



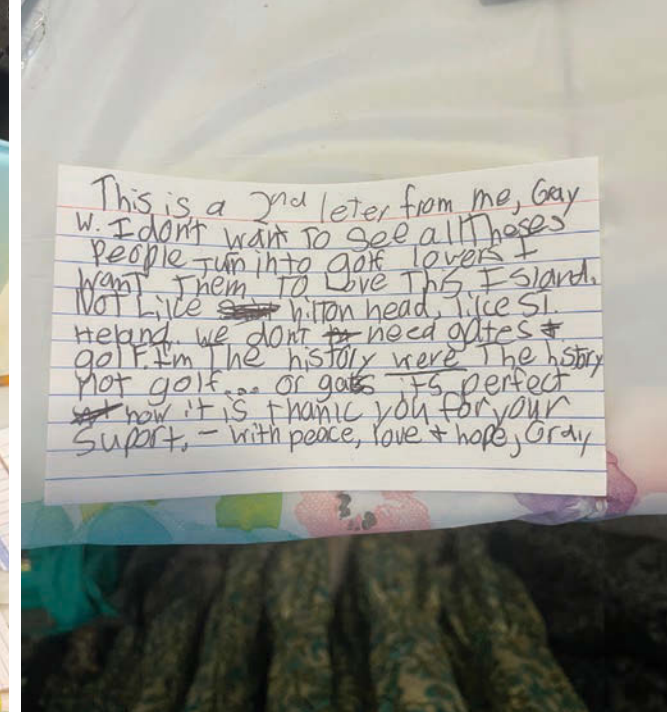
2023 HIGHLIGHTS & 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

“We know that we can’t protect all the places, but by the grace of God and your help, for the next generation we’ll try.”

— Colden Battey



Conserving the Lowcountry with you since 1971



The gift of hope and joy, the gift of time

In a world that often feels upside down, what gives you hope?

Over the past eighteen months there have been many challenges facing our corner of the world but there have also been moments of hope and cause for celebration.

As a mother of two young children, I love seeing the world through my children's eyes, without judgement and always taking time to notice and appreciate the small things around us.

As they have gotten older, ages 7 and 9, they understand more and they are listening to what adults are saying around them. What I have noticed recently is that every time they hear me talking about a problem, they jump to offer a solution. They are natural problem-solvers. They approach a situation with determination and a creative vision. They have conviction.

This is not unique to my children. Across the Lowcountry, as our land trust works with schools, communities, and local families, I have witnessed a similar courage and conviction.

As we support the St. Helena community to protect its rural character and cultural heritage as a developer threatens the integrity of local zoning to build a golf course and gated community where they are not currently allowed — students took notice.

When the community of St. Helena met earlier this year, I watched several middle and elementary school students speak in front of a crowd of almost six hundred people and passionately stand up for their future.

I watched my daughter write multiple letters of opposition to the development to County Council. When she began writing her second letter I asked, "But you already submitted a letter?" and was met with "Well, I have more to say!"

Students from Beaufort Elementary are starting a group called "Stewards of the Bluff" where they will safeguard and help care for the land trust's first conservation property. They are getting involved in land conservation and taking ownership in caring for the health of the land and water central to our community.

Conservation rests on the shoulders of the next generation. They are listening. And because of your vision and commitment to the conservation of the places we all hold dear, the children of today are becoming the leaders of tomorrow.

When you support the Open Land Trust, you give the gift of time to help us conserve land. You are demonstrating what it means to care. They are following your example.

We entrust future generations with the gift of time, and land, by what we do today. We know that once the land is gone, there's often no going back. We lean into a problem and come up with creative solutions to balance thoughtful growth while maintaining long-term connections to our history, culture, and special places.

And because of you, the next generation of Beaufortonians will know and cherish the same lands and waters you love.

We are in a period of great hope and conviction as more people stand up to conserve what they love.

They thank you, and so do I.

Warmly,

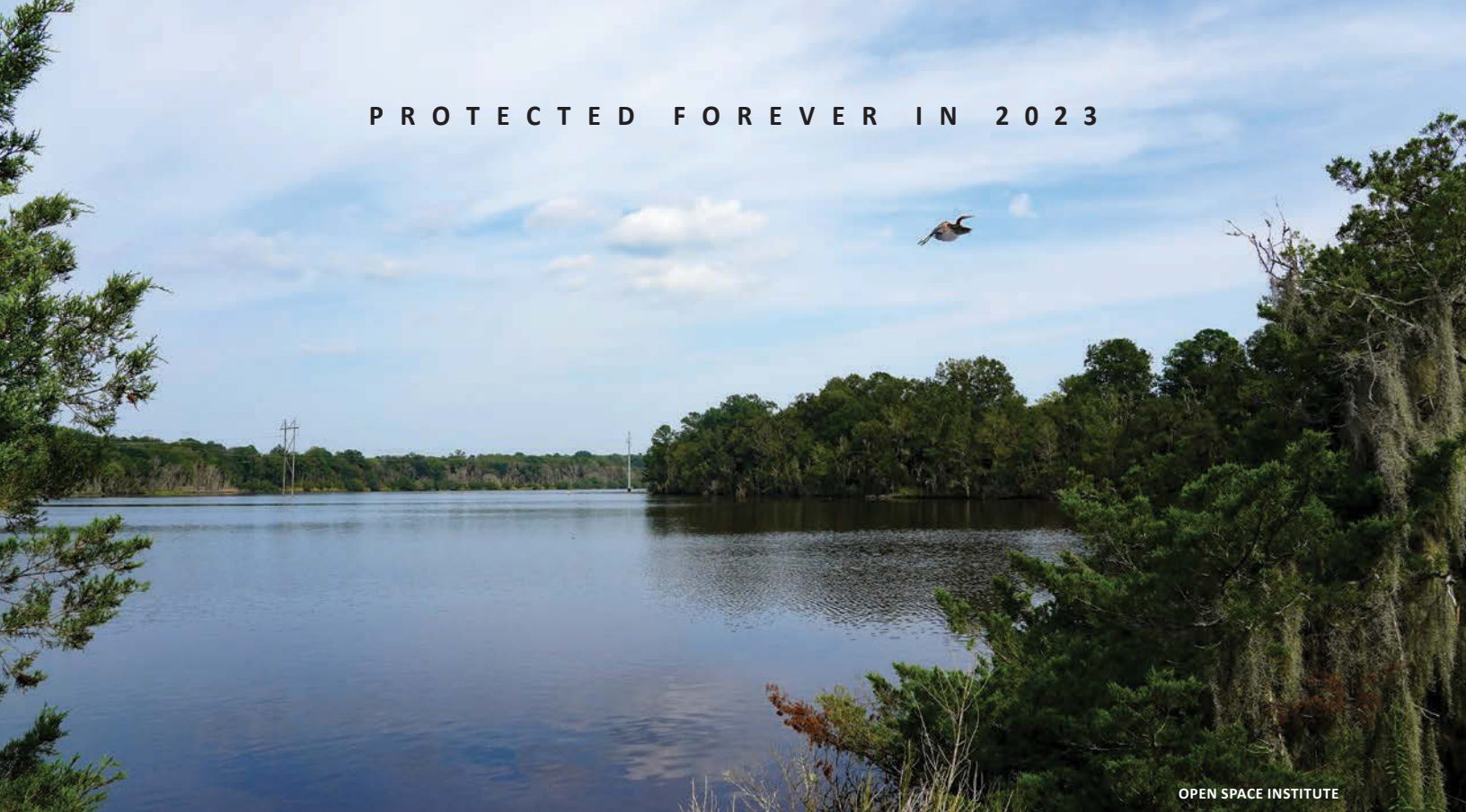
Kristin

Kristin Williams, Executive Director



“Because of you,
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P R O T E C T E D F O R E V E R I N 2 0 2 3



When conservation expands, history, wildlife and people benefit

A historic homesite is protected forever

In May, OLT closed on a conservation easement on “Cotton Hall”, protecting 190 acres of the historic property.

The conservation easement is part of a larger partnership between the South Carolina Conservation Bank, the Open Space Institute and Beaufort County to conserve an additional 527 acres as a public park. This partnership protected the entire 716 acres — the historic homesite, grounds and the larger natural areas. Some of the property will have public access, some private, and all with benefit to the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto (ACE) Basin and Port Royal Sound watersheds.

Open Space Institute secured the property when it was listed for sale. Partnership expanded the opportunity; thanks to your support along with funding from Beaufort County’s Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program and the South Carolina Conservation Bank, this property will provide habitat and recreation forever.

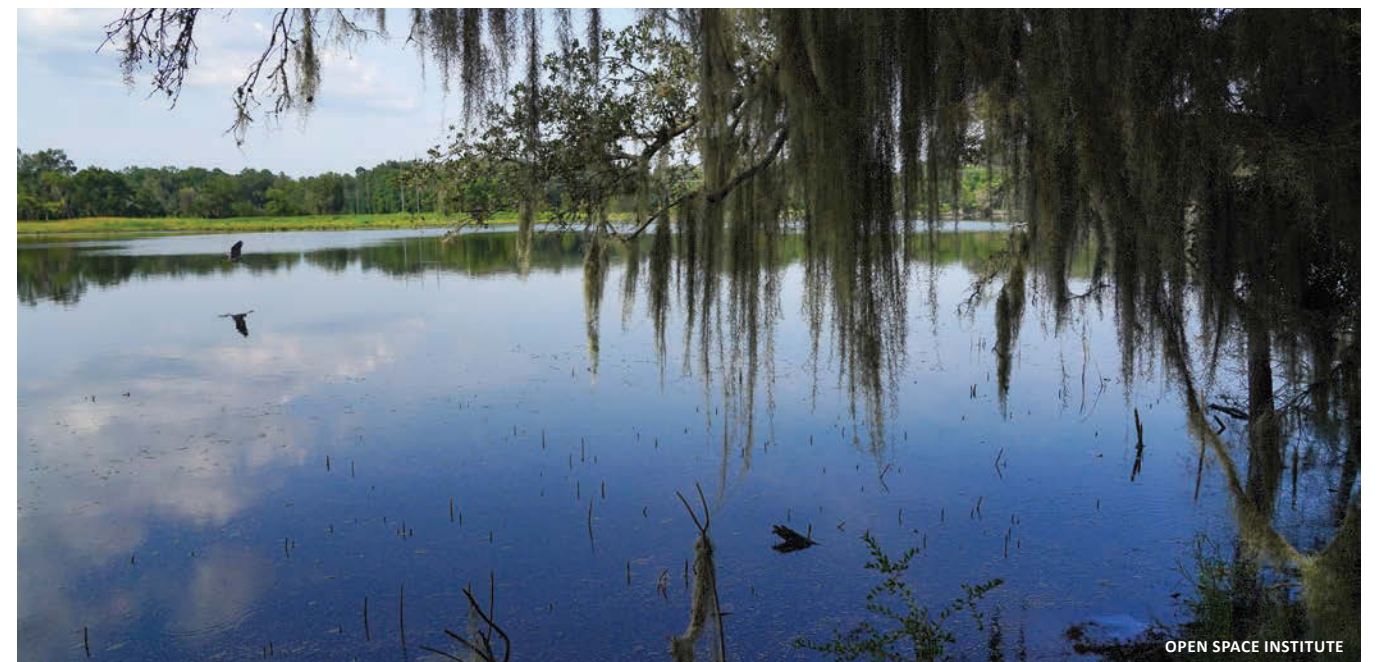
The property features forests, open fields and a large saltwater pond. Cotton Hall’s location is important because it adds to the already conserved Tomotely and Bindon conservation neighbors and fronts a 2.5 mile rural tree-canopied section of U.S. Highway 17 and was annexed into the Town of Yemassee..

Thankfully, Cotton Hall will be here for generations to come. OLT is deeply grateful for your support and our partners’ tireless efforts to protect Cotton Hall. It shows our community’s deep appreciation of our natural resources is truly a credit to the collaborative efforts of conservationists and dedicated community leaders.



“OSI is proud to be part of this project and thanks Beaufort County and OLT for their partnership to protect the whole tract and to provide public access to nature and add to a growing network of protected land in this beautiful part of the state.”

– Nate Berry, Chief Land Protection Officer, Open Space Institute

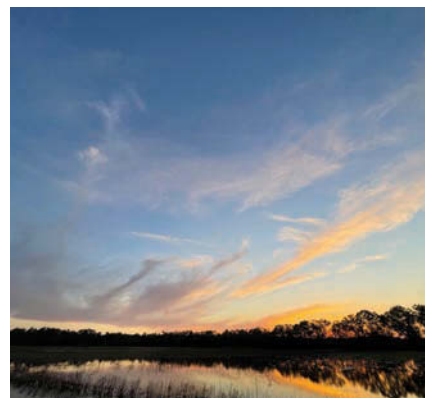




Protecting a family homestead, protecting a watershed

For the greater part of a year, OLT worked with landowners to conserve 2,064 acres in Hampton County. This privately owned property is a family homestead and was the first property subdivided from the parent Buckfield tract. The protected property retains the Buckfield name and is home to the historic Hampton Stokes property, historic rice fields, the backwaters of the Tullifinny River, agricultural fields and lush forests.

Landowner Mike Oates feels good about the family's decision. He smiled and said, "Buckfield Plantation has been part of the Lowcountry since the late 1700s. We view ourselves as the latest in a long line of custodians of the land and we are proud to have partnered with OLT to protect this beautiful property in perpetuity."



This project builds upon the conservation momentum in this area, stitching protected parcels together that help to connect protected lands from the ACE Basin to the Savannah River. This private conservation easement will surround public access property, enhancing the public's enjoyment.

Now protected forever, Buckfield will support clean water downstream in the Broad River and Port Royal Sound watershed and protect important wildlife habitat. Land protection here also buffers rapidly growing communities in Beaufort and Jasper Counties.

The protection of this property was made possible through partnership with the landowners whose ethic

compelled them to protect what they love and the shared investment of state and private grants from the South Carolina Conservation Bank, The Ceres Foundation and The Nature Conservancy.

This project followed other successful conservation projects by partner conservation organizations, Open Space Institute and the Nature Conservancy on adjacent properties that total a 12,000-acre assemblage. Those neighboring 12,000 acres will be transferred to the State of South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) to become the state's newest Wildlife Management Area – public land available for hunting, hiking, fishing, and nature study.

OLT is grateful to the Oates family for seeing a conservation future in their region and doing their part in protecting their property forever, benefitting everyone in the watershed who enjoys unspoiled access to healthy natural resources.

"We view ourselves as the latest in a long line of custodians of the land and we are proud to have partnered with OLT to protect this beautiful property in perpetuity."

– Mike Oates



Coming home to the family farm

This July, OLT protected Bowers Farm in partnership with the Bowers Family, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the South Carolina Conservation Bank.

Robert Bowers, eldest brother in the Bowers Family, described the 488-acre property as a family retreat, a homeplace. Spending time at the farm, he and his siblings gained a deep love for nature and the family continues to create memories with their children and grandchildren fishing in the ponds or walking the many meandering trails.

Bowers Farm sits along the South Wimbee River in the St Helena Sound in the ACE Basin, north of Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. Preferring to fly over farms and forest than houses and shopping centers — the Department of Defense helped fund the conservation of the family property.

Military partnerships like this protect wildlife habitat for birds like the bald eagle, scenic forested road frontage, keep our rivers and creeks clean AND improve military operations here in Beaufort. MCAS Beaufort and the OLT have been partners on these types of projects for almost 15 years, protecting over 9,000 acres near and around Bowers Farm and the air station.

Our partnership with DoD, Conservation Bank and the Bowers family shows how powerful and beneficial land conservation can be when we work together.

This wouldn't be possible without caring supporters like you.

Time is of the essence Great challenges present great opportunities

Imagine a future where the last 30 years of collaborative, community-led conservation are undone.

That's a startling thought.

The truth is today the Lowcountry faces some of the strongest development pressures in the United States. Combine that with skyrocketing land prices and the love-spell the beauty of our region has, it's no wonder the Broad River corridor and the Port Royal Sound need your passion and protection.

In Jasper County we have a unique but time-limited opportunity. There are many long-time family landowners who deeply cherish the land and the community and want to partner to conserve farms, forests, and wetlands.

That gives us hope.

Yet, recent property sales in the area signify an alarming trend as national homebuilders pursue development on a large scale — forever altering the character of Jasper County.

What also gives us hope is communities putting conservation first. Locally, the Jasper County Council passed a nine-month development moratorium in the county. This will give the people of Jasper County time to update a comprehensive planning and zoning code with conservation in mind.

Regionally, Beaufort County voters recently passed a two-year sales tax in November 2022 generating \$100 million for land protection that can be spent in neighboring counties.

Federally, in March 2023, more than two million acres from the Edisto to the Savannah River was officially designated by the Department of Defense as the Lowcountry Sentinel Landscape, the 11th Sentinel Landscape in the country. This timely designation increases access to federal conservation funding for land protection.

With great challenges come great opportunities and we have all the ingredients for success given the opportunity in front of us.



“A hopeful future in the Port Royal Sound watershed means responsible growth, safeguarding lands for wildlife, working lands for livelihoods and leaving a conservation legacy we can all be proud of.”

– Milton Woods, Jasper County native

Honoring our past and protecting our future

Continuing the tradition

Betty, John and Marguerite didn’t set out to save the Lowcountry. Not at first.

When John Trask, Jr., Betty Waskiewicz, and Marguerite Broz were born in the 1930’s and 1940’s, Highway 21 coming into Beaufort was a road made of oyster shells. Beaufort County could be described as an undiscovered, sea-island paradise.

But in 1971, after seeing a for-sale sign on an iconic waterfront lot along the eastern edge of Bay Street in downtown Beaufort, the three knew *something had to be done*.

Unfortunately, haphazard development was coming, and it was coming fast. And the beautiful, open views from the Bay Street Bluff were in danger of being lost forever.

Betty, John and Marguerite joined forces and did something incredible when they purchased the property to conserve the remarkable views of the Beaufort River.

The three weren’t sure how they were going to pay for it, or what they were going to do with the property when they put it under contract. But they knew they had to protect the view to the river and the town’s sense of place.

And they knew they couldn’t do it alone. The trio’s mantra, “something has to be done” would galvanize the community. Bay Street Bluff was where it began

and from there it was Bellamy Curve. A movement had started.

Betty, John and Marguerite reached out to the heart of Beaufort – families and friends to host gatherings and luncheons. “Chicken Salad Luncheons” hosted by ordinary people of Beaufort with extraordinary vision raised the funds to help buy some of our most iconic properties, setting them aside for generations to come.

Without realizing it, they created a Beaufort tradition of saving the world, one chicken salad luncheon at a time. In 2021, we brought these luncheons back to life.

As one recent brunch hostess, Carole Longmeyer puts it, “What they have done in the last five decades is amazing. The biggest reason we have all this beauty, all this open space, all the green sweetgrass and blue water vistas is the OLT.”

We know these lunches wouldn’t happen without caring supporters like you who take action, and bring people together to conserve the lands that define our region. Thank you for continuing the tradition.



Betty Waskiewicz, John Trask, Jr. and Marguerite Broz celebrating the Open Land Trust’s 20th birthday.



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Lloyd Williams, Realtor with Lowcountry Real Estate
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Farm Bureau Insurance

Special Thanks

Susan Mason Catering
Paul Nurnberg Photography
Campfire Tyler

Brunch on the Bluff

Celebrate with us! The official birthday party of the Open Land Trust is an annual spring event to celebrate the founding of South Carolina’s first land trust — and you, our wonderful supporters.

SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY APRIL 27, 2024



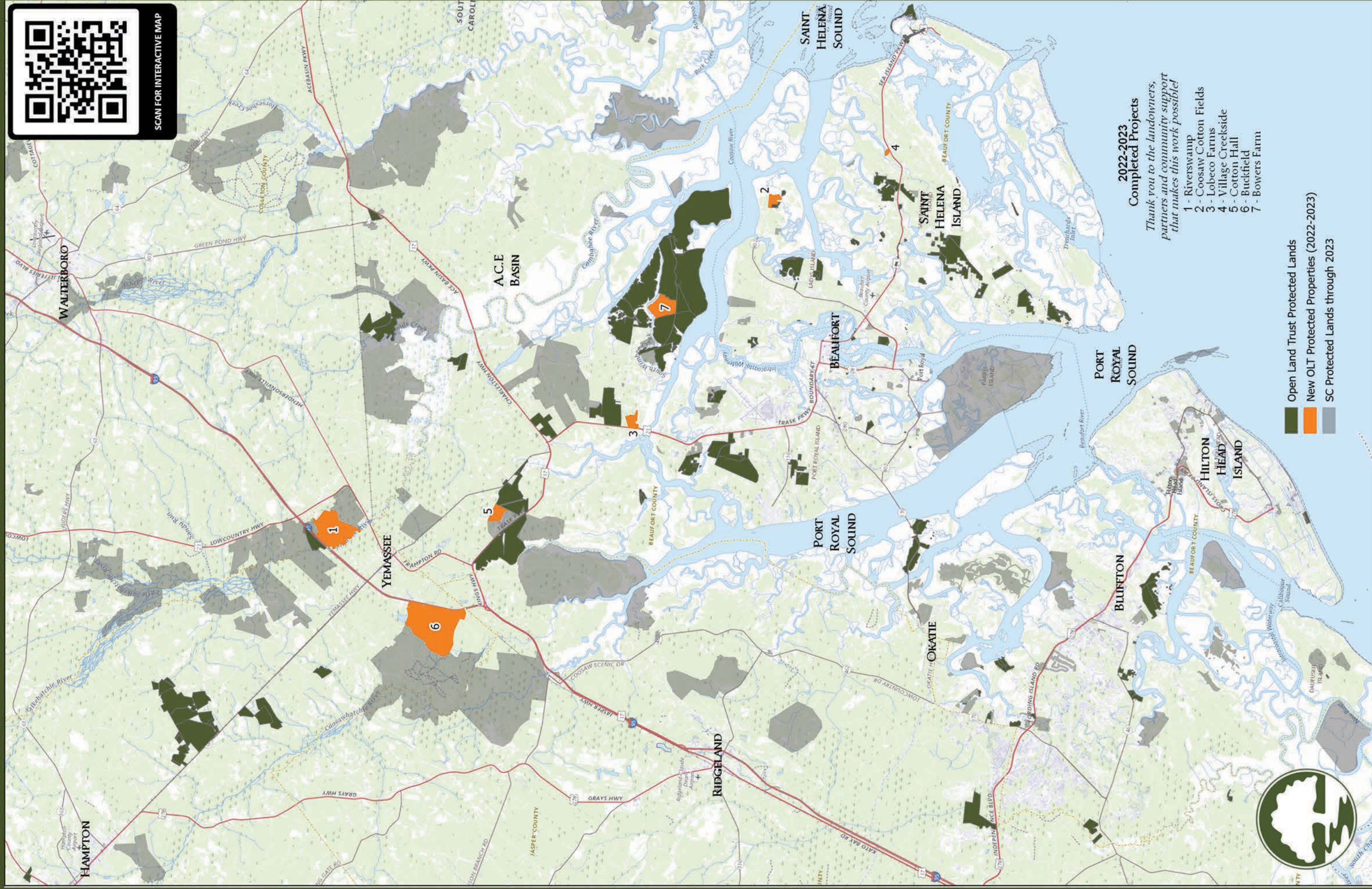
“This is one of my favorite events celebrating the protection of our special places. Thank goodness for the OLT!”

– Ivey Savage, Brunch Committee Chair

OPEN LAND TRUST AND OTHER PROTECTED LANDS



SCAN FOR INTERACTIVE MAP



P R O T E C T E D F O R E V E R I N 2 0 2 2

NURNBERG PHOTOGRAPHY

Hidden in plain sight

Conservation uncovers history, culture and healing

OLT board member, Beek Webb and his wife, Cathy, have lived on Coosaw Island for over 40 years, spending a great deal of their time outdoors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they found themselves spending even more time walking and exploring the island's treasures. On one of their morning walks they noticed some interesting features in the marsh that did not look natural.

Beek's curiosity was piqued. He began investigating.

After many site visits with experts and more research, it was determined that the Webbs stumbled upon a piece of untold history. The beauty of the marsh they walked every morning held more than the deer, egrets, heron and woodstorks: it held a piece of the Lowcountry's past.

The unusual features they found turned out to be rows upon rows of beds and dikes created by enslaved people that were used to cultivate Sea Island cotton. The Sea Island Cotton industry was one of the most important economic forces in South Carolina from the late 1700s until the Civil War. Few remaining sites are known to exist.



The beauty of the marsh they walked every morning held more than the deer, egrets, heron and woodstorks: it held a piece of the Lowcountry's past.

Over the past three years the Open Land Trust has worked with three local families to purchase multiple parcels of land totaling roughly 120 acres which includes these rare, historic cotton fields and the adjacent lands surrounding them, protecting them from future development.

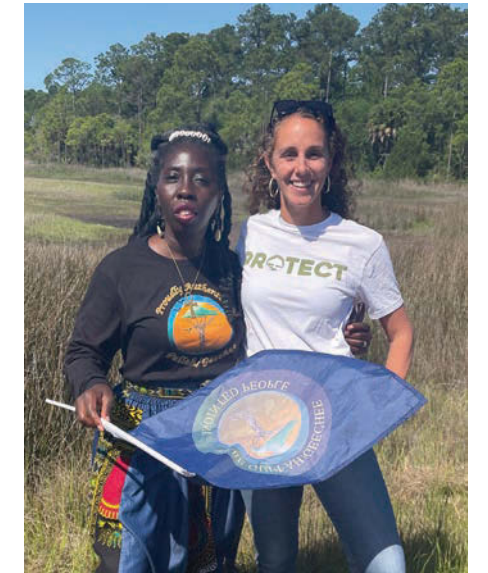
"I'm happy the land is protected. I have lived on Coosaw Island since 1981 and this is the home of my father and his family and my wife's family. We never knew this was here," Reverend Isaiah Smalls says of the project.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Heritage Trust Board has started the approval process with hopes to eventually take ownership of the property and provide public access.

Until now, almost no one knew these fields existed. As Beek puts it, "It is amazing to think what we can find if we slow down and pay attention. It also makes you wonder how much of our history may have been lost."

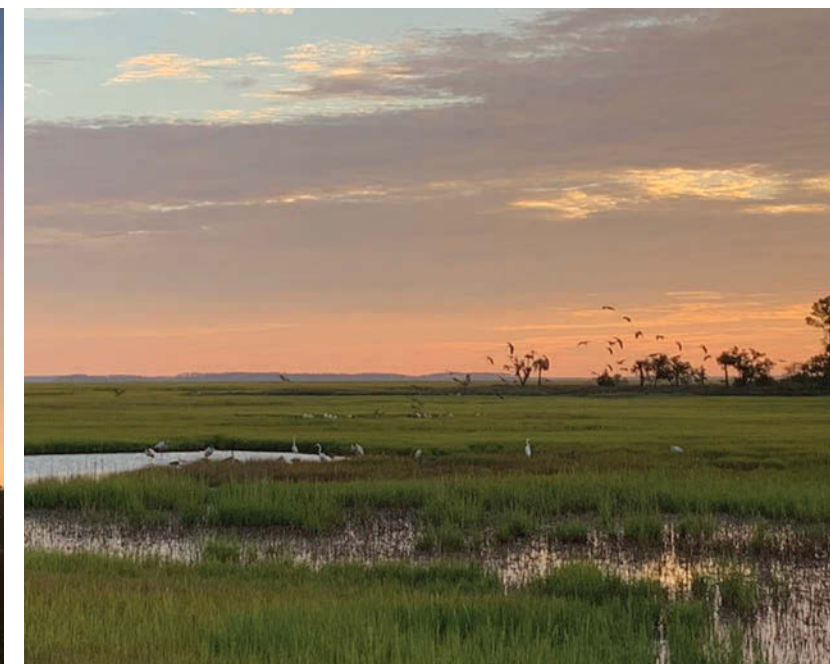
But not all is lost. Queen Quet, Cheiftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation shares, "I look forward to sharing the history and legacy of native Gullah/Geechees from Coosaw including the stories and voices of my family members. Conserving these spaces will allow future generations of people to be able to step back in time and see and feel these historic places in a natural state."

This land holds stories that have yet to be told. Stories that are hard to find and even more difficult to comprehend. Yet Queen Quet has hope, "This will open the space for all of us to walk through together and GOD willing, we will all come out healed." Protecting this land will ensure that these stories will be told for generations, keeping history alive.



“Conserving these spaces will allow future generations of people to be able to step back in time and see and feel these historic places in a natural state.”

– Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah Geechee Nation



Grateful for you and this place

I first became aware of the Open Land Trust when they protected Bay Street on the Bluff in the 1970's. This opened up the magnificent vista of Beaufort River for everyone.


Shortly after the NAPA auto parts store on Bellamy curve was removed, opening the dramatic view of the Beaufort River and Lady's Island. It was only later that I learned this was just a small part of what the land trust has accomplished over its five decades.

It's inspiring: our community has conserved more than 30,000 acres — over 3,000 protected in 2023 alone. It's lands that border our rivers, creeks and marshes, and sites of historic significance. It's land that if developed, would change the character of Beaufort forever.

Yet, to know you, and many other hardworking, passionate folks have come together to make sure that doesn't happen, fills me with joy. You've made all our lives — our children's and grandchildren's lives — better. Thank you.

Smart growth while protecting the very fabric of the Beaufort Lowcountry is possible. The conservation of these beloved farms, marshes, forests and open spaces could not have been done without the generous support of dedicated, visionary people like you who care about the future of Beaufort.

As we enter our 53rd year, we ask for your continued support. We know that we can't protect all the places, but by the grace of God and your help, we'll try.

Warmly,

Colden Battey, President



2022 Annual Report Highlights What a difference you've made

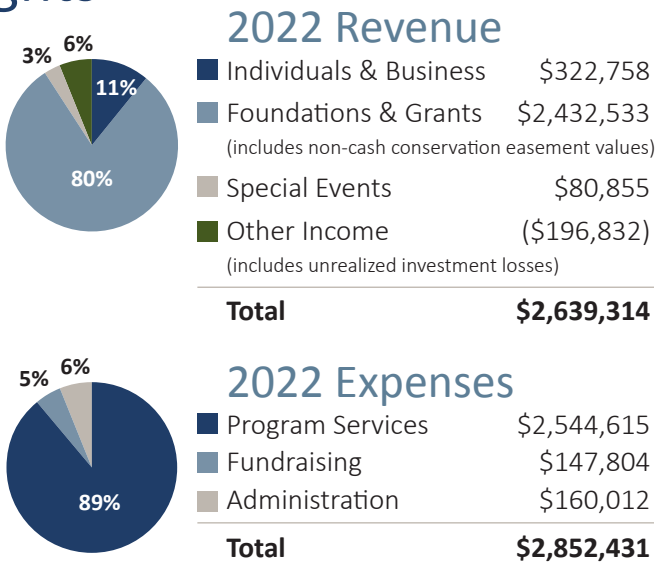
Thanks to you, Beaufort is a place we can all call home.

As a nationally accredited-land trust, we believe in building an organization that is here to stay. Your gifts are investments in the future of all who visit Beaufort—as well as the wildlife and community members who call it home.

Our success is your success

For every dollar raised from individual supporters, an additional \$6 dollars was leveraged through local, state and federal conservation funding maximizing the quantity and quality of projects we can do together. It's an incredible return on your investment in conservation that lasts forever.

*For more detailed financials reach out to Kristin Williams at kristin@openlandtrust.org or (843) 521-2175



A place to call home Protecting land and family for generations to come

St. Helena Island is a special place filled with special people. The land, the people and the water are all interconnected and have been for generations. Protecting land on St. Helena is about more than protecting the soil, it is about protecting a living culture.

Katie Daise, a 93-year-old native Gullah-Geechee from St. Helena Island knows this all too well.

Katie's family land is located on Village Creek. It is a place that holds happy memories of times past. Katie wanted to make sure these memories and many more would always be there for her family, many of whom have moved away from St. Helena. She lovingly said of her decision, "I want them to have a place to come visit that they can say 'We are going home.'"

And now, she and her family truly can come home.

In December 2022, Katie protected her land forever. In partnership with the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program and the Open Land Trust, Katie conserved her property with a conservation easement.

Katie is a remarkable woman with foresight and a vision that is rooted in her love of family and place. Thank you for making it possible to work with fellow community members like Katie who wish to leave a lasting legacy of the Lowcountry for all generations.



"I want them to have a place to come visit that they can say 'We are going home.'"

— Katie Daise

Hear Katie's story in her own words by using the QR code.





Combahee River conservation

Protecting the rivers and forests that sustain us

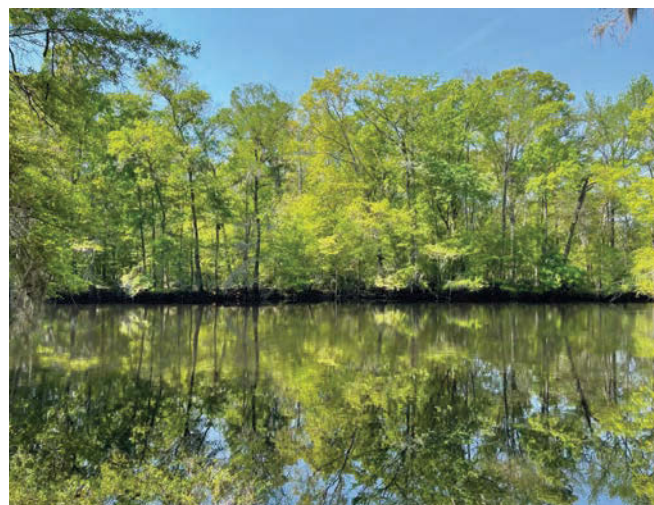
In the heart of South Carolina's Lowcountry, the protection of River Swamp stands as a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to safeguard the region's natural beauty and ecological diversity. This 1,017-acre property, nestled along the picturesque Combahee River, holds immense natural beauty and expansive habitat for plants and animals of the Lowcountry.

River Swamp connects more than 15 miles of protected Combahee River frontage, bridging the gap between the confluence of the Little Salkehatchie and Salkehatchie Rivers and the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge Combahee Unit. This contiguous protected river corridor creates a haven for both wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts, offering unparalleled recreational opportunities and a thriving ecosystem.

The Combahee River, which flows 45 miles inland primarily supports a freshwater ecosystem, providing a sanctuary for a diverse array of fish like the Atlantic sturgeon, redbreast sunfish, bluegill, and white catfish. The forested wetlands provide shade, keeping water temperatures cool for fish, turtles and other critters.

The property contributes to the region's forestry economy, maintaining a healthy working landscape. Over 200 acres of property closest to the river will remain untouched, contributing to the health of the Combahee River, ensuring a bright future for this vital natural resource.

Protecting River Swamp not only preserves the region's unique beauty but also benefits the entire community by safeguarding the ACE Basin watershed. The landowners, the South Carolina Conservation Bank, and with your help, the OLT came together to protect this land, ensuring that the Combahee River and surrounding lands thrive for generations to come.



Farmland surrounds Beaufort today and forever

Farming into the future

Located just north of the Whale Branch River, Lobeco Farms has been a working farm for much of the 20th and early 21st centuries.

But not all farms have survived the passage of time.

Every hour 85 acres of working lands are lost to development or other uses. Once that land is gone, it's lost forever.

Thankfully, when an agricultural investor put Lobeco Farms up for sale, private landowners saw the urgency to save the farm and conserve it with the Open Land Trust in 2022. This act of generosity is one critical step to reverse a trend of farmland loss in Beaufort County and provide the next generation of farmers an opportunity to work the land.

Beaufort and Jasper counties are home to 296 farms according to the USDA-National Agricultural Census. These farms produce over \$33 million in all products sold including produce, animal products, and sod. Healthy working lands conserved and cared for over time are an essential part of a thriving economy.

Thanks to the landowners and the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program this farm will remain a part of the economic and social fabric of our community.

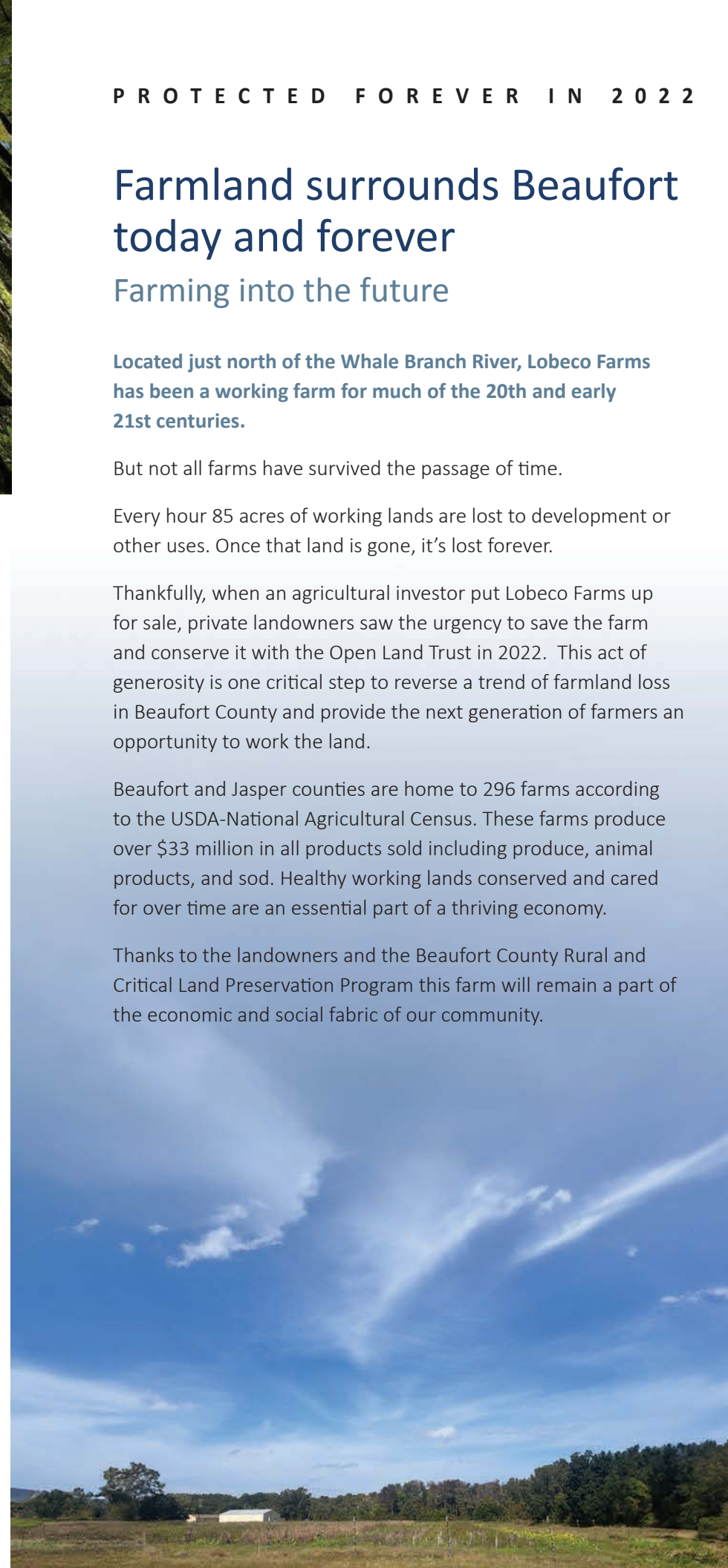
6 Quick Facts

About Conservation Easements

Conserving your land is always a big decision. Here are a few key points to consider if you, or someone you know, is interested in land conservation.

- 1 Ownership Retained** You retain your private property rights and can sell, lease, or pass your land on to your family.
- 2 Flexible** Farming, forestry, hunting, recreational uses, and a limited number of house sites and/or property divisions may be permitted.
- 3 Financial Benefits** You may also greatly reduce your federal income tax liability for several years, starting the year you conserve your land. Compensation through local, state and federal grant funding may also be available.
- 4 Tailored to You** All conservation easements are unique to the land it conserves and to your vision for your property.
- 5 Voluntary** All landowners who decide to conserve their land with a conservation easement do so voluntarily.
- 6 Estate Planning Benefits** Conserving your land can help with your estate planning, reduce your estate taxes, and allows for a transition to the next generation.

For more information, please go to our website openlandtrust.org.



You are the heart of the Lowcountry

Caring people from across our region and beyond made 2022 a banner year

Fond farewell

This summer we said a fond farewell to Haley Romeo, our outreach and administrative coordinator for the past four years. We wish Haley well in her new role at Riverview Charter School and will miss her smiling face and outreach support at OLT.



In Honor of

Lauren Plate
Sea Island Garden Club
Patricia Battey
Rick and Ruth Ann Lawson
Laura Lee Rose
Oldfield Travel and Outdoor Club
Priscilla Merrick
Avid Gardeners
Brian Flewelling
Kriss and Ron Lewis
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Beaufort Rentals
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Paul Nurnberg
Dr. Zabrensky and Dr. Hoffman
Paula Brulotte-Kirsch

Grants

Coastal Community Foundation
Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley
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Land Trust Alliance

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

**To the best of our knowledge, this list reflects donations received in the 2022 calendar year. If there is an error or omission, please contact our office and we will make the appropriate changes in our database.*

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Sharon and Richard Shealy
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JENN CLEMENTONI

Did you know?

Painted buntings are actually members of the cardinal family. You may have seen flashes of red, blue and green as one flies by. One of the most stunning birds visually, they are very protective of their territory and will fiercely defend it against other birds. While some stay in the Lowcountry year-round, most migrate to the Caribbean and tropics for winter, returning in the spring and summer to breed and raise their young. These living rainbows rely on the open lands of the coast to interior farmlands for food and shelter. That means OLT's conservation work is important not only the people of the Lowcountry, but to the well-being of our feathered friends like the painted bunting.

There are many ways to give

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You can make a big difference for the people and places of the Lowcountry. Donating to OLT helps protect habitat for animals, farmlands that provide fresh food and keeps natural spaces open and accessible to locals and visitors alike. Visit openlandtrust.org to donate or call Kristin Williams, Executive Director at (843) 521-2175 to discuss a gift that's meaningful to you.

