mixed pines, wild blueberry bushes, and wildflowers, her property connects over 3,000 acres now protected around the Early Branch community in Hampton County. This emerging conservation corridor is significant

to the Port Royal Sound at large: if high water quality and healthy salt marsh habitat is to continue downstream, land protection must occur upstream. Contiguous land protection also enables productive wildlife corridors as we continue to build a coastal greenbelt and connect the Savannah River landscape and the ACE Basin. Odette Strahan met this need with a fully donated conservation easement, protecting her 282 acres forever.

*Pictured left to right: Kevin Brown, Odette Strahan, Caylor Romines and Kate Schaefer*







## RURAL AND CRITICAL UPDATE: *Conservation Partnership Protects 88-acres of St. Helena Farmland*

On October 25, 2021, Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program announced the permanent protection of 88 acres of prime agricultural land on St. Helena Island. The property is located off Tom Fripp Road, along Eddings Point Creek, and is formerly known as Henry Farms North.

***“St. Helena Island is such a unique and historic part of South Carolina, and the Conservation Bank is proud to partner with Beaufort County, the Open Land Trust and The Center for Heirs' Property Preservation™ to protect important farms and other family-owned land there.”***

***— Raleigh West, executive director,  
South Carolina Conservation Bank.***

Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program contributed \$325,000 to purchase the development rights and conservation easement; the South Carolina Conservation Bank contributed \$325,000 and Beaufort County Open Land Trust contributed \$50,000. The Center for Heirs Property Preservation owns and will manage the property, opening it as a community resource for farming, forestry and land retention.

The conservation easement permanently

restricts residential development and protects agricultural soils and water frontage along Eddings Point Creek. This protection adds to over 1,700 acres of protected land on St. Helena, including the nearby Henry Dairy Farm (289 acres), Penn Center (91 acres), King Tract (14 acres), Christian Trask Tract (92 acres), Orange Grove Plantation (810 acres), Orange Grove House (46 acres), Penn Center Tree Farm (161 acres), the Sanders Tract – Station Creek (160 acres), The Dukes Tract (221 acres), and the Jones/Scott Hill Farm (92 acres).

***“By working with The Center for Heirs' Property Preservation, we all demonstrate that protecting land and farming land under conservation easement is possible and important if we are going to protect family lands, soils and people on the sea islands for generations to come.”***

***— Kristin Williams***

The property has incredible soil productivity with at least 55 acres (62% of property) containing highly productive prime soils and soils of statewide importance. In addition, the property provides scenic value and contributes to water quality protection by protecting 880 feet of scenic forested road frontage on Tom

Fripp Road and 1,100 linear feet of saltwater tidal creek frontage on Eddings Point Creek.

Begun in 2019, this land protection effort is a result of a partnership to buy and protect the property in a competitive real estate market before it was lost to a non-conservation use. Every organization played their role in the partnership: The expertise of the funding entities helped identify and fund the purchase, the land trust helped protect the conservation values and the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation will help turn the land into a resource for the community. Upcoming community meetings will be held to determine the activities that will take place on the site and fulfill this partnership. Interested landowners can learn more by visiting <https://www.heirsproperty.org>



# Fall Wildflower Walk

Thanks to Kristen Mattson of The Lowcountry Institute, April Atkinson of Webb Wildlife Center and Dr. Al Segars, a group of OLT members enjoyed a wonderful day at Webb Wildlife Center. The day started with a brief talk by April about the property and its' fascinating history that dates back to the 1700's. Kristen and Al then led the group stopping at various locations to view the wide variety of wildflowers as well as other special features on the property.

If you have not yet had the opportunity, we encourage you to

visit Webb Wildlife Center. Webb is 5,866 acres of various habitat types that is owned and managed by SCDNR. The property is open to the public year-round except for specific dates reserved for special hunts. We encourage you to visit the Wildlife Management Areas as they are there for us all to enjoy and we promise you will not be disappointed!

Make sure your OLT membership is up to date and that we have your correct email address so that you don't miss out on any upcoming OLT field trips.



## Noticing a lot of changes to Whitehall?

Don't worry, the waterfront portion of the property is permanently protected by the Open Land Trust, Beaufort County and the City of Beaufort. Whitehall Park was purchased by Beaufort County through the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program in 2018 to be used as a Passive Park. The City will manage the 10-acre park and the Open Land Trust holds a conservation easement on the portion owned by the County. A plan for the park is complete and construction is expected to start in 2022 outside of the American Bald Eagle nesting season.

The Open Land Trust recently worked with Michael Murphy of Preservation Tree Care and Kolcun Tree Care to do some preventative maintenance on the Mother Tree at Whitehall Park. Activities included reduction pruning of the outside canopy to reduce weight and encourage new growth; slight thinning of Spanish Moss to reduce weight and allow sunlight to penetrate the canopy which

encourages new growth; and the removal of all deadwood and vines in the tree. A lightning protection system was installed to protect the tree if it is struck by lightning.

All this work should increase the life of the

tree significantly to allow it to be around for generations to come. To learn more about the benefits of this thinning process, you can watch a talk given at Whitehall by Michael Murphy on the Open Land Trust facebook page.







## 50th Annual Meeting of the Open Land Trust

The 50th Annual Meeting of the Open Land Trust was hosted on Thursday, October 21 at the Beaufort Yacht and Sailing Club. Members and guests gathered at sunset on the bank of the Beaufort River and enjoyed fresh oysters from Sea Eagle Market, live entertainment by The Cluster Shucks, and great fellowship. Executive Director, Kirstin Williams and Board President, Terry Murray shared celebratory remarks about all of the wonderful things happening within the OLT; new protected lands, a new home for the OLT and they introduced the new full staff.





## Chicken Salad Lunches

In honor of our 50th anniversary, the original fundraiser of the Open Land Trust, the chicken salad lunch, was resurrected and reimagined slightly in lieu of covid.

The first lunch was hosted on April 8, 2021, at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Locke. Since that lunch, we have had 12 other hosts and hostesses present lunches. Each imagined in their own way – al fresco, on a porch, on a boat, and a few in a formal dining room – all with the same common denominator, a chicken salad lunch.

We plan to continue hosting lunches year-round, so be sure to check the website for upcoming lunches. The next lunch is a sell-out and will be held at the home of Mrs. Cheryl Mansson.



**We would like to thank each host for their commitment and support of the OLT:**

Mrs. Elizabeth Locke, Mrs. Alison Guilloud and Mrs. Pat Denkler, Mrs. Mary Savage, Mrs. Ivey Savage, Mrs. Chilton Simmons and Mrs. LeeAnn Walters, Mrs. Julie Musselman and Mrs. Wendi Lynn, Mrs. Dianne Andrews, Mrs. Barb Farrior and Mrs. Darlene Dudley, Mrs. Kathy Parks, Mrs. MJ Simmons, Mrs. Jane Frederick, Mrs. Beth Campbell, Mrs. Maggie Mitchell and Mrs. Katherine Hefner.





## Cocktail Party

In keeping with the yearlong celebration of our 50th anniversary, the Open Land Trust hosted an opening cocktail party the night before the Auldbrass Tours. The event was held on the rooftop of the Old Bay Marketplace. Guests enjoyed signature cocktails appropriately named “the Cherokee Red” and “The Prairie”, continuous passed hors d’oeuvres by Debbi Covington Catering, live entertainment by Whitley Deputy, and conversation with our 3 Frank Lloyd Wright experts, Nelson Brackin, Greg Gamel, and Jim Klippel. Fun was had by all.







## *Auldbrass Tours*

The Auldbrass Tours were hosted November 4 – 6, 2021. All three days boasted large groups in rain or shine! Guests traveled from all over the country and a few international guests joined the event.

Another wonderful tour year that would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of all our volunteers. We would like to thank all the volunteers who made this possible, but we would like to especially thank our 3 key volunteers who have been with us for many years, Donne Dehncke, Jen Moneagle and Stuart Heath.





## Give the Gift

This holiday season, we are offering Open Land Trust packages for the hard-to-buy-for person in your life. We have created 2 packages for easy grab and go, or you can customize to your liking.

### Package 1 Includes (\$55):

A Sea Island Seasons cookbook and a 1-year membership to the OLT, this membership includes a car decal, monthly email newsletters and bi-annual printed mailings. The most current mailings will also be included in the package (ie: Beaufort Lifestyle Magazine and Annual Report).

### Package 2 Includes (\$110):

A Sea Island Seasons Cookbook, (2) logo Tumbler Cups with lid, Printed Canvas bag, a 1-year membership to the OLT, this membership includes a car decal, monthly email newsletters and bi-annual printed mailings. The most current mailings will also be included in the package (ie: Beaufort Lifestyle Magazine and Annual Report).

Call or email to secure yours today. 843-521-2175 or [info@openlandtrust.com](mailto:info@openlandtrust.com)



## Beaufort Lifestyles

In case you missed it, the Open Land Trust was featured as the cover story on the October issue of Beaufort Lifestyles magazine. Local contributor, Wendy Nilsen Pollitzer, wrote a wonderful article covering the trust's origin, 50 years of land protection and how the trust will continue to play a major part in the future of the southern lowcountry landscape. The article can be read here:

<http://beaufortlifestyle.com/category/cover/>



## Paul Nurnberg

We would like to give a big thank you to Paul Nurnberg of Nurnberg Photography for capturing all our events this year, as well as for the cover story of Beaufort Lifestyle magazine and many other shots of our protected lands. Thank you, Paul for being the official photographer of the Open Land Trust!







## St. Helena Island Resiliency Assessment

Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation and Chair of the St. Helena Island Cultural Protection Overlay District Committee is leading the St. Helena Island resiliency project. The project is funded through a grant from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide technical

assistance in developing green infrastructure to help St. Helena residents defend their culture and heritage from threats like climate change and storm surge.

On three occasions this summer the Open Land Trust joined Queen Quet, members of the Gullah/Geechee Sustainability Think Tank,

Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition members, staff from Beaufort County Community Development Department, Conservation Voters of South Carolina, landscape architects, journalists and the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League on a resiliency assessment of St. Helena Island.

## Land Trust Accreditation Commission awards the Open Land Trust with Renewed Accreditations



This August, The Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission awarded the Open Land Trust (OLT) accreditation for the second time! We are proud to share this mark of distinction.

Accreditation is awarded to Land Trusts who demonstrate the highest level of ethical conduct, responsible governance, sound financial standing and lasting stewardship. The accreditation seal is approved after the land

trust goes through a rigorous review process that looks at all aspects of operation. OLT was originally awarded accreditation in 2015 and this year was our first re-accreditation process.





*Photo Credit: Jenn Clementoni | Pictured: Various bird species take refuge on the isolated sand bar off of Harbor Island.*

## Harbor Island Beach Walks

On two recent occasions, groups of Open Land Trust members enjoyed field trips to Harbor Island led by board member, Dr. Al Segars and Harbor Island resident, Peggy Lucas. In July, a group walked the beach at sunset viewing large numbers of whimbrels, oyster catchers, pelicans, skimmers, and plovers gathering on a newly created sandbar just off of the beach. The small remote sandbar provides the birds a safe space free from humans, pets, and other mammalian predators. To add to the evening were several pairs of mating horseshoe

crabs. In October, another group met at the classroom on Harbor Island to learn more about migrating shorebirds and their utilization of our barrier islands through an informative presentation by Dr. Al Segars followed by a walk along the shore to see the birds firsthand.

Just after sunset the group watched the birds take flight and Dr. Segars remarked, "They are headed to Deveaux Bank for the night". Located at the mouth of the North Edisto River is a small, shifting sandbar called Deveaux Bank. Protected by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Heritage Preserve Program, Deveaux Bank has always been known as a haven for resident and migratory shorebirds mainly because it is one of the few undeveloped places along the coast where birds are free from human disturbance. Every year the Hudsonian whimbrel makes a 3,000-mile journey from South America to the arctic with only one stop to refuel, and for many that stop is in South Carolina. It was recently discovered that out of the total population of 40,000 whimbrels migrating to North America, 20,000 of them depend on Deveaux Bank as a safe place to rest. Harbor Island is located just a mere 17 miles as the whimbrel flies from Deveaux Bank, offering

another place of refuge along the Carolina coast for these long-haul migrations.

Special thanks to Harbor Island resident, Peggy Lucas and OLT Board Members Al Segars and Beekman Webb for making trips like these possible to show the importance of our work and the global impact of local conservation.



*Deveaux Bank Video*



*Pictured: Dr. Al Segars teaches the next generation how to use a spotting scope*



*Pictured: OLT members viewing birds at sunset*





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Outreach Coordinator  
Caylor Romines – Director of Stewardship  
Ashley Rhodes – Director of Development

## SAVE THE DATE FOR THE *Ribbon Cutting*



- Thursday, January 20, 2022 | 4:00 pm
- The Open Land Trust's forever home  
905 Charles Street, Beaufort, SC

Please contact Haley Romeo at  
haley@openlandtrust.com or  
843-521-2175.

## *End of Year Giving*

Thank you for your support over the years. Your support makes our work possible.

Because of you, we have protected over 25,000 acres across 7 counties.

Because of you, we have protected working farms, rural landscapes and helped to keep family lands intact for generations to come.

Because of you, we are maintaining our sense of place and protecting our cultural heritage.

Because of you, we can help to manage growth and protect our iconic landscape.

We hope you will use the membership envelope enclosed and make an investment in a future we can all be proud of.