



Annual Report 2021

WHEN THE FUTURE OF CONSERVATION
STARTS WITH *moon shadows*

Have you ever watched magic happen?

Earlier this summer I saw something that was as close to magic as I’ve seen in a long time.

A full moon framed the water’s edge, as my five-year-old son, Ford, and my eight-year-old daughter, Gray, joined other children in the search for shorebirds and horseshoe crabs. Long shadows of birds darting at the water’s edge cast a sense of timelessness; as if we were there watching something that had happened for hundreds if not thousands of years before us.

That was the night when my son exclaimed, “Mommy, I want to do this again. I love this place.” That was the night when we were privileged to see a massive horseshoe crab resting on the beach or looking for mates.

Our job, as parents and as the leader of the program that night, was to ensure our enthusiastic kids experienced these special creatures in a manner that reflected empathy, compassion, curiosity, and joy. The emotions of the children, the fragility of the horseshoe crabs, the expanse of protected sand dunes under conservation easement. It was so vulnerable.

We are facing a time where children are spending less and less time outside and more time than ever with a phone or a tablet in their hands. Connections to nature have been documented to play a critical role in childhood health, wellness, and social well-being.

That’s one of the reasons why our land trust hosts free programs like this for youth and adults alike. As Jane Goodall, one of the world’s most inspiring conservationists said, “Only if we understand, can we care. Only if we care, we will help. Only if we help, we shall be saved.”

Because of you, open spaces, maritime forests, wetlands and working family lands will be here for generations to come. Thanks to you, other children will be able to fall in love with nature, just like my kids did that night. It’s a timeless gift you are giving to ensure that our youth become the future of conservation. You are creating a lasting legacy.

For that, I am so very grateful. Thank you for caring, and for supporting the critical work of conservation here, close to home, at a time when we need it, and it needs us, more than ever.

Warmly,

Kristin

Kristin Williams, Executive Director



Comings & Goings

A Fond Farewell TO



Patricia Ann Denkler, fondly called Pat, has been a part of the Open Land Trust for many years. Although Pat recently finished two consecutive board terms she remains a dedicated member of the Open Land Trust, where her energy and passion continues to inspire us all. Pat has a love for her community and it shows in everything she does. We are so grateful to have Pat on our team and for her years of service to the Open Land Trust.

A Warm Welcome TO



Edward Dukes Edward is a lifelong resident of Beaufort and the owner and Broker-In-Charge of Lowcountry Real Estate. Edward stays active in the community and has served on a variety of civic and nonprofit boards including the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, Historic Review Board, The YMCA, Beaufort Memorial Hospital Foundation, The Historic Beaufort Foundation, The Friends of the Spanish Moss Trail and as President of the Beaufort County Board of Realtors. When not working, he does his best to get outside for boating, golfing, biking, kayaking, paddle boarding or anything on the water.



Alex Shuford Alex loves the Lowcountry and has long had an interest in conservation. He is a retired Vice President with South State Bank and brings great experience in financial management, marketing and nonprofit organization to the Trust. He has served on the Board of the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation and on the SCANA Lowcountry Advisory Board. He is also a past president of the University of South Carolina Alumni Association and a past member of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees.

P R O T E C T E D A C R E S T O D A T E

101
conservation
easements
totaling
28,577.02
protected acres

50
OLT owned
properties
totaling
731.89
protected acres



combined
total of
29,308.91
protected
acres

NEW HOME, NEW LOOK, *Same Great Land Trust*

After fifty years of renting office space, the Open Land Trust is thrilled to have a place, we can call home.

If you missed our grand opening earlier this year, we encourage you to come by and see us. Our doors are always open, we would love to give you a tour and let you know about some of the exciting projects we are working on.

NEW LOCATION:
905 Charles Street,
Beaufort, SC 29902



Birding Wagon Tour At Bear Island

Bear Island is a Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Management Area in the heart of the ACE Basin. In mid-February, OLT donors had the opportunity to tour with esteemed tour guides - OLT Board Members, Dr. Al Segars and Beek Webb, and Dr. Ernie Wiggers. We saw an abundance of birds including tundra swans, roseate spoonbills, avocet, eagles, grebes, and others! Quite a day of birding.



Bear Island is open February 9 – October 31 (except during designated hunt periods) for your self-guided visits.



Nemours Field Trip

In early May, a small group of donors took the morning to tour a portion of the 10,000 acres of Nemours Wildlife Foundation in northern Beaufort County. Nemours Wildlife Foundation has been a partner of the Open Land Trust for many years as both organizations continue to work on conservation in the ACE Basin.

Nemours wildlife biologist, Heather Kraus, led the group in a short lecture on our conservation partnership, the mission of Nemours and the current wildlife research projects being performed on the property.



New Website!

We are very excited to announce the launch of our new website:

www.openlandtrust.org

New features include:

- Interactive protected lands map
- Spotlight on Featured Properties and Recent Acquisitions
- Introduction of “The Bluff Legacy Circle” and Planned Giving Program
- A monthly giving option
- Online store with NEW! merchandise



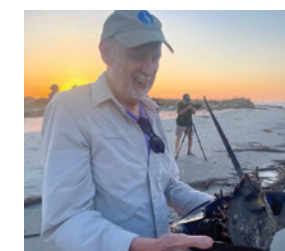
In addition to the new launch, please note the new email addresses for our staff with .org

Kristin Williams | Kristin@openlandtrust.org
Ashley Rhodes | Ashley@openlandtrust.org
Haley Romeo | Haley@openlandtrust.org
Caylor Romines | Caylor@openlandtrust.org
Kate Schaefer | Kate@openlandtrust.org



Harbor Island Full Moon Beach Walk | Whimbrels, Red Knots, Horseshoe Crabs and how they are all connected

For three consecutive nights during the full moon in late May, the Open Land Trust team led beach walks on Harbor Island. During these walks donors and their children learned about an impressive little avian visitor called the Whimbrel, the “moon bird”- the Red Knot, the prehistoric blue-blooded marine arthropod, the horseshoe crab, and the impact that local conservation efforts have on their survival. The participants, both big and small, shared the same smiles and level of excitement to learn and see the incredible wildlife we have in our back yard. We hope to host more trips like this again next spring for our wonderful donors.



2021 Protected Properties

In 2021, the Open Land Trust protected six new properties across our region, which amounted to 10% of our total acres protected to date. Because of this conservation, boaters and water users can enjoy a protected Combahee River corridor from Morgan Island at the Atlantic Ocean to Yemassee! Working forests that support our regional economy are protected forever, critical habitat that supports wildlife populations are secured, and recreational opportunities like fishing, birdwatching, hiking, and hunting are enhanced for us all.

First and foremost, this is possible because of our generous landowners whose conservation ethic compels them to protect what they love. Secondly, this is possible because of a shared investment in land protection – grants, donations and public support for conservation make these opportunities possible.



Combahee Scott

Conservation Easement

209 acres • Colleton County

This easement protects a working forest and three-quarters of a mile along the Combahee River forever. The property includes a 94.3-acre preserve area running the length of the river boundary that will protect the adjacent wetlands and bottomland hardwood forest: no activity – residential, forestry or otherwise – will occur in the preserve area. The easement was made possible by landowner donation and a grant from the South Carolina Conservation Bank.



Johnson Cooper Tract

Conservation Easement

128 acres • Hampton County

The Johnson family donated a conservation easement to protect 128 acres in the Early Branch neighborhood. This property currently supports longleaf, loblolly and slash pine and is now protected forever as a recreational and family haven for people and wildlife. The property is importantly situated in the uplands of the Port Royal Sound Watershed.



Strahan Timber Tract

Conservation Easement

282 acres • Hampton County

This fully donated conservation easement protects old growth timber, wild blueberry groves, and a place for peace and tranquility forever. The property adjoins other OLT-protected land and is part of a larger conservation neighborhood consisting of over 3,000 protected acres. Upland protection in the upper reaches of the Salkehatchie watershed protects downstream water quality for us all.

2021 Protected Properties



Oak Point

Conservation Easement

2067 acres • Beaufort County

Oak Point lies on the Wimbee River in the St Helena Sound and successfully adds to land protected forever in the ACE Basin, benefits local military readiness, and water quality draining into the pristine St Helena Sound. The easement was partially donated by the landowners and partially funded by the Department of Defense (DoD) and Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program (RCLPP). Fishers, crabbers, oyster lovers and military teams all enjoy the public benefit from this privately protected property.



Boatswain Pond Creek Tract

OLT Owned

23.4 acres • Beaufort County

OLT purchased upland acreage adjacent to Boatswain Pond Creek as part of our initiative to protect more land and scenic vistas on Coosaw Island. This land will have future recreational potential as public land, allowing all to enjoy expansive views of coastal salt marshes, historic cotton fields, and the St Helena Sound forever.



Saint Helena Community Farm

Conservation Easement

88 acres • Beaufort County

Formerly known as Henry Farm North, this conservation easement protects prime farmland forever. This project also reflects an exciting young partnership: The Center for Heirs Property Preservation™ owns the property; the purchase was funded by the Open Land Trust and State Conservation Bank in 2020 with the conservation easement added by the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program in 2021. Conservation is a team sport!

Well into 2022, we are on our way to protect more land in our region and are continuing to build our coastal greenbelt. Proactive land conservation will help us leapfrog growth headaches seen in Charleston, Mount Pleasant and Johns Island, and support existing industries that depend on the Port Royal Sound's clean water. Where and how we develop to accommodate the growth projected for Beaufort, Jasper and Hampton counties will determine our continued regional health (or decline). In 2022 and beyond we must continue to create this coastal greenbelt, and double-down on land protection and creatively protect the most strategic parcels.

Rural & Critical Land Protection Program

The Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program is supported by Beaufort County taxpayers and has protected over 28,500 acres since 2002. The Open Land Trust has been proud to serve as its staff contractor for 11 years, managing projects from landowner outreach to permanent protection.

In 2021, three properties earned funding support from the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program. They include 88 acres of prime farmland on St Helena Island known as St Helena Community Farm, 24 acres of waterfront property on St Helena Island that will provide fishing and recreational access for residents, and 2,067 acres known as Oak Point.

The program is also guided by an advisory board made up of Beaufort County citizens; throughout 2021 they enjoyed visits to protected property.

Spotlight on Three Sisters Farm

Program funding helped protect Three Sisters Farm in 2004; when everyone else was developing their waterfront property, matriarch Mary O. Merrick worked to protect hers. Located on the Okatee-Colleton River, the property is prime waterfront for development but thanks to the proactive work of the family and their conservation values, the property will never become a housing subdivision. Her daughters own and operate “Three Sisters Farm” on the property today: They farm vegetables and flowers, selling them through their much-loved CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program and at local restaurants and farmers markets.

These 145 acres are part of over 1,400 protected acres in the Okatie Watershed that improve water quality for us all.



Spotlight on Oak Point

Oak Point is the latest in a long partnership with MCAS-Beaufort and the third largest project protected by the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program to date.

Oak Point is in the heart of the St Helena Sound and the ACE Basin. The ACE Basin is the confluence of the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto Rivers and boasts over 316,000 protected acres. Through the RCLP program, Beaufort County is an important leader in the ACE Basin effort and OLT is a member of the ACE Basin Taskforce. Land protection in the ACE Basin, like the protection of Oak Point, over the past thirty years has protected water quality forever. In fact, when the EPA categorized and ranked watersheds for their water quality in the 90s, they left St Helena Sound and southern ACE Basin off the list because if it had been given an “A”, it would have skewed the grading curve – nationally, no other A’s would exist. We are lucky to have this resource in our backyard. Protecting large acreage parcels like Oak Point help secure neighborhoods forever and protect natural resources at scale.



Paul Nurnberg Photography;
thanks to our friends at Coastal Expeditions for the Tour.

Spotlight on Oyster Factory Park

Oyster Factory Park is co-owned by Beaufort County and Town of Bluffton and protected with funds from the RCLP program; it also is protected forever with an OLT conservation easement. This year, the RCLP Board enjoyed their annual retreat onsite, admiring the working waterfront and the historic Garvin House. OLT Board member Beekman Webb helped restore the house when Councilmember York Glover served on the RCLP Board and advocated for its permanent protection.



Protecting the Sound of Freedom

Land protection in a military town takes on national significance. Preferring to fly their planes over farms and forests rather than over housing developments or bright lights, military partners, and OLT work together to protect undeveloped open spaces to protect important habitat, secure water quality, and prevent encroachment on critical military training.

In March 2022, a Marine Corps fighter jet crashed onto Coosaw, a large rural protected property located just north of Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. Thankfully, the pilots safely ejected from the plane, and no one was injured on the ground. The landowners, the Sheldon Fire Department, Beaufort County Sherriff’s Office, Burton Fire District, and Marine Corps Air Station first responders rushed to the scene and provided the necessary support to the pilots and the clean-up. Back at OLT, our phones were also buzzing. Staff immediately began working with our military partners to provide information about the landscape as they worked to secure the safety of the pilots and the public.

The property on which the jet landed has been permanently protected by an easement between the Marine Corps and the OLT since 2011. The protected open space provided exactly what it was intended to - a safe crash site. It helped avoid the worst tragedy - loss of life - and emphasized the critical overlap between military operations and landscape conservation.

MCAS Beaufort, Beaufort County, and the Open Land Trust have been partners on land protection projects for over 20 years, through a program known as Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI). Through REPI, over 6,200 acres in Beaufort County have been protected, part of 15,000 protected acres north of Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. When the most recent REPI project, known as Oak Point - 2,067 acres on the Wimbee River - closed, it was described by all as a “Team Beaufort” victory, and indeed the many benefits of protected land, economic impact is to be shared by all.

We are thankful for the pilots’ safety and our continued military partnerships in our shared work ahead.



Marine Corps Aviation Association

How is Land Conservation Funded?

Landowner

Landowners can execute the ultimate property right by protecting their land forever. This is a charitable donation of development potential where the land remains privately owned and enjoyed but woods, wetlands and landscapes are protected from development. Gifts may be eligible for tax deductions and other incentives.

Local

Local funding is often best spent to meet specific community needs. The Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program funding typically focuses on preventing military encroachment, protecting scenic vistas, supporting working farms, protecting key cultural and public resources, and providing water access to the public.

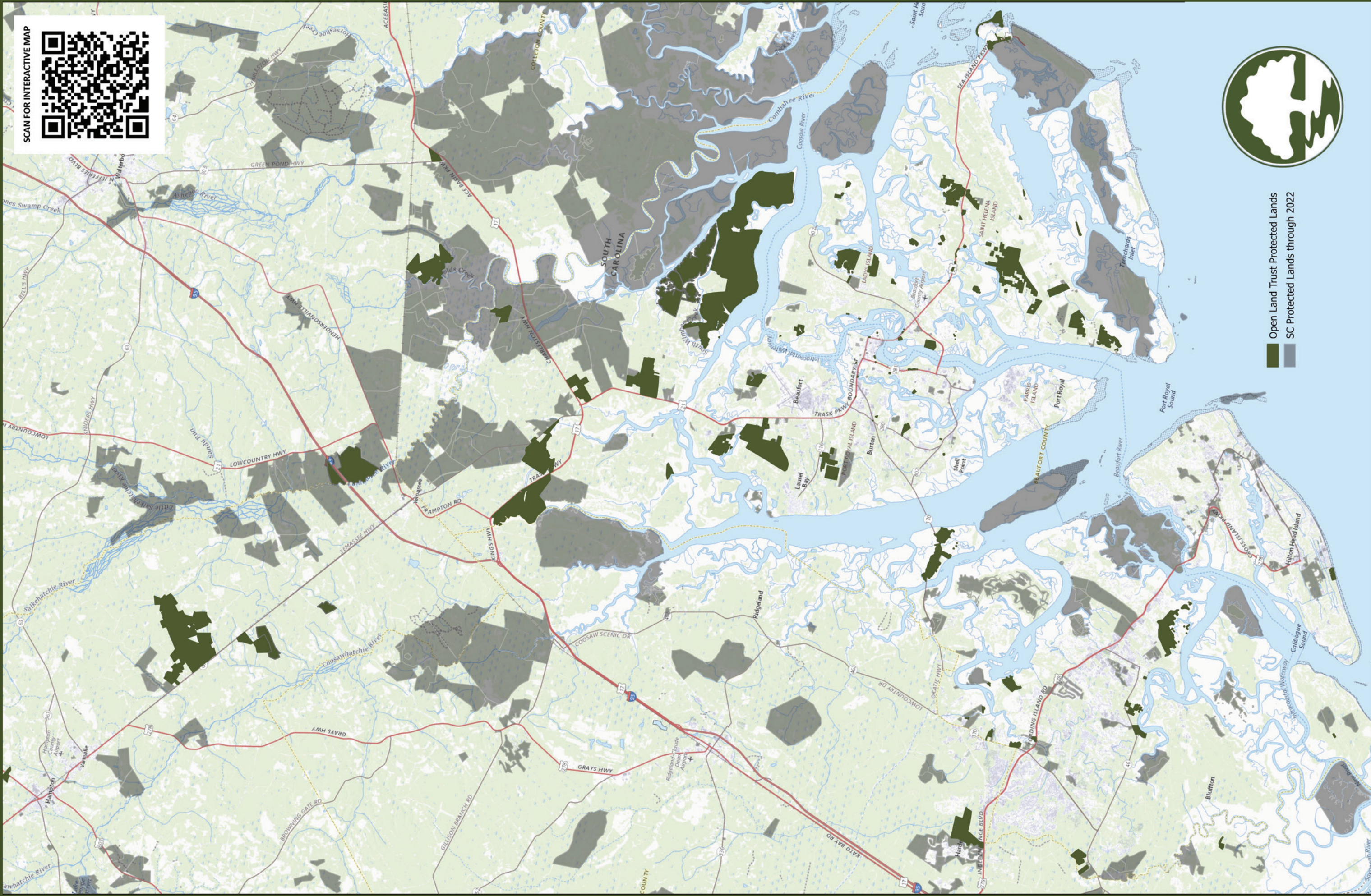
State

The State Conservation Bank is one state funding source that has protected 332,824 acres statewide including this year’s Combahee Scott project. Using \$178 million in funds through the years, bank funding has protected property with a real estate value of \$1.25 billion. Including the St Helena Community Farm, the Conservation Bank has protected 22,800 acres of farmland statewide.

Federal

The REPI program (referenced above) is one federal program that provides conservation funding. Including Oak Point, the REPI program has protected 6,200 acres in Beaufort County. OLT actively works with federal partners to secure all available funding.

Open Land Trust and Other Protected Lands



Brunch on the Bluff

CELEBRATING 51 YEARS

On April 23, 2022, we celebrated the 51st birthday of the Open Land Trust at one of the original protected lands at 1806 Bay Street. With continuous breezes off the Beaufort River, the day was perfect. Guests enjoyed sounds provided by Ben Coppage and Worth Liipfert, exquisite lowcountry fare by Susan Mason Catering and lots of conversation surrounding conservation. The event was a huge success.

We would like to extend an enormous thank you to our wonderful sponsors who made this day possible.

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Salt Marsh

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Atlantic Asphalt

Kinghorn Insurance

Nurnberg Photography

Spanish Moss

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Lloyd Williams, Realtor with Lowcountry Real Estate

Seaside Grown

Wind From The Carolinas Raffle

Phifer Contracting

Harbour Island Canvas Co.



All photo credit: Paul Nurnberg Photography

Fundraising with Friends

The Original Concept: 50 years ago, the Beaufort County Open Land Trust was founded so that 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. 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 lunches 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.

Something New: We understand that a chicken salad lunch isn’t the best fit for everyone who may want to host an event in their home to support the Open Land Trust, so we want to think outside the box. We now invite you to host different types of events. A few ideas we had were: Stretch your branches yoga sessions, Oyster Roasts, Lowcountry Boil Dinners and Private Chef Dinners. But we also encourage you to host in the way you see fit. Maybe a sushi night or plein air paint is more your speed? Whatever your fancy, we would love to bring people together with you to have a good time and learn about the Land Trust and how supporting the trust also enriches your life in the southern Lowcountry of South Carolina.

Hostess Role: As a host/hostess, you will provide food and beverage for the final guest count. We leave all of the details to you. We simply need a hospitable host/hostess(es), seating to dine, and food and beverage.

Date & Time: You select!

For chicken salad lunches, we suggest any Tuesday or Thursday. Each lunch will begin at 11:30 am and typically ends around 1:30 pm



For all other types of events, we leave that up to you.

Guests: Each event is completely unique and how the guest list is obtained is also. Some hosts/hostesses prefer to fill their seats with their own list of friends/guests, other hostesses prefer to have the Land Trust invite them. Either way, each guest in attendance will be asked for a minimum donation based on the event type being hosted. All proceeds go directly to the Open Land Trust. With each donation, the guest will receive a 1 year membership to the OLT and will receive all mailings and e-news for 1 year.

Education: 1-2 members of the Open Land Trust staff or board, will be in attendance at each event to dine with your guests and to share information at an appropriate time. In addition, one representative will set a table to share membership information, and to sell cookbooks and merchandise.

For more information, please call or email Ashley Rhodes, director of development TODAY!

843-368-2554 | ashley@openlandtrust.org

Upcoming Events

D A T E S T O R E M E M B E R

THURSDAY
October 20
2022

Annual Meeting

Beaufort Yacht &
Sailing Club

SATURDAY
January 14
2023

Roast on the Coast

Bluffton Oyster
Factory Park

SATURDAY
April 22
2023

Brunch on the Bluff

The Bluff on Bay Street –
Beaufort

SOUTH CAROLINA LAND TRUST NETWORK

Did you know there is a network of **22 land trust partners** in the state of South Carolina that make up the South Carolina Land Trust Network? Together we inform, protect and steward land across our entire state.

Join us for South Carolina Land Trust Days in October.

View all events here: www.scltn.org



BEAUFORT JASPER RIVER SWEEP – October 1, 2022

Organized by the Open Land Trust in conjunction with SC Land Trust Days, Keep Beaufort County Beautiful, and Keep Jasper County Beautiful

The Open Land Trust is excited to organize the inaugural, Beaufort Jasper River Sweep!

This volunteer cleanup effort will extend the entire length of the Port Royal Sound Watershed. Volunteers from 2 counties are invited to assist the Open Land Trust during South Carolina Land Trust Days in the removal of litter at multiple locations along the Port Royal Sound and its many tributaries. Litter continues to be a global problem and volunteers like YOU can make a positive impact on the entire Port Royal Sound by participating in the Beaufort Jasper River Sweep on October 1, 2022. A full map of the Port Royal Sound Watershed and compost bags donated by the Keep America Beautiful Affiliates in Beaufort and Jasper can be picked up when you join the effort at the Open Land Trust in Beaufort or at the Blue Heron Nature Center in Ridgeland.

To add to the fun, we will throw in some SWAG for the BEST CLEANUP EFFORT. To enter to win you must post the end of your cleanup day on social media and tag @openlandtrust with the hashtag #SCLandTrustDays. If you are able to mark your geo location, that’s even better! The post with the most collected litter, will win an Open Land Trust Tote bag filled with 2 logo hats, 2 t-shirts, 2 RTIC mugs and a 1-year membership to the Open Land Trust.

To join this effort or for more info, please call the Open Land Trust 843-521-2175 or email info@openlandtrust.org

2021 Open Land Trust Supporters

\$25,000 +

Mary and Ed Leary

\$10,000 +

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lane
Lane Family Foundation
Dr. and Mrs. Walter C. Meier
The Meier and Linnartz Family Foundation

\$5,000 +

Anonymous gift
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100+

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A LEGACY Lives On



Joanne and Alan Moses can truly be described as the kind of people “they just don’t make anymore” yet they purposefully gave in a way that would ensure their legacy of philanthropy for years to come.

Although we knew that Joanne and Alan were incredibly generous, the extent of their generosity was not known until this year. Joanne and Alan wanted to remain anonymous for many of their contributions until their passing. One of those contributions was the purchase of Oak Island, an island off their beloved

Dataw community. After the island was purchased, the OLT worked with the Dataw community on a conservation easement to restrict future development. However, even we did not know who the generous benefactor was behind the island’s purchase.

The Open Land Trust was fortunate to be a beneficiary of Joanne and Alan’s support both as individuals and through the Coastal Community Foundation’s Beaufort Fund, which Joanne and Alan started in 1998. Since its inception, the Beaufort Fund has provided

\$11 million of support to nonprofits throughout our region.

Although we can no longer pick up the phone or write Joanne and Alan a note to express our gratitude we will honor their legacy through our work protecting this place they loved and by stewarding the lands they so generously helped us protect.

Thank you, Joanne and Alan. Your contributions will never be forgotten and will continue to inspire others for generations to come.

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Estate gifts are among the highest complements donors can pay to organizations that they care about. The Open Land Trust is honored to be included in the personal legacies of its supporters. The Bluff Legacy Circle honors those members and friends who preserve the mission of the Open Land Trust for generations to come through an estate gift.

Planned gifts leave a legacy that allows for the stewardship and land protection to continue for years to come, protecting the legacy of the Lowcountry forever. The name was chosen because the Bluff, the first protected property of the Land Trust, has served as an iconic vista in Beaufort for over fifty years.

Becoming a member of The Bluff Legacy Circle is easy. We simply ask our donors to fill out The Bluff Legacy Circle Form making us aware of your future.

If you are interested in being recognized as a member of The Bluff Legacy Circle, please contact us today!



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