

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
BEAUFORT COUNTY GOVERNMENT ROBERT SMALLS COMPLEX  
100 RIBAUT ROAD  
POST OFFICE DRAWER 1228  
BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA 29901-1228  
TELEPHONE: (843) 255-2180  
www.bcgov.net

D. PAUL SOMMERVILLE  
CHAIRMAN

GERALD W. STEWART  
VICE CHAIRMAN

COUNCIL MEMBERS

RICK CAPORALE  
MICHAEL E. COVERT  
GERALD DAWSON  
BRIAN E. FLEWELLING  
STEVEN G. FOBES  
YORK GLOVER, SR.  
ALICE G. HOWARD  
STEWART H. RODMAN  
ROBERTS "TABOR" VAUX

GARY T. KUBIC  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

JOSHUA A. GRUBER  
DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

THOMAS J. KEAVENY, II  
COUNTY ATTORNEY

ASHLEY M. BENNETT  
CLERK TO COUNCIL

AGENDA  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Monday, May 15, 2017

2:00 p.m.

Executive Conference Room, Administration Building  
Beaufort County Government Robert Smalls Complex  
100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort

Committee Members:

Brian Flewelling, Chairman  
Roberts "Tabor" Vaux, Vice Chairman  
Rick Caporale  
Gerald Dawson  
Steve Fobes  
York Glover  
Alice Howard

Staff Support:

Anthony Criscitiello, Planning Director  
Gary James, Assessor  
Eric Larson, Division Director  
Environmental Engineering  
Dan Morgan, Division Director  
Mapping & Applications

1. CALL TO ORDER – 2:00 P.M.
2. DISCUSSION / PREVIOUS PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
3. UPDATE / NEW AICUZ (AIR INSTALLATION COMPATIBILITY USE ZONE) MAP
4. PORT ROYAL ISLAND ZONING MAP AMENDMENT / REZONING REQUEST FOR R100 024 000 078C 0000 (12.1 ACRES AT 19 COVENANT DRIVE); FROM T2-RURAL ZONING DISTRICT TO S1-INDUSTRIAL ZONING DISTRICT; OWNER: AMERIS BANK/AGENT: THOMAS HERMANN ([backup](#))
5. PRESENTATION / BEAUFORT COUNTY RURAL AND CRITICAL LANDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM: STEWARDSHIP AND PUBLIC USE OF RURAL AND CRITICAL LANDS REPORT, AND DISCUSSION ON HIRING A STEWARDSHIP MANAGER ([backup](#))
6. TEXT AMENDMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CODE (CDC); APPLICANT: BEAUFORT COUNTY PLANNING STAFF: ([backup](#))
  - A. ARTICLE 1:
    - Section 1.3.50 (Exemptions): Adds requirement to comply with Historic Preservation standards
  - B. ARTICLE 2:
    - Section 2.2.50 (Lots): Specifies widths of flag lots
    - Section 2.2.60 (Access Management): Clarification



C. ARTICLE 3:

- Table 3.1.70 (Land Use Definitions): Amends “Campground” to specify two or more recreational vehicles/RVs on a single property

D. ARTICLE 5:

- Section 5.6.120 (Freestanding Signs): Establishes minimum 10-foot setback from right-of-way/ROW
- Section 5.9.50.F (Existing Trees in Thoroughfare Buffer): Requires retention of existing vegetation in thoroughfare buffers
- Section 5.8.110.B.4 (Performance Guarantee): Establishes a two-year survival bond for landscaping
- Section 5.11.90 (Forests): Adds language that promotes interconnectivity of preserved forest habitat
- Section 5.11.100 (Trees): Adds longleaf pine and black cherry as specimen trees at 16 inches, and increases the penalty/mitigation of illegally removed trees from 1.25 times to 2 times the caliper inches removed

E. ARTICLE 6:

- Section 6.2.70 (Maintenance Guarantee): Cross-references the landscaping survival bond from Article 5, Division 5.8

7. DISCUSSION / DAUFUSKIE ISLAND “BAILEY BILL” ([backup](#))

8. CONSIDERATION OF REAPPOINTMENTS AND APPOINTMENTS

A. Southern Beaufort County Corridor Beautification Board

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements and proposed purchase of properties - Project 2017-C, Project 2017-D and Project 2017-E

10. ADJOURNMENT

2017 Strategic Plan Committee Assignments

Hilton Head National Rezoning/Development Agreement  
Priority Investment – Capital Projects Long-Term Prioritized Requirements  
Passive County Parks: Plan, Funding  
Comprehensive Countywide System/Stormwater Utility (Agreements with Municipalities)  
2018 Priority Projects: Immediate Opportunities  
Stormwater Management Program/Policy: Implementation  
Okatie River Restoration: Funding  
May River Action Plan  
Rivers and Creeks Water Quality: Evaluation  
Transfer of Development Rights  
Buckingham Plantation Community Development Plan: Amendment



## PLANNING DIVISION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Natural Resources Committee of County Council  
**FROM:** Anthony Criscitiello, Planning Director  
**DATE:** May 10, 2017  
**SUBJECT: Proposed Port Royal Island Zoning Map Amendment/Rezoning Request for 12.1 acres at 19 Covenant Drive (R100 024 000 078C 0000) from T2-Rural to S1-Industrial**

---

### **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION from its May 1, 2017, draft minutes:**

Mr. Robert Merchant briefed the Commission on the map amendment/rezoning request. He noted the history of the property that was downzoned in 2006 to accommodate a church to occupy an existing light industrial building on the property. The current owner, Ameris Bank, has a potential purchaser who wants to place a cabinet shop in the existing building on the property so the zoning must revert back to its original industrial zoning to accommodate the cabinet shop. The staff recommends the rezoning since the property is surrounded by the industrial zoning/uses and located in the AICUZ (Air Installation Compatibility Use Zone) that recommends light industrial uses per the Comprehensive Plan. The Metropolitan Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the rezoning request.

**Discussion included** clarification of the surrounding zoning districts, a query on the possible commercial square footage allowed on the property, and concern for traffic impact based on possible buildout of commercial square footage on the property (*Mr. Merchant noted that the traffic model takes into account past growth rates, not build out; the planning staff would look at development trends if the area were to develop.*).

### **Applicant's Comments:**

- Mr. Thomas Hermann of Ameris Bank, the applicant, noted that the bank (Ameris, property owner) obtained the property via a foreclosure upon the death of the pastor (of New Covenant Ministries, the former owner). Mr. Hermann stated the bank believes in the property back to industrial to get jobs to the area.
- Mr. Dean Williams, a cabinet maker, former firefighter/paramedic, and potential purchaser of the property, stated he has outgrown his current location. Through his due diligence he must seek property other than on Lady's Island where his current establishment exists. He noted his research on the property, stating he probably would receive a shipment about once a week. There is another cabinet manufacturer down the street, and he knows that another cabinet business is interested in opening in the area also. He asks for a favorable recommendation from the Commission.

**Public Comment:** None were received.

**Motion:** Ms. Carolyn Fermin made a motion, and Mr. Jason Hinchler seconded the motion, to forward to County Council with a recommendation of approval of the Port Royal Island Map Amendment/Rezoning Request for R100 024 000 078C 000 (12.1 acres at 19 Covenant Drive) from T2-Rural Zoning District to S1-Industrial Zoning District. Discussion included not seeing a posting sign on the property; however, Mr. Semmler affirmed that he did see such a sign. Mr. Stewart did talk to a neighbor and the neighbor supports to rezoning. The motion was carried (FOR: Chmelik, Fermin, Fireall, Hinchler, Semmler, Stewart, and Walsnovich; ABSENT: Mitchell and Pappas).

---

**STAFF REPORT:**

**A. BACKGROUND:**

<b>Case No.</b>	ZMA-2017-02
<b>Owner/Applicant/Agent:</b>	Ameris Bank / Thomas Hermann / Christian Kata
<b>Property Location:</b>	19 Covenant Drive, Burton South Carolina
<b>District/Map/Parcel:</b>	R100 024 000 078C 0000
<b>Property Size:</b>	12.1 acres
<b>Current Future Land Use Designation:</b>	Light Industrial
<b>Proposed Future Land Use Designation:</b>	No Change
<b>Current Zoning District:</b>	T2-Rural
<b>Proposed Zoning District:</b>	S1-Industrial

**B. SUMMARY OF REQUEST**

The subject property consists of 12.1 acres located on both sides of Covenant Drive in Burton. Historically, the property had a light industrial use on it located in an 8,000 square foot metal frame building. The property was originally zoned Light Industrial under the Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO). In 2006, the property was purchased by a church and the owner rezoned the parcel to Rural with Transitional Overlay since churches were not a permitted use in Light Industrial. The building is now vacant and a potential buyer is interested in locating a cabinet shop in the same building prompting a rezoning to S1-Industrial.

**C. ZONING MAP AMENDMENT ANALYSIS:** Section 7.3.40 of the Community Development Code (CDC) states that a zoning map amendment may be approved if the proposed amendment:

1. **Is consistent with and furthers the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and the purposes of this Development Code:** The proposed rezoning is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use chapter designates the

future land use of the property as Light Industrial. The property is located in the MCAS Airport Overlay District. The Land Use chapter also states that within this overlay district, light industrial, commercial and agricultural uses are appropriate land uses as opposed to residential development and places of assembly such as churches and schools. The Economic Development chapter has a policy to encourage light industrial development that states that non-retail commercially zoned properties should be expanded within the Airport Overlay Districts where appropriate.

2. **Is not in conflict with any provision of this Development Code, or the Code of Ordinances:** The proposed rezoning is not in conflict with the CDC or Code of Ordinances.
3. **Addresses a demonstrated community need:** Not applicable
4. **Is required by changing conditions:** Not applicable
5. **Is compatible with existing and proposed uses surrounding the land subject to the application, and is the appropriate zone and uses for the land.** The proposed rezoning is compatible with neighboring zoning and land uses. The proposed rezoning would eliminate an irregularity in the zoning map that was created by the downzoning of the property in 2006. The property is bordered on the west and north by parcels zoned S1- Industrial. South and east of the property are large undeveloped tracts that are zoned T2-Rural. The property is located approximately 500 feet south of the Beaufort Commerce Park. Along Bay Pines Road and Covenant Drive, there are six other light industrial and warehousing operations in addition to the Burton Fire District Pinewood Station.
6. **Would not adversely impact nearby lands.** The proposed rezoning would not adversely impact nearby lands. See Item 5 above.
7. **Would result in a logical and orderly development pattern.** The proposed rezoning would result in a logical and orderly development pattern. See Item 5 above.
8. **Would not result in adverse impacts on the natural environment – including, but not limited to, water, air, noise, storm water management, wildlife, vegetation, wetlands, and the natural functioning of the environment.** The proposed rezoning should result in minimal impact on the natural environment. The property already contains an 8,000 square foot light industrial building. Any additional development of the property will need to be addressed through adherence to the natural resource and stormwater standards in the Community Development Code.
9. **Would result in development that is adequately served by public facilities (e.g. streets, potable water, sewerage, storm water management, solid waste collection and disposal, schools, parks, police, and fire and emergency facilities):** The proposed rezoning is consistent with the historic use of the property. It is staff's opinion that the change of zoning to S1-Industrial would not result in an increased demand on public facilities.

#### **D. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

After review of the guidelines set forth in Section 7.3.40 of the Community Development Code, staff recommends approval of this request for the following reasons:

1. The requested zoning and proposed use fits well with existing zoning and uses of neighboring properties while remaining consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the intent of the Community Development Code.
2. The requested zoning change is consistent with the character of the neighborhood and the property is suitable for the use for which it is being considered.
3. Allowable uses in the proposed district would not adversely affect nearby property.

#### **E. METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

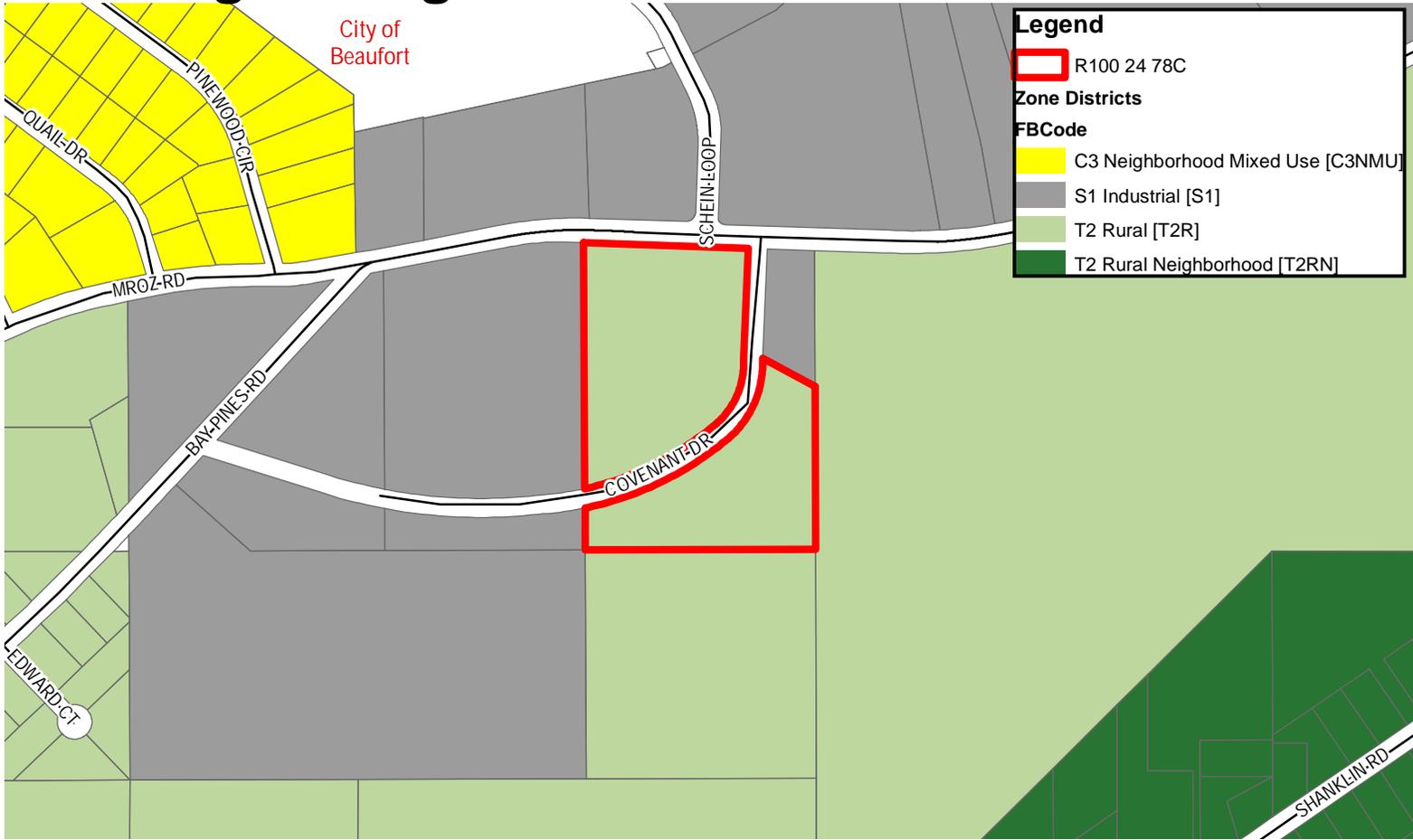
The Metropolitan Planning Commission met on April 24, 2017, to review the rezoning request. In attendance were Joe Devito, Bill Harris, Judy Alling, Caroline Fermin, Tim Rentz, and Robert Semmler. Robert Merchant gave a summary of the proposed rezoning. Tim Rentz asked if the residents of Pinewood Circle had been notified. Mr. Merchant said that they notify everyone within 500 feet of the proposed rezoning and that the property was posted. Caroline Fermin motioned to recommend approval of the rezoning. Tim Rentz seconded. Motion carried.

#### **F. ATTACHMENTS:**

- Before and After Zoning Map of site
- Application
- Notification Letter
- Property Owners Notified
- Photos of Posted Notification

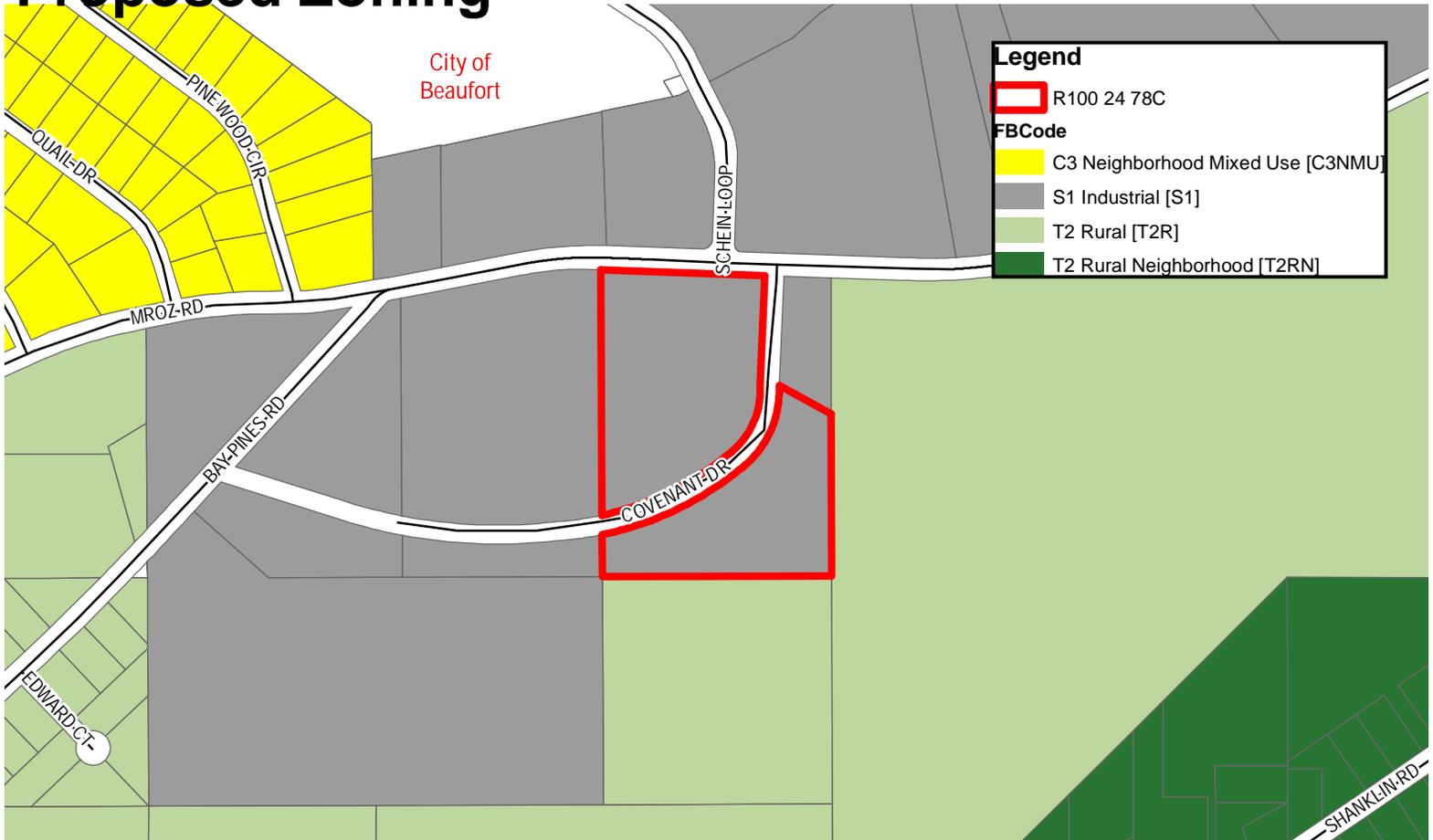
# Existing Zoning

City of Beaufort



# Proposed Zoning

City of Beaufort



**BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA  
PROPOSED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CODE (CDC)  
ZONING MAP OR TEXT AMENDMENT / PUD MASTER PLAN CHANGE APPLICATION**

TO: Beaufort County Council

The undersigned hereby respectfully requests that the Beaufort County Zoning/Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO) be amended as described below:

- This is a request for a change in the (check as appropriate):  PUD Master Plan Change  
 Zoning Map Designation/Rezoning  Community Development Code Text
- Give exact information to locate the property for which you propose a change:  
 Tax District Number: R100, Tax Map Number: 024, Parcel Number(s): 078C  
 Size of subject property: 12.1 Square Feet / Acres (circle one)  
 Location: 19 Covenant Drive
- How is this property presently zoned? (Check as appropriate)
 

<input type="checkbox"/> T4NC Neighborhood Center	<input type="checkbox"/> T2RC Rural Center	<input type="checkbox"/> C3 Neighborhood Mixed Use
<input type="checkbox"/> T4HC Hamlet Center	<input type="checkbox"/> T2RN Rural Neighborhood	<input type="checkbox"/> C4 Community Center Mixed Use
<input type="checkbox"/> T4HCO Hamlet Center	<input type="checkbox"/> T2RNO Rural Neighborhood Open	<input type="checkbox"/> C5 Regional Center Mixed Use
<input type="checkbox"/> T4VC Village Center	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> T2R Rural	<input type="checkbox"/> S1 Industrial
<input type="checkbox"/> T3N Neighborhood	<input type="checkbox"/> T1 Natural Preserve	<input type="checkbox"/> Planned Unit Development/PUD (name) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> T3HN Hamlet Neighborhood	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Preservation (specify) _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> T3E Edge		
- What new zoning do you propose for this property? S1 Light Industrial (original zoning)  
 (Under Item 9 explain the reason(s) for your rezoning request.)
- Do you own all of the property proposed for this zoning change?  Yes  No  
 Only property owners or their authorized representative/agent can sign this application. If there are multiple owners, each property owner must sign an individual application and all applications must be submitted simultaneously. If a business entity is the owner, the authorized representative/agent of the business must attach: 1- a copy of the power of attorney that gives him the authority to sign for the business, and 2- a copy of the articles of incorporation that lists the names of all the owners of the business.
- If this request involves a proposed change in the Community Development Code text, the section(s) affected are: N/A  
 (Under Item 9 explain the proposed text change and reasons for the change.)
- Is this property subject to an Overlay District? Check those which may apply:  
 MCAS-AO Airport Overlay District/MCAS  MD Military Overlay District  
 BC-AO Airport Overlay District/Beaufort County  RQ River Quality Overlay District  
 CPO Cultural Protection  TDR Transfer of Development Rights  
 CFV Commercial Fishing Village MCAS AICUZ APZ (CZ)
- The following sections of the Community Development Code (CDC) (see attached sheets) should be addressed by the applicant and attached to this application form:
  - Division 7.3.20 and 7.3.30, Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Text Amendments.
  - Division 7.3.40, Zoning map amendments (rezoning).
  - Division 1.6.60, Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) Approved Prior to Dec. 8, 2014
  - Division 6.3, Traffic Impact Analysis (for PUDs)



Christian Keta / 843-441-7659 / christian.keta@amerisbank.com

9. Explanation (continue on separate sheet if needed): We are requesting a zoning change back to the original zoning of light industrial. We have local businesses that would like to purchase the building and the current zoning as a church does not match surrounding properties.

It is understood by the undersigned that while this application will be carefully reviewed and considered, the burden of proof for the proposed amendment rests with the owner.

Ameris Bank T. Hermann 3/31/17  
Signature of Owner (see Item 5 on page 1 of 2) Date  
Printed Name: THOMAS R. HERMANN Telephone Number: 843-522-2445  
MARKET PRESIDENT, AMERIS.  
Address: 2348 BOUNDARY ST, BEAUFORT, SC 29902  
Email: Tom.hermann@amerisbank.com  
Agent (Name/Address/Phone/email): \_\_\_\_\_

UPON RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS, THE STAFF HAS THREE (3) WORK DAYS TO REVIEW ALL APPLICATIONS FOR COMPLETENESS. THE COMPLETED APPLICATIONS WILL BE REVIEWED FIRST BY THE BEAUFORT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION SUBCOMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AREA WHERE YOUR PROPERTY IS LOCATED. MEETING SCHEDULES ARE LISTED ON THE APPLICATION PROCESS (ATTACHED). COMPLETE APPLICATIONS MUST BE **SUBMITTED BY NOON THREE WORKING DAYS AND FOUR (4) WEEKS PRIOR FOR PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS (PUDs) OR THREE (3) WEEKS PRIOR FOR NON-PUD APPLICATIONS TO THE APPLICABLE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE.**

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) APPLICANTS ARE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT FIFTEEN (15) COPIES TO THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT. CONSULT THE APPLICABLE STAFF PLANNER FOR DETAILS.

FOR MAP AMENDMENT REQUESTS, THE PLANNING OFFICE WILL POST A NOTICE ON THE AFFECTED PROPERTY AS OUTLINED IN DIV. 7.4.50 OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CODE.

CONTACT THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT AT (843) 255-2140 FOR EXACT APPLICATION FEES.

FOR PLANNING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY:

Date Application Received: 3/31/17  
(place received stamp below)



Date Posting Notice Issued:

Application Fee Amount Received: \$250

Receipt No. for Application Fee: 15454



COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY  
**BEAUFORT COUNTY PLANNING DIVISION**

Beaufort County Government Robert Smalls Complex  
Physical: County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Room 115  
Mailing: Post Office Drawer 1228, Beaufort SC 29901-1228  
Phone: (843) 255-2140 • FAX: (843) 255-9432

April 6, 2017

**RE:** Notice of Public Meetings to Consider a Port Royal Island Map Amendment for R100 024 000 078C 0000 (12.1 acres; at 19 Covenant Drive, Burton; located off Bay Pines Road, west of Parker Drive and across from Schein Loop); from T2-Rural Zoning District to S1-Industrial Zoning District; Applicant: Ameris Bank; Agent: Thomas Hermann

Dear Property Owner:

In accordance with the Beaufort County Community Development Code, Section 7.4.50, a public hearing is required by the Beaufort County Planning Commission and the Beaufort County Council before a map amendment/rezoning request can be adopted. You are cordially invited to provide comment at these meetings and public hearings on the subject proposed map amendment in your neighborhood. A map of the property is on the back of this letter.

1. The **Metropolitan Planning Commission** – **Monday, April 17, 2017** at 5:30 in the Beaufort City Hall at 1911 Boundary Street, Beaufort, SC 29902.
2. The **Beaufort County Planning Commission** (public hearing) – **Monday, May 1, 2017**, at 6:00 p.m. in the County Council Chambers, located on the first floor of the Beaufort County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort SC.
3. The **Natural Resources Committee** of Beaufort County Council – **Monday, May 15, 2017**, at 2:00 p.m. in the Executive Conference Room, located on the first floor of the Beaufort County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, SC.
4. **Beaufort County Council** – generally meets second and fourth Mondays at 6:00 p.m. in the County Council Chambers of the Beaufort County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, SC. County Council must meet three times prior to making a final decision on this case. Please call (843) 255-2140 to verify the exact dates and locations.

Documents related to the proposed amendment are available for public inspection between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, in the Beaufort County Planning Department office, Room 115 of the Beaufort County Administration Building. If you have any questions regarding this map amendment/rezoning request, please contact the Planning Department at (843) 255-2140.

Sincerely,

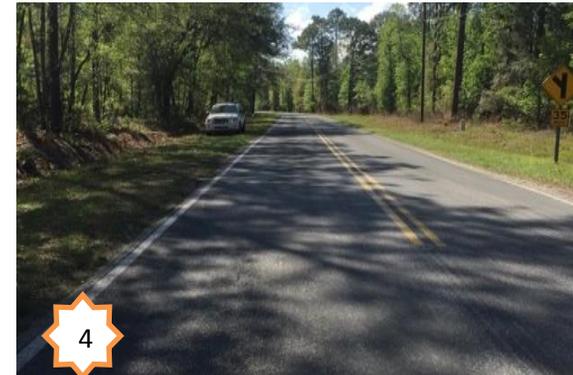
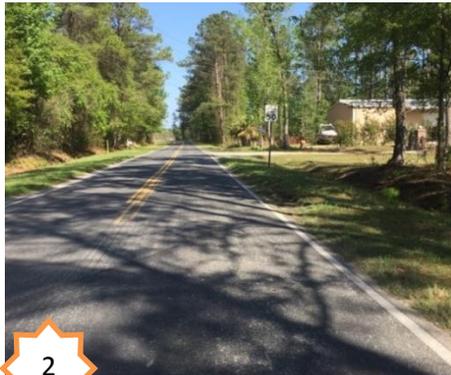
Delores Frazier  
Assistant Planning Director

Attachment: Map on back of letter

**Property Owners Notified of Map Amendment/Rezoning Request for R100 024 000 078C 0000 (from T2-R to S1-Industrial)**

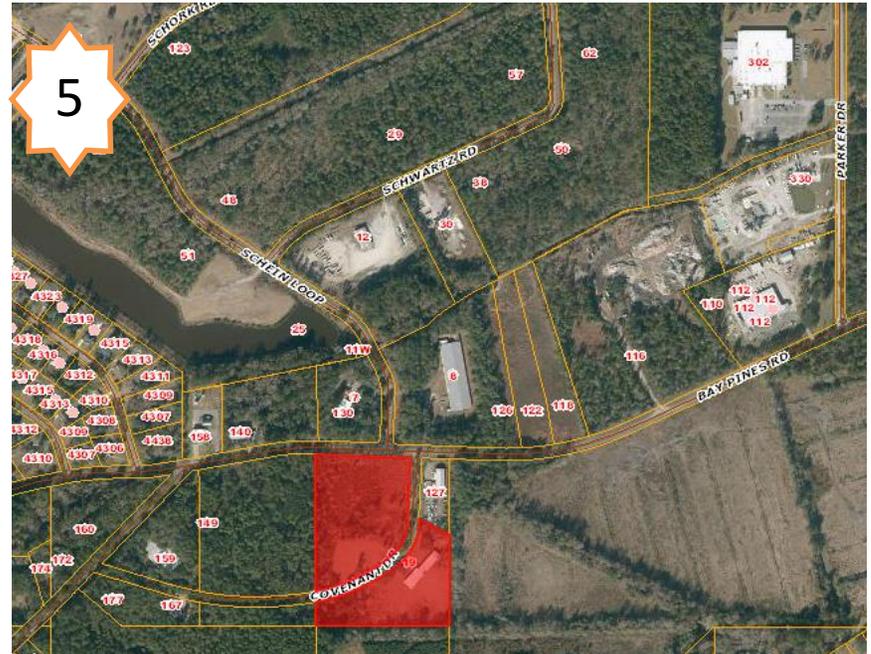
<b>PIN_</b>	<b>Owner1</b>	<b>MailingAdd</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>ZIP</b>
R100 024 000 0244	ADVANCED DUST SOLUTIONS INCORPORATED	16431 FAIRWAY WOODS DR UNIT 105	FORT MYERS	FL	33908-5354
R100 024 000 078C	AMERIS BANK	7915 BAYMEADOWS WAY #300	JACKSONVILLE	FL	32256
R100 024 000 0112	BURTON FIRE DISTRICT COMM	36 BURTON HILL RD	BEAUFORT	SC	29906-4264
R120 024 000 0407 and 0409	CITY OF BEAUFORT (THE)	1911 BOUNDARY ST	Beaufort	SC	29902-3825
R100 024 000 0384	LARSEN MICHAEL K DEBORAH W NEAL SUSA	PO BOX 964	BEAUFORT	SC	29901
R100 024 000 078E	LOUDER MICHAEL	127 BAYPINES RD	BEAUFORT	SC	29906
R100 024 000 078D	LOWEN COMPANY INC	PO BOX 1528	HUTCHINSON	KS	67504-1528
R100 024 000 0262	PBCC HOLDINGS LLC	85 RIVERS HILL RD	BEAUFORT	SC	29906
R100 025 000 099A and 013A	TRASK HAROLD E Jr	8 FIR TREE LN	ASHEVILLE	NC	28803

R100-024-000-078C-0000/AMERIS BANK REZONING  
POSTED SIGNS



**PORT ROYAL ISLAND MAP AMENDMENT/REZONING REQUEST FOR R100-024-000-078C-0000 (12.1 ACRES; AT 19 COVENANT DRIVE, BURTON; LOCATED OFF BAY PINES ROAD, WEST OF PARKER DRIVE AND ACROSS FROM SCHEIN LOOP); POSTING SIGN NOTIFYING PUBLIC OF MAP AMENDMENT/REZONING REQUEST:**

1. FACING PROPERTY ON BAY PINES ROAD
2. EAST OF PROPERTY (TOWARD PARKER DRIVE)
3. (SCHEIN LOOP) ACROSS FROM/NORTH THE PROPERTY
4. WEST OF PROPERTY (TOWARD MROZ ROAD)
5. AERIAL MAP OF (PROPERTY IN RED)



# Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program

---

## Stewardship and Public Use of Rural and Critical Lands



October 2016

Prepared by:  
Lisa Lord  
Ken Driggers  
Beaufort County Open Land Trust  
PO Box 75  
Beaufort, SC 29901  
(843) 521-2175



## Contents

---

▪ <b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
▪ <b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
▪ <b>Community Profile</b>	<b>6</b>
▪ <b>Program History and Management</b>	<b>8</b>
▪ <b>Land Inventory</b>	<b>9</b>
Fee Lands	
Conservation Easements	
▪ <b>Property Management</b>	<b>27</b>
▪ <b>Public Access and Passive Parks</b>	<b>30</b>
▪ <b>Resources for Passive Parks and Property Management</b>	<b>35</b>
▪ <b>Branding and Marketing</b>	<b>40</b>
▪ <b>Opportunities</b>	<b>41</b>
▪ <b>Recommendations</b>	<b>44</b>
▪ <b>Implementation</b>	<b>46</b>
▪ <b>Tables and Maps</b>	<b>47</b>
○ Table1: Fee Property Classifications	
○ Table 2: Property Maintenance	
○ Map 1: Passive Park Map	
○ Map 2: Mid County Recreation and Conservation Area Map	

## Summary

---

Beaufort County has been a frontrunner among local governments in land preservation for over a decade. The forward thinking and innovative Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program (RCLPP or Program) is nationally known for preserving the very landscape which makes the Lowcountry special.

This report, *Stewardship and Public Use of Rural and Critical Lands*, presents a framework for how Beaufort County can allow public access and develop the passive parks while properly managing and maintaining all RCLPP lands. This assessment is a starting point for a comprehensive stewardship and park program, helping to inform early management decisions. It provides guidance for moving the RCLPP into an era of stewardship and complimentary public use, and at the same time recognizes the County has competing needs.

All of the RCLPP properties were evaluated and most physically inspected to assess location, physical characteristics, resources, security issues, and opportunities. The RCLPP properties are variable in size and character and include vistas, islands, maritime forests, planted pine, wetlands, river buffers, agricultural fields, hardwood forests, and parks providing a diversity of uses and purposes.

Operations and maintenance, park development, resources, and opportunities are all discussed in this report. A summary of results from Clemson University's Strom Thurmond Institute public opinion survey is included. This informative survey gathered statistically valid input from the community to understand the relationship between public use and the Program lands.

The opportunities for the RCLPP stewardship program are abundant. Unique opportunities exist including the formation of a mid-County recreation and conservation area, private-public partnerships, and partnerships with willing and organized volunteer groups. With a focused effort, the stewardship program and passive parks can have the same regional and national recognition as the land protection program. Building capacity and assigning responsibility is critical to success. The following are suggested as key recommendations:

- Define roles and responsibilities for staff, volunteers, and Boards to develop and manage the public use of the parks and management of the remaining properties.
- Implement appropriate monitoring and security measures.
- Generate natural resource management plans for all RCLPP lands.
- Draft and implement a Passive Park Plan.
- Develop comprehensive branding and marketing for RCLPP lands.

The evolution of the Program is occurring organically. Well-informed stewardship goals and continued focused on the Program's mission will allow the public to use and enjoy select properties and provide tremendous benefits to the citizens of Beaufort County.

## Introduction

---

Since 1999, Beaufort County has been a frontrunner among local governments across the United States in land preservation. The forward thinking and innovative Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program (RCLPP or Program) is nationally known for preserving the fragile landscape of the South Carolina Lowcountry. Adding to the success of the RCLPP is its support from the public. Four referenda have been approved by Beaufort County voters and more than 73 percent approved funding for the Program in the 2014 referendum.<sup>1</sup> It is time to build on this success and popularity by expanding the Program.

The benefits of open space and parks are well documented. Research shows that parks overwhelmingly enhance the quality of life of citizens, contribute to community health and vibrancy, and promote economic development, tourism, and education.<sup>2</sup> Property values are generally higher when they are next to or near open space and the typical return for every dollar invested in conservation is between \$1-\$4.<sup>3</sup> Many of the RCLPP properties have abundant potential for recreation and use as public parks. Enhanced stewardship continues the voters' environmental mandate to protect the natural resources and quality of life of Beaufort County. Expanded public use furthers the taxpayers return on their investment in the Program.

RCLPP lands have been deemed special by the community. In the recent Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Opinion Survey Report, conducted by Clemson University, 97 percent of the participants felt that conserved lands contributed to their overall quality of life and 86 percent believe conservation lands should be more publically accessible.<sup>4</sup> Properties have been acquired that have scenic views, water access, or historic significance. Proper stewardship of these natural resources is fundamental to property management and the protection of the conservation values of these lands. Giving the public more opportunities to enjoy Rural and Critical lands is a natural evolution of the Program. Citizens can and should enjoy these special places without harming their conservation values.

*Stewardship and Public Use of Rural and Critical Lands* presents a framework for how Beaufort County can begin to move toward allowing public access while properly managing and maintaining all the lands in the RCLPP inventory. While this assessment is a structure for the decision-making process and provides guidance for moving RCLPP into an era of stewardship and complimentary public use, at the same time, it is important to allow for tailoring the Program to the realities and competing needs of the County. Park planning and design is not part of this report. Although that is an equally important process, several steps must occur, to include community needs assessments, to better understand the population the parks will be serving before developing additional park plans.

The preservation mission of the RCLPP is as vital today as ever. Preservation will continue to be a priority in a community expected to grow by 40,000 in the next 15 years. Accommodating this population growth within a fragile and beautiful landscape will be a challenge.

---

<sup>1</sup> South Carolina Election Commission. 2014 Election Results. <http://www.enr-scvotes.org/SC/Beaufort/53431/149204/en/summary.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Trust for Public Land's Guide to Facts & Figures on the Economic Benefits of Land Conservation. 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Based on seven recent studies undertaken by The Trust for Public Land's Conservation Economics Program

<sup>4</sup> Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Opinion Survey Report. Clemson University. 2016.

## Organization

This assessment is broken into four primary sections with additional sections that present recommendations and a strategy for implementing the recommendations.

The first section is an inventory and assessment of current RCLPP lands. Proper stewardship is based upon an understanding of the properties. This information and the categorization of property is important in the consideration of the future use of the properties.

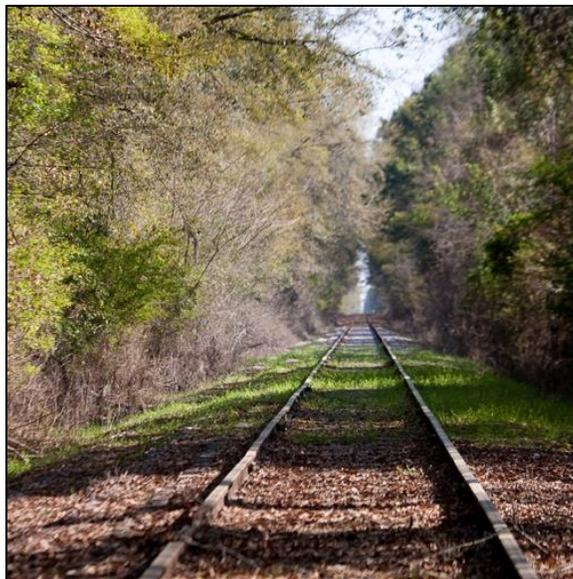
The next section is a property management and operations analysis that outlines how Beaufort County can begin to look at managing and developing the stewardship and public use of the Program lands. Program management, rather than land, is the focus of this section.

The third section explores passive parks specifically — their genesis, evolution, status and resources for operating and maintaining them. Included in this section is a summary of results from the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Opinion Survey Report. The County Planning Department, utilizing the research expertise of Clemson University's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management and the Strom Thurmond Institute, commissioned a public opinion survey to solicit public input. This information is useful to understand the relationship between public demand and passive parks.

The fourth section presents a series of opportunities. The uniqueness of the RCLPP is exciting. Appreciating this uniqueness and exploring possibilities are the focus of this section.

Recommendations are presented in the fifth section. These recommendations propose standards, practices, and procedures for moving the Program towards stewardship and public use.

This last section offers an implementation strategy, which can be amended and improved to reflect Beaufort County's culture and needs and as further discussions occur amongst staff, decision-makers, and the community.



## **Community Profile**

---

### **Beaufort County - Challenge and Change**

The necessity of Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program stems from the interaction of two indisputable facts. The first is that Beaufort County is a place of unique but fragile natural resources. The second fact is that Beaufort County, as does all of the Lowcountry, faces the reality of growth. This combination of sensitive natural resources and rapid growth poses a challenge to Beaufort County: It must strike a balance between its natural legacy and a prosperous future.

### **A Sensitive Environment**

Beaufort County has some of the most scenic and ecologically sensitive land in the United States. The ecological treasure that is the Lowcountry features unique habitats, scenic views and recreational destinations, all of which contribute to quality of life in Beaufort County. Since this lifestyle is a fundamental part of the attraction to Beaufort, protecting this environment is an economic imperative.

The scenic and sensitive resources are varied and numerous. Plant communities bring beauty and definition to the landscape. Lying in the coastal zone, Beaufort County forests includes bottomland hardwoods, pine woodlands, oak-hickory forest, cypress-tupelo and maritime forests. Tree protection ranks high in the community's conservation interests.

Beaufort County has thirty animal and plant species listed as either threatened or endangered.<sup>5</sup> Loss of habitat is the primary cause of species loss. In the fast growing Lowcountry, protecting sufficient habitat to maintain species population levels is difficult.

The almost forty linear miles of beaches are an important mainstay of the tourism economy and are part of the natural environment that make Beaufort County unique. Their dune systems also form the first line of defense against tides and sea level rise, and provide important wildlife habitat.

In the end, the resource that truly defines Beaufort is water. Rivers, estuaries, wetlands and of course, the Atlantic Ocean itself forms the scenic backdrop that makes Beaufort County such a special place. The County consists of 468,000 acres and 51 percent are tidally influenced rivers, creeks or marshes according to Beaufort County's Comprehensive Plan. The quality of these waters has been at the forefront of the Beaufort County conservation efforts for twenty years. Indeed, the Program has focused much of its efforts on buffering the May, Okatie, Broad and other rivers and their watersheds.

### **Rapid Growth**

A visitor to Beaufort County today would be hard pressed to imagine the community two generations ago. The Beaufort of the 1950's featured rural farming communities and fishing villages. The City of Beaufort was a commercial center. Hilton Head had not yet become an incorporated place and nowhere near the world class destination it is today.

Today, the visitor sees a different place. Resort development is predominant on the Sea Islands. Large swaths of land now have sprouted residential development. Beaufort and Port Royal have grown and now

---

<sup>5</sup>US Fish and Wildlife Service South Carolina Field Office.

[http://www.fws.gov/charleston/pdf/Endangered/species\\_by\\_county/beaufort\\_county.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/charleston/pdf/Endangered/species_by_county/beaufort_county.pdf)

attract creative, enviable clientele. The communities south of the Broad River have experienced even more growth and change. Bluffton has grown into a major presence in the Lowcountry and much of its growth now occurs in and around its city limits. Hilton Head is well recognized for its attractions and its own efforts at resource conservation.

The 1980 census placed Beaufort County's population at 65,364. In 2008 the population had grown to 146,743.<sup>6</sup> By 2015, the population had grown to 179,589.<sup>7</sup> By 2030, the population of Beaufort County is expected to be 261,017.<sup>8</sup>

In 2015, the statistical area comprising of Beaufort and Jasper counties had the fourth-fastest growing population along the East Coast.<sup>9</sup> Much of the population climb can be traced to the area's retirement and military communities. Beaufort has long enjoyed a close relationship to the United States Armed Forces with the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort and the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island.

The area's beauty and environment drives its growth as a retirement community. People from around the world visit Beaufort County on vacation or other reasons. Many are so impressed they decide to make their home here.

### **Beaufort County's Comprehensive Plan**

Comprehensive Plans were mandated by the State of South Carolina in 1994 for local governments that regulate land use.<sup>10</sup> Beaufort County's Comprehensive Plan was first adopted in 1997 and was the single most important tool for managing the natural, cultural, economic and fiscal resources of the County in an effective manner in the face of significant growth. The Comprehensive Plan upholds safety and protects the health of the community while also promoting economic prosperity in a sustainable way. Considered a "living document" the Comprehensive Plan is periodically reviewed and updated. It is also a key document that establishes growth boundaries, and provides a framework for growth, while preserving approximately 60 percent of the land base in a rural state or as open space.<sup>11</sup>

A sensitive environment coupled with rapid growth presented a delicate balance for the development of Beaufort County. Economic growth is critical to the economic quality of life of residents, but little tolerance exists for environmental degradation. Maintaining this balance is a key reason for the establishment of the Rural and Critical Preservation Program and why it continues to be an essential element in managing Beaufort County's growth now and into the future.

---

<sup>6</sup> US Census estimate as of July 1, 2008.

<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkml>

<sup>7</sup> US Census estimate as of July 1, 2015. <http://www.census.gov/search-results.html?q=beaufort+County+SC&search.x=0&search.y=0&search=submit&page=1&stateGeo=none&searchtype=web>

<sup>8</sup> SC Department of Employment and Workforce. Community Profile. 2016.

<https://lmi.dew.sc.gov/lmi%20site/Documents/CommunityProfiles/04000013.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau. 2016.

<sup>10</sup> SC Code of Laws. <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t06c029.php>

<sup>11</sup> Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan. 2010.

## **Program History and Management**

---

The County was experiencing unprecedented and widespread county growth in the 1990's, and the anticipated effect was a sharp decline in the quality of life for the citizens of Beaufort County. The environmental impact of rapid growth was perceived as a major detriment to the quality of life along with the associated negative effects of traffic on highways and bridges.

With its genesis rising out of the first Comprehensive Plan, the RCLPP became a partial answer to the growth pressure, and in 2002 the first bond referendum for \$40 million to fund land purchases was put before the citizens of Beaufort County. It passed with tremendous support. Three additional referenda followed in the next 15 years. These were the 2006 referendum for \$50 million to fund land purchases; the 2012 referendum for \$25 million to fund land purchases and park improvements (not to exceed 20 percent of the borrowed amount); and the 2014 referendum for \$20 million to fund land purchases and park improvements (not to exceed 20 percent of the borrowed amount). As a result, more than 23,500 acres of land either in fee purchase or conservation easements have been protected through the Program.

### **Management of the Program**

Upon the establishment of the Program, County Council created the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Board (RCLPB) to oversee implementation. The Board is comprised of one member from each of the 11 County Districts. Board members are nominated by the Council member in their district and approved by County Council. Each member serves a term of four years and can seek reappointment by his or her respective Council member. This Board was assigned specific advisory powers, duties, and responsibilities for their role in the Program which at the time of this report does not include parks. Resolution 2014/1 does allow for the creation of a 5-member Passive Park Advisory Body with specific expertise in land development, engineering, and/or conservation, but it has not yet been implemented.<sup>12</sup>

The Planning Staff advises the Board in matters of policy-making and in the realm of making recommendations to County Council. The Program is currently administered by the Beaufort County Open Land Trust (BCOLT) which has a contractual agreement with the County and works on behalf of the County to identify and investigate candidates for conservation, negotiate the purchase of land, and bring potential purchases forward for consideration by the RCLPB.

When the Program began, the emphasis was on protecting land during rapid growth, not on the management and utilization of properties as parks. Rarely were properties purchased for the specific purpose of becoming parks, but it was always understood that at some time in the future some properties would be accessible to the public as passive parks and that the management of those parks and the remaining property would need further consideration. With more than 23,500 acres of land in the RCLPP inventory, over 11,000 of which held in fee simple by the County in whole or in part, it has become an imperative to determine the steps toward passive park development and operations and the management of the remaining fee lands.

---

<sup>12</sup> Resolution 2014/1 <http://www.bcgov.net/archives/county-government/administration/resolutions/2014/01.pdf>

## Land Inventory

Each property the County owns has unique ecological, historical, or cultural values important to the County. These were evaluated prior to purchase and the purchase of the properties confirmed the importance of those values. At the end of the first quarter in 2016, the RCLPP protected more than 23,500 acres, with more than 11,000 acres protected through fee simple purchase, and 12,400 acres protected via conservation easements.

A comprehensive inventory to gather additional information about the assets of the County was a critical next step to the park and management decision-making process. The land inventory provides a launching pad for early management decisions and reveals opportunities for a variety of uses including forest management, agriculture, ecotourism, and passive recreation. The RCLPP lands were inspected on the ground and then evaluated using GIS data layers, existing baseline documentation, and surveys to better assess location, physical characteristics, existing restrictions, security issues, resources, and opportunities.

As an overview of the tremendous assets, the Program lands include<sup>13</sup>:

- **394 acres of maritime forest**
- **8,790 acres of wetlands**
- **6,507 acres of forests**
- **1,703 acres of working farmland on St. Helena**
- **8,000 acres in the ACE Basin**
- **645 acres in the Okatie River watershed**
- **725 acres in the Chechessee watershed**
- **3,608 acres buffering the Marine Corps Air Station-Beaufort**
- **25 sites that are habitats for 14 different rare, threatened or endangered species**
- **52 islands or hummocks that have been protected for a total of 2,119 acres**
- **84 archaeological sites and 21 historic structures have been preserved**

The RCLPP properties are highly variable in size and character and include vistas, islands, maritime forests, planted/naturally regenerated pine, freshwater wetlands, river buffers, agricultural fields, hardwood forests, and parks. Size does not constitute conservation value or program value. North Williman Island, consisting of 8,000 acres is the largest property protected through the Program, but several properties, particularly the scenic vistas, are less than one acre. Nonetheless, they are of high importance to the community and environment.

Most fee lands are solely owned by the County, but several are jointly owned with another entity, commonly another municipality, BCOLT, and even the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Joint

<sup>13</sup> ArcGIS analysis by Beaufort County Open Land Trust. Analysis is an approximation based on available GIS data. 2016.

ownership is an asset to the County, often bringing resources to bear to manage and maintain the property. In some cases, the Partnership agreement dictates how and when the property can be utilized.

### **Land Classification System**

One of the most critical first steps to any Stewardship Program is having a firm understanding of the property owned and its assets. In 2011, RCLPP Staff and Board produced a land classification system for this purpose which has been revised several times over the last five years, Current classifications are listed in Table 1.<sup>14</sup> This classification system is a snapshot of the fee land in the RCLPP, categorizing property into four types of fee land. The system was not intended to be a recommendation for a specific property use or intensity of use, but provides an initial indicator of what the property could accommodate as far as use.

## **Fee Land**

### **Fee Land Definitions**

As a reference, the Beaufort County Community Development Code defines the following:<sup>15</sup>

Passive Recreation: Recreation requiring little or no physical exertion focusing on the enjoyment of one's natural surroundings. In determining appropriate recreational uses of passive parks, the promotion and development of resource-based activities such as fishing, camping, hunting, boating, gardening, bicycling, nature studies, horse-back riding, visiting historic sites, hiking, etc., shall be the predominate measure for passive park utilization.

Regional Park: An open space of at least 75 acres available for structured and unstructured recreation

Pocket Park: A small open space available for informal activities in close proximity to neighborhood residences

---

<sup>14</sup> The categorization system began as a result of the 2011 RCLPP Board retreat. Last refined in 2016.

<http://bcgov.net/departments/administrative/beaufort-county-council/boards-and-commissions/council-appointed/board-list/rural-and-critical-lands-preservation-board/minutes/2011/041411.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Beaufort County Community Development Code. Article 10 Definitions. <http://www.bcgov.net/departments/Planning-and-Development/planning/cdc/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Article-10-04-08-16.pdf>

## Category 1: Passive Parks

Property Name	Acres	Habitat	Classification
*Crystal Lake Park	24.79	uplands/pond/wetlands	Passive Park (1)
*Fort Fremont	16.984	uplands/beach	Passive Park (1)
Okatie Marsh	97.700	uplands/marsh/wetlands	Passive Park (1)
*Altamaha	100.07	uplands/river view	Passive Park (1), Special Resource Site (3)
*Factory Creek	1	uplands/dock	Passive Park (1), Open Space (4)
Pinckney Point	229.18	uplands/ wetlands	Passive Park (1), Open Space (4)
Widgeon Point	162.24	uplands/hummock/wetlands	Passive Park (1)
Duncan	79	uplands/open fields	Passive Park (1)
New Riverside	759.31	uplands/wetlands	Passive Park (1)
Garvey Hall	87.170	uplands/wetlands	Passive Park (1)
**Ihly Farms	63.07	uplands/wetlands	Passive Park (1)
**McLeod Farms	90	uplands/wetlands	Passive Park (1)
Graves	18	upland buffer	Passive Park (1)
Bluffton Park	9.65	uplands/wetlands	Passive Park (1)

\*Currently open to the public

\*\*Department of Defense Restrictive Easements granted

### Park Phases

The natural evolution of the Program has determined the order of bringing parks “online”. Typically, the emergence of a theme and the presence of community volunteers, in the absence of a park plan and a funding stream for operations and maintenance, determined the development of the parks. This process is described further detail later in this assessment Taking into account the parks that are already being developed, and the characteristics and opportunities that presented during the land inventory investigation, the existing park properties (Category 1) are phased below. This is a suggestion for how a passive park plan could be prioritized.

#### Phase One

Several properties are open or in the late planning stages as passive parks including Crystal Lake, Fort Fremont, Altamaha, Factory Creek Park, and Okatie Marsh (Map 1). The location, natural resources or the nature of the relationships between the land, private-public ventures, and partners or Friends groups allowed forward momentum leading to park development.

### **Crystal Lake**

Crystal Lake provides a natural retreat from its urban surroundings with forested trails, boardwalk over the salt marsh, and scenic view of Crystal Lake. The property includes valuable wildlife habitat, especially bird foraging and roosting habitat in a highly urbanized area. Located on Lady's Island, the park will be a 25-acre "ecohub" for conservation activity in Beaufort County in partnership with the Friends of Crystal Lake, many of whom are master gardeners and master naturalists.



Park construction is now underway. The center of activity for the property will be the renovated Butler marine building which will provide office space for several local conservation groups including the Soil and Water Conservation District and BCOLT. These groups will help with the oversight of the property. The building will also provide meeting space and will be easily accessible for local school groups. In addition to the "green" building, there will also be a covered walkway and butterfly and rain garden installed.

### **Fort Fremont**

Located on Penn Center Road on the southwestern end of St. Helena Island, Fort Fremont is a passive park with a historic theme. It is perhaps the best example of use for historic tourism. In a 2013 tourism study conducted by Regional Transactions, Concepts LLC that estimated the impact of tourism spending in Beaufort County, it was determined that there were 174,535 visitors to Beaufort, Port Royal Island and St. Helena, which does not even include visits to Hunting Island.<sup>16</sup> This means there is an incredible opportunity for Fort Fremont to attract visitors.

The Fort itself was built in 1898 to defend the Port Royal Sound, during the outbreak of the Spanish-American War.<sup>17</sup> The property was acquired by the Program with plans to restore the overgrown and rapidly deteriorating property. The County Planning staff works in partnership with the Friends of Fort Fremont to maintain the site, and together, they are developing plans for the park that will include a historic interpretive center and park pavilion. The Friends are currently leading historic tours and have even raised funds to build their own diorama of the Fort.

### **Okatie Marsh (aka Prichard's Point)**

Okatie Marsh borders the Okatie River, contributing to the County's decade long efforts to protect the Okatie River from further degradation. The property is the northernmost tract of a series of three tracts that were designated to become Planned Unit Developments (PUD). The Program purchased this tract and its anticipated development was stopped.

A new animal control facility is being constructed between the preserved property and Highway 170. This quickly helped a park theme emerge, creating an incredible opportunity for people to walk the trails and spend quality time with their new prospective



<sup>16</sup> [http://www.beaufortsc.org/media/images/2013\\_Beaufort\\_Co\\_Tourism\\_report\\_092514.pdf](http://www.beaufortsc.org/media/images/2013_Beaufort_Co_Tourism_report_092514.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Friends of Fort Fremont. <http://fortfremont.org/history.html>

pet. As part of the development plan it is likely that the developer of the adjacent PUD will contribute to or pay for the development of the park. The Engineering Department is currently working on master planning. A number of structures including a dilapidated house, Quonset hut and sheds will need to be removed before allowing public access.

The property includes maritime forest, which grades into planted loblolly pine as the property nears the river. An interesting and unusual feature is an eastern red cedar allée along Pritchard's Point Road. Okatie Marsh also contains harvestable timber. A well-planned forest thinning will improve the ecological health of the property, improve aesthetics, reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire, allow trails construction with significantly less cost and effort, and generate revenue. This property also contains large and attractive live oaks that are under pressure from dense pine trees.

### **Altamaha Town Heritage Preserve**

Altamaha is the site of significant archeological and historical Indian artifacts dating back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>18</sup> Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 100-acre site was the home of the Yemassee tribe chief and contains two burial mounds and other artifacts.<sup>19</sup>

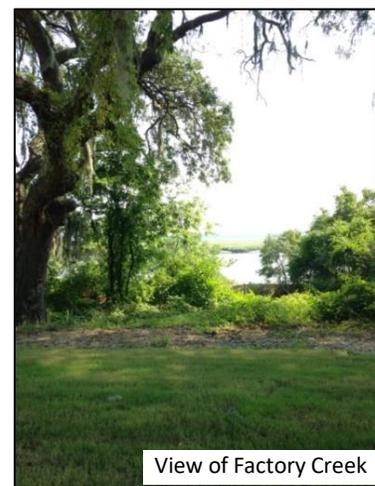
The property can be accessed from Old Bailey's Road. The only existing improvements include an interpretive sign, picnic tables, and a small dirt parking lot. A single road, open only to hikers on foot, traverses the property emerging from an oak hickory forest to a scenic vista overlooking the Okatie and Colleton Rivers. Along with Fort Fremont, this is probably the best representation of historic preservation by the Program.

Altamaha is jointly owned with the Department of Natural Resources which cost shared in the purchase. A document associated with the deed restricts the activities and uses of the property. Because of the importance of the artifacts, public access to the property has been kept to a minimum until proper staffing is put in place and no plans are currently in place for additional park development. If properly secured, this property could be the highlight of a Native American Heritage Trail in Beaufort County.

### **Factory Creek Park**

Factory Creek Park is a small pocket park located at the base of the Woods Memorial Bridge on Lady's Island. After the removal of several buildings, the site offers a beautiful vista and green space in an urban area. Factory Creek Park contains a dock maintained by the County, a small parking area, and green space for dog walking, observing the water, birdwatching.

Factory Creek Park is jointly owned by the County and BCOLT. The land trust assumes all of the responsibility for the maintenance of the property with the exception of the fishing dock. A Joint Ownership Agreement is in place that defines the role and responsibility of each party.



View of Factory Creek

<sup>18</sup> SC Department of Natural Resources. [https://www.dnr.sc.gov/mlands/managedland?p\\_id=25](https://www.dnr.sc.gov/mlands/managedland?p_id=25)

<sup>19</sup> South Carolina Department of Archives and History. <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/beaufort/S10817707054/index.htm>

## Phase Two

### Widgeon Point Preserve

Located on Lemon Island, Widgeon Point Preserve is ideally located, equidistant from southern and northern Beaufort County. Beaufort County Open Land Trust is a 1/8 owner and active partner, and through a management agreement with the County, takes the lead for maintenance and operations.

The preserve was once a family horse farm. The land trust worked with volunteers to remove debris and old barbed wire fencing and with a group of master naturalists to design and build rudimentary trails and conduct a prescribed fire. BCOLT works with community groups such as the Port Royal Sound Foundation, Master Naturalists, and The Center for Birds of Prey to conduct bird and nature walks.



Jack Greenshields, Master Naturalist

The land trust renovated the existing barn on the property and the trust rents for events and weddings to offset the cost of property maintenance. Several years ago architect Rob Montgomery drafted a conceptual park plan, but the plan requires further refinement. BCOLT is a willing partner and would like to see this park moved from conceptual planning to implementation.

### Duncan Farms

This 80-acre property in northern Beaufort County has an agricultural history and is in an area of the County with abundant rural land, but much of it is privately owned and it is increasingly under the threat of sprawl. This park requires the development of an identity or theme. This property is in immediate need of a maintenance plan so the fields do not revert with woody vegetation.

Throughout the country, the local food movement has been increasing and Beaufort County has many active farms. Duncan Farms is an opportunity to create an agricultural node for education and interpretation. With its history and location, the property could be an ideal incubator farm for young farmers and earn revenue toward property maintenance. Development into working farmland could be an excellent partnership with the USDA, NRCS, Clemson Extension and local colleges. Greenhouses, honey bees, and other agricultural elements could also be incorporated into the site. Nemours Wildlife Foundation has offered to be a partner in this effort and to form a local task force to explore opportunities. They have a keen interest in teaching local school children about the outdoors, forestry, and farming. Duncan Farms is also close to Whale Branch Middle School.

### New Riverside/Garvey Hall

This 760-acre property has nearly \$900,000 of restricted Program funds attached to it for park development. The Planning Department has had preliminary conversations about the park, but beyond hiking and walking trails, a theme is yet to emerge. The Palmetto Bluff residents have offered to play an active role in park development and would be an asset in creating a park theme.



View of the New River

As one of the largest properties in the RCLPP inventory, it makes an idyllic park. Most of the property is wet and consists of impounded rice fields, making access difficult. These rice fields may offer an opportunity for environmental mitigation through restoration. This opportunity should be explored.

To allow public access to the property, an entrance road will need to be constructed from New River Parkway. The property offers the prospect for extended walking or even biking trails and kayaking, among other activities. And, if any RCL property would be suitable for rental cabins and camping, this is it. A comparable property is CawCaw Interpretive Center in Ravenel, which is owned and operated by Charleston County PRC.

Garvey Hall, approximately 87-acres, is another large tract close to New Riverside. Although not connected, these properties are so close they essentially should be considered together as one regional park. Connectivity between these properties should be explored along with the acquisition of connecting properties or access easements. Because of its location, Garvey Hall is easily accessible and this could be a better location for an interpretive building, entrance gate, and check-in for visitors. Access to the New River by kayak is ideally located and accessible from this property.



### **Pinckney Point Park**

Pinckney Point, between the Colleton and Okatie Rivers, is ecologically sensitive and is a candidate for ecological restoration. The property consists of open, fallow fields with some naturally regenerating pine. A caretaker lives on the property.

Agriculture and forestry would both be appropriate for this site. Longleaf pine restoration would benefit the health of the property, create an excellent education opportunity, and the timber could be a source of future revenue. Many grant and cost-sharing opportunities exist for longleaf pine restoration. Given the time it requires to establish a healthy and harvestable forest, planting now is ideal, and public access plans can be developed in the future.



Commissioned by the Trust for Public Land, a park plan was drafted by Jim Tiller several years ago, which should be revisited as part of creating any new plans. Another approach is the concept of a native species arboretum if done in a way that protects the natural resources and is an educational tool. An arboretum can be an incredible balance of natural landscapes and cultivated spaces and are popular tourist destinations.

### Phase Three

The following properties have the potential to be passive parks, but there are no plans at this time to develop them.

#### Ihly Farm

Ihly Farm, in northern Beaufort County on deep water with 700 feet of frontage on McCalleys Creek, is a perfect location for a boat landing. The access to deep water could be useful for mariculture projects and leasing of the dock space for that purpose. Maritime forest and salt marsh comprise the northern property boundary. The property also contains approximately 30 acres of open fields and a pecan grove centrally located within the interior of the tract. There are 8-acres of wetlands with two isolated wetland ponds. Forest types include both mesic and upland mixed-hardwood pine and management for forest health can generate timber revenue.



Beaufort County granted a restrictive easement to the Department of Defense restrictive easement, but it does allow for management and some public access.

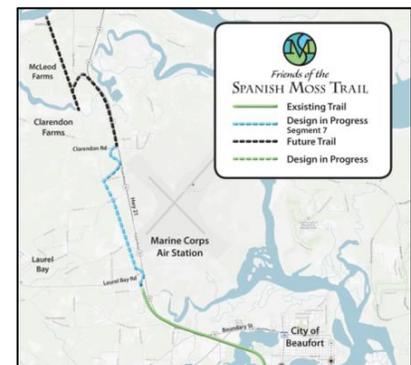
#### McLeod

The McLeod property in northern Beaufort County contains maritime forests and salt marsh associated with the Whale Branch River. Although the interior of the property is unmanaged, views of the water are extremely picturesque. An agricultural field is open in the middle of the property.

A portion of the McLeod property is designated to be included in the route for the Spanish Moss Trail, which begins in the Town of Port Royal and parallels Hwy 21 through the northern part of Beaufort County. Access is currently through a gate with access controlled by Santee Cooper. The rail trail provides some walkable access, but for permanent access bridges would need to be constructed over the existing ditches.



Beaufort County also granted a restrictive easement to the Department of Defense on this property, but the easement allows for a passive park with some limitations. Restrictions are described in detail in the easement document.



## Graves

The Graves property is an 18-acre linear buffer on the Okatie River. There is a small house and barn on the property and a dock which could provide access to the water for fishing or wildlife watching. Park infrastructure should be limited or contain minimal impervious surface because of the impact to the Okatie River



Horse Barn and House



View of the Okatie River and dock

**Bluffton Park** is co-owned by the County and the Town of Bluffton. The property is almost entirely composed of wetlands and was purchased to address drainage issues that would have been created through development. Since the property is adjacent to Red Cedar Elementary School, the Town has a strong desire to build boardwalks through the property and classroom space, but funds are not available at this time. The Town of Bluffton inspects the property and maintains the drainage flowing through the property to the north.

## **Category 2: Recreational/Special Use**

Recreational or Special Use properties are the most active and impacted properties in the RCLPP inventory and have the potential to withstand higher impact and use. This subset of properties includes well-used parks and land adjacent to boat landings. They also include places for people to gather to learn about historic or traditional uses of the water or provide access to it. There is an important economic element to these properties and their use.

Property Name	Acres	Habitat	Classification
Okatie Regional Preserve	186.62	uplands/marsh/wetlands	Recreational Property (2)
*Greens Shell Park (Davis Tract)	3.3	Uplands/park/existing infrastructure	Recreational Property (2)
*+Oyster Factory Park	9.06	uplands/boat landing/existing infrastructure	Recreational Property (2)
*Pinckney Colony Park	38.21	uplands/wetlands/park/existing infrastructure	Recreational Property (2)
Keyserling (Fort Frederick)	2.58	upland/river view	Recreational Property (2)
+Jones Landing (Buddy and Zoo Boat Landing)	4.56	uplands/adjacent to boat landing	Recreational Property (2)
+Barringer	1.78	uplands/wetlands	Recreational Property (2)

\*Maintained by Parks and Leisure Services (PALS)

+Boat Landing on or adjacent to property

### **Okatie Regional Preserve**

The County Planning staff has been actively developing a 119-acre equestrian-themed park, located on the Okatie River within the Town of Bluffton, known as the Okatie Regional Preserve. The Planning Department estimates this park will provide 23 percent of the projected need for passive parks in this area of the County. The property consists of maritime forest, wetlands, salt marsh, and mixed-hardwood pine forests.

Once developed, this park will have the facilities to provide equine-assisted therapeutic activities for individuals in the Lowcountry with physical, mental or emotional disabilities. A private partner will be brought in to manage this program on behalf of the County. Heroes on Horseback has been a partner assisting with design elements. The development of this park is a prime example of leveraging resources, making the most of a public-private partnership and maintaining the conservation values of the property. The park plan even includes a manure management plan. Trails will run throughout the property for both horses and people.



### **Greens Shell Park** (aka Davis Tract)

This 3-acre property on Squire Pope Road was jointly purchased by the Town of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County. Amenities on the property include an observation deck, playground, picnic pavilion, restrooms, and basketball court. It is one of the more intensely developed sites in the RCLPP inventory, but it should be noted that although this is considered a RCLPP property, it was purchased with funds prior to the first referendum. It is currently maintained by Beaufort County Parks and Leisure Services (PALS).

### **Oyster Factory Park**

Oyster Factory Park is well used by visitors and the local community to access the May River and is a site for special events and functions. Because of its convenient location in the heart of Bluffton on the May River, it offers the community an opportunity to use and enjoy this unique local resource. Oyster Factory Park connects the community to Bluffton's historic oystering past, preserves a beautiful bluff providing a buffer from the residential and commercial development occurring in the surrounding community.

The Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County have a Memorandum of Agreement in place and the Town recently took over management of the park.

Structures include signage, wooden fences, a short nature trail through the wooded area, two designated parking lots, Garvin House (in need of renovation), open air pavilion, restrooms, an oyster roast area with tables, and benches. WiFi is also available.



BCOLT holds a conservation easement on two of the Oyster Factory Park parcels. Because of ambiguous language in the original easement, the conservation easement was amended in 2015 to clarify the uses of the property. The amendment included the 2015 Master Plan map and further defines the structures that are permitted by the terms of the easement.

### **Pinckney Colony Park**

Pinckney Colony Park is a 38-acre park at the corner of Pinckney Colony Road and Highway 278. Most of the property is wetlands, but the upland area has a picnic space with tables and trash cans. A storm water pond was recently constructed on the property. Improvements to the parking area would be beneficial. PALS are currently responsible for property maintenance.

### **Fort Frederick (access parcels)**

Fort Frederick is a 3-acre DNR Heritage Preserve on the Beaufort River in the Town of Port Royal, owned and managed by the Department of Natural Resources. The Fort is of historical importance and believed to be the oldest tabby structure in South Carolina and SCDNR arranges tours of the property on occasion. The Program purchased land adjacent to Fort Frederick to help provide access to the heritage preserve. No maintenance is currently needed or infrastructure warranted.

Two properties are available for overflow parking and are adjacent to boat landings:

Located on Saint Helena Island off on Station Creek Drive, **Buddy and Zoo Boat Landing** is a widely used boat landing. The RCLPP property is adjacent to the landing and is used for overflow parking. The existing house on the property is used by the Sherriff's office as a satellite office location.

The **Barringer** tract is open space next to the Eddings Point Landing. It provides access to Jenkins Creek and Morgan River.

### Category 3: Special Resource Sites

Special Resource sites are properties that are environmentally sensitive and for that reason, not the best candidates for parks. These properties are of inappropriate size, locale or have high environmental sensitivity. More appropriately, they are candidates for natural resource management or a “hands off” approach.

Property Name	Acres	Habitat	Classification
**Lucky	70.41	uplands	Special Resource Site (3)
**Adams	57.17	uplands/wetlands	Special Resource Site (3)
**Battey/Wilson	63.46	uplands/wetlands	Special Resource Site (3)
Barrell Landing	49.08	uplands	Special Resource Site (3)
Baxter Associates	25.29	uplands/marsh	Special Resource Site (3)
Manigault Neck (multiple tracts)	222	upland/marsh/wetlands	Special Resource Site (3)
Mitchellville Beach Property	20	beach/marsh/wetlands	Special Resource Site (3)
Stoney Preserve (Aranda, Jarvis Creek)	8.109	uplands/marsh	Special Resource Site (3)
Ford Shell Ring	6.885	uplands	Special Resource Site (3)

\*\*\*\*Department of Defense Restrictive Easements granted

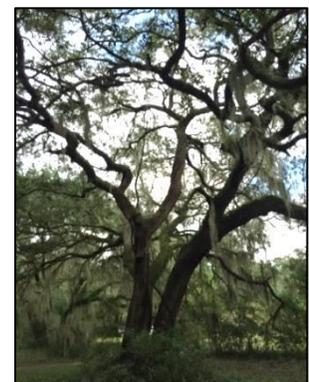
#### Lucky, Adams, and Battey/Wilson

The Lucky, Adams and Battey/Wilson properties are encumbered with Department of Defense (DOD) restrictive easements. Through the Readiness and Environmental Integration Initiative (REPI), the DOD contributed to the purchase and received a restrictive easement limiting the property uses.

The 70 acre **Lucky** property is adjacent to Ihly Farms and the Lucky tract is a natural expansion. It is very attractive with open wildflower meadows and grand live oak trees. A 1.5 acre pond and fields with an array of warm season grasses and native wildflowers are found in the interior. This would make an excellent property for agricultural activities. Some of the property is comprised of mesic forest associated with a wetland drain. Several stands of loblolly pine exist, which have been planted or naturally regenerated.



The primary management concern on the Lucky property is the tenant living on the property. (Pictured right) There is significant dumping and trash piled up around the house that has created a nuisance. The County has allowed this individual to live on the property who has not



cared for the property in the correct way. The tenant should be paying rent and adhere to very specific maintenance guidelines. A Use/Tenant Policy needs to be developed for all County properties with tenants or caretakers that live on property.

The **Adams** and **Batthey/Wilson** properties are both ideal for managing timber so they remain ecologically healthy while generating revenue. They are substantial in size and already are comprised of harvestable forests. Because of their location and restrictions, they are not recommended for passive park development. Neither property has a good road system or existing infrastructure to make them accessible at this time.

The Adams tract is adjacent to several other protected conservation easement properties including the Pulaski and Moody tracts. Most of the property is upland forest (approximately 57 acres). Two wetland drains traverse the tract, comprising 16 acres of wetlands.

The Batthey-Wilson tract, located in northern Lady's Island, is just over 60 acres. This property contains mixed pine-hardwood, mostly naturally regenerated, that grades into maritime forest and eventually the marshes of Broomfield Creek. Access is from Eugene Drive, but currently there are no improved roads or trails onto the property. The property is in close proximity to Jack Island where bald eagle nests have been identified.

#### **Barrell Landing, Baxter Tract**

Barrell Landing (multiple tracts) and the Baxter tract are both properties that Program purchased as part of a larger effort to prevent the Okatie River from further decline. Neither of these properties has adequate access or parking. They have limited water access and their small size makes them inappropriate for trails. Barrell Landing is comprised primarily of planted pine and to improve the health of the property as well as reduce the fuel load and fire hazard, the timber on the property should be harvested. A stormwater pond was also recently constructed on Barrell Landing.

#### **Manigault Neck (4 tracts)**

This assemblage of four properties totaling 222 acres is not planned for passive park development although its size, location, and aesthetic beauty should warrant such consideration. A simple approach would be to construct a kiosk at a small parking area on Callawassie Drive, along with a walking trail and boardwalk for views and access to Chechessee Creek. Because these properties are along Highway 170 and are so close to Widgeon Point, it probably would not be a good use of resources to "build out" both properties.

All of the properties purchased by the RCLPP from Widgeon Point to Okatie Regional Preserve form a significant rural greenbelt or greenway between northern and southern Beaufort County, creating connectivity and wildlife habitat corridors (Map 2). This is the greatest opportunity in the County to create a big picture approach to ecotourism by connecting these mid-county properties together. With a coordinated branding and marketing effort of a Mid-County Recreation and Conservation Area, this corridor could be a highly visited attraction.

#### **Mitchelville (Pawley)**

The Mitchelville property is a 20-acre parcel of undeveloped beach property which is unusual for Hilton Head Island. The property is ecologically sensitive and consists of four unique habitat types ascending from the beach to the maritime forest



Deer rub

uplands. It is also a refuge for wildlife species that have limited space in this highly urban environment.

The property is subject to dumping including couch cushions, concrete blocks, and miscellaneous contractor materials. Trash and litter are scattered throughout the tract. An ungated pull-off makes it convenient for improper use. This property is in need of gates, signage, and regular monitoring, not only by the Sherriff's office, but also by public works. The existing trash needs to be removed because it only serves to encourage more dumping.

### **Stoney Preserve (Aranda, Jarvis Creek)**

Stoney Preserve is consists of multiple tracts with 50/50 shared ownership between the Town of Hilton Head Island and County. The Town maintains the property which is situated off of a busy road and bike trail.

The property has a picturesque view of Jarvis Creek with an open area used occasionally for picnicking. Signage would be helpful to deter the dumping/littering that is occurring.



### **Ford Shell Ring**

The Ford Shell ring tract is also jointly owned by the Town of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County. There is no parking and limited access. Because of the sensitivity of the property, it is ideal for a “hands off” approach.

## **Category 4: Open Space**

These properties, because of their size or location, are primarily open or green space with low probability they will ever be developed as parks. Many of these properties are islands purchased in the early years of the Program before the first referendum. Vistas and scenic view sheds also fall into this category.

Property Name	Acres	Habitat	Classification
Charlotte Island	34.69	islands	Open Space (4)
Palm, Murdaugh, Legare Islands	24.24	islands	Open Space (4)
North Williman Island	8,000	islands	Open Space (4)
Buzzard Island	120	islands	Open Space (4)
AMGRAY Donation	20.78	uplands	Open Space (4)
McDowell Hummocks	3.96	islands	Open Space (4)
The Green	1.057	uplands	Open Space (4), Passive Park (1)
Beach City Road Lots	7.287	uplands	Open Space (4)
Amber Karr/ Broad River Drive	12.55	uplands/marsh/hummocks	Open Space (4)
Shell Point	11.92	uplands/wetlands	Open Space (4)
4P	3.92	hummock	Open Space (4)

### **Charlotte, Palm, Murdaugh, Legare, Buzzards Islands, McDowell Hummocks**

Charlotte, Palm, Murdaugh, and Legare, were all purchased prior to the first RCLPP referendum and Buzzard Island was purchased shortly thereafter. These properties are used by locals to hunt and camp without permission, but the County has not opened these up for official use. As some point in the future, it would be a great ecotourism opportunity and revenue generator to create a fish camp, very similar to the system of the state parks. There are no public opportunities like this available in Beaufort County at this time.

### **North Williman Island**

North Williman Island is just over 8,000 acres and is the largest property in the RCLPP inventory. Beaufort County is a co-owner (1/4) with the SC Department of Natural Resources (3/4). The sheer size of this island presents a wonderful opportunity to manage this property as a Wildlife Management Area, similar to Victoria Bluff Heritage Preserve/WMA. To get this type of opportunity structured would require staff time working with DNR to determine what would be required. For now, this property is monitored by both DNR and the Sheriff's office.

### **AMGRAY Donation**

The AMGRAY donation is mostly wetlands with an elevated rail bed transecting the property. It is located in an area that needs regular monitoring by the Sheriff's office. Beaufort County may or may not be the best perpetual owner of this property.

### **McDowell Hummocks**

These very small hummocks are best managed as open space. They are difficult to access but are occasionally used as a fish camp.

### **The Green**

A conservation easement was granted in 2007 on the eastern parcel of The Green. It was conserved as open space and restricted from any improvements. Later in 2010, the property (both eastern and western parcels) was purchased after a large fundraising campaign by BCOLT and with funds from the RCLPP.

A management agreement was signed between BCOLT and Beaufort County that outlines responsibilities and use. The City of Beaufort helps to maintain the property.



### **Beach City Road lots**

The Beach City Road lots were purchased jointly with the Town of Hilton Head Island to provide a buffer and protect Fish Haul Park. Each parcel is located within the historic footprint of Mitchelville, the first Freedman village in the post-Civil War South. The Town of Hilton Head maintains these tracts.

### **Amber Karr**

Located off of Broad River Drive, this is one of the more unusual RCLPP purchases because of its location. This was part of a larger project with other adjacent parcels. The other purchases fell through, and, programmatically it doesn't make sense to retain, but fortunately it does create a pleasant buffer and

preserves wildlife habitat. Access between two driveways is difficult, so it is not likely a park could ever be developed.

### **Shell Point**

Shell Point was purchased to stop additional residential development in a highly developed area. The 11 acre property contains both jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional wetlands and preservation prevents the exacerbation of stormwater issues. For the time being, this property should remain as open space.

### **4P**

The 4P property is a small hummock on Highway 170 near Lemon Island. Protecting this property continued the rural land protection in this greenway.

## **Conservation Easements**

The RCLPP also protects land through the purchase of development rights via a conservation easement. Conservation easements are proactive tools used to protect rural land, thereby preserving natural resources and reducing incompatible development. The RCLPP goals are compatible with local, state, and federal partners and frequently those partners, including the Marine Corps Air Station, USDA NRCS, and local municipalities participated in the purchase of conservation easements.

Many of these properties continue to be active farms or working lands contributing to the local economy and remain privately owned. Most of the conservation easements are held by BCOLT, a qualified organization, which annually monitors these easements. A few easements are held by Beaufort County itself.

Annual monitoring is a very important part of an easement program. Landowners receive payment or accept tax benefits in exchange for the easement donation and the qualified organization that holds the easement has a duty to ensure no abuses are occurring. Landowners should be held to the agreements they have signed. Monitoring should be completed by a trained individual who understands the conservation easement document terms. The IRS guidelines for conservation easement compliance:

The organization must have the commitment to protect the conservation purposes of the donation and resources to enforce the restrictions of the conservation easement. Treas. Reg. § 1.170A-14(c)(1).

Organizations that accept easement contributions and are committed to conservation will generally have an established monitoring program such as annual property inspections to ensure compliance with the conservation easement terms and to protect the easement in perpetuity.

The organization must also have the resources to enforce the restrictions of the conservation easement. Resources do not necessarily mean cash. Resources may be in the form of volunteer services such as lawyers who provide legal services or people who inspect and prepare monitoring reports.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Conservation-Easement-Audit-Techniques-Guide>

BCOLT also has a strict enforcement policy for easement violations. Beaufort County should draft and adopt such a policy for reporting and remedying easement violations.

### Conservation Easements

Property Name	Acres	Grantee	Additional Grantee/Co-holder
Lemon Island	380.27	Beaufort Co.	
Winn Tract	68.910	Beaufort Co.	USDOD
Penn Center (Tree Farm)	195.411	Beaufort Co.	USDA/NRCS
Lucky (MCAS)	70.410	Beaufort Co.	USDOD
Seabrook Road Donation	14.880	Beaufort Co.	
Ulmer CE	449.000	BCOLT	
Ulmer #2	127.410	BCOLT	
Ulmer #3	53.190	BCOLT	
Norman Jones Farm	92.000	BCOLT	USDA/NRCS
Sanders Property	158.820	BCOLT	
McLeod Farms	400.000	BCOLT	USDOD
Chisolm Plantation	4717.500	BCOLT	
Crosby/Pepperhall	17.120	BCOLT	
Ulmer #4	257.869	BCOLT	
Oak Mulligan	157.190	BCOLT	USDOD
Trosdal/May River	50.681	BCOLT	
Palmer	30.000	BCOLT	
Sanders (Okatie)	47.438	BCOLT	BCOLT
Henry Farms	285.610	BCOLT	USDA/NRCS
Orange Grove Plantation	784.773	BCOLT	USDA/NRCS
Coosaw Plantation	1529.470	BCOLT	USDOD
Halbrook Sanders II	10.000	BCOLT	USDOD
Joyce Crosby	40.000	BCOLT	
Zeke Jordan	127.283	BCOLT	
Lands End Plantation	231.010	BCOLT	
Penn Center CE	92.338	BCOLT	USDA/NRCS
Bindon Plantation	1,317.05	BCOLT	
Pulaski	19.293	BCOLT	USDOD
Cason	15.599	BCOLT	USDOD
Campbell	335.957	BCOLT	
Harvey Partnership	155.28	BCOLT	USDOD
Dopson	291.62	BCOLT	USDOD
Christian Trask	74.32	BCOLT	USDA/NRCS
Charles King	12.91	BCOLT	USDA/NRCS
Duncan Farms	129.000	BCOLT	

## Other Lands

### **St. Helena Island (aka St. Helena Market)**

In 1997, with privately donated and Beaufort County funds, BCOLT acquired the Blocker Field and Store to support the iconic market which operated on the property. At the time, there was a growing concern of commercial blight, with cinderblock stores advancing along the highway to the east and west of this property. Since then, this beautiful site located at the entrance to St. Helena Island has welcomed every visitor and resident. The nostalgic “Blocker Store” had become the quirky St. Helena Market noted for local produce and hanging baskets with flowers.

BCOLT currently holds title to the property, but because of the contribution by the County, it is accounted for the RCLPP inventory. The land trust is transformed the market into the home of the Carolina Cider Company. This country store at the entrance of St. Helena Island is compatible with the rural character of the island.

## Property Management

### **Operations and Maintenance**

Public ownership of real property is a detailed part of governance. According to Article XII of the South Carolina State Constitution, under Section 1 of the Function of Government, the “health, welfare, and safety of the lives and property of the people of this State and the conservation of its natural resources are matters of public concern.”<sup>21</sup> Properly managed public lands are an asset to the community. Failure to manage them threatens resources, creates problems with the continuity of the landscape, and liabilities become costly issues for the taxpayer. This basic government function is even more important when RCLPP lands are involved. These lands have unique qualities, conservation values, which have been determined by to be important to the livability of Beaufort County by its citizens through their votes for the four bond referendums. Tax money has been used to preserve them and they require special management to ensure the resources are preserved.

The process for the management of RCLPP lands to Beaufort County has slowly developed and evolved over the life of the Program, almost two decades. No clear direction has been established for sustainable management, even independent of the park development issue. As a result, few clear policies, defined responsibilities, or ordinances exist related to the management of these precious resources.

### **Stewardship**

Stewardship is a broader and more comprehensive type of property management than basic maintenance and involves managing property resources with three achievable goals: sustainability, multi-use and revenue generation. Stewardship should form the foundation of the County’s property management program.

The first stewardship goal is to promote *sustainability* and safeguard the conservation values and natural resources from being compromised. The program can go further to restore many environmental functions on some parcels. Mitigation credits for restoration may be available.

Another stewardship goal is to *promote multi-use* of RCLPP lands while protecting conservation values. Public lands develop constituencies across a broad spectrum of users. Each user or user group will have its own vision for use of the land. An important step in the County park program will be to ensure that users have adequate access and the County adequately meets their needs. The recent opinion survey will be important for understanding these relationships as well as any follow-up needs assessments that are performed.

A third goal is to *generate revenue* from the land in an ecologically sensitive manner to assist with the maintenance and operations of the RCLPP lands. The revenues can come in part from timber, agriculture, user fees, rentals, events, or perhaps even green energy. As long as the activity is in line with the mission of the RCLPP, it warrants evaluation for revenue potential.

Some properties have larger revenue potential than others and these funds can be used to assist with the maintenance of other less profitable properties. As an example previously discussed, significant timber stands need to be harvested to sustain a healthy forest on several properties. These proceeds could help

---

<sup>21</sup> South Carolina Constitution through 2015 session. <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/scconstitution/SCConstitution.pdf>

develop the Stewardship Program, be placed in a dedicated fund for park development, build internal staff capacity, or match grants.

### **Records Management**

There should be an established process for administration. When property is purchased and transitions from the acquisition stage to ownership by Beaufort County, it can be a cumbersome process. There are many people involved from the initial stages of investigating a property to eventual ownership and management. BCOLT maintains files for the property through closing, and Howell, Gibson, and Hughes keeps copies of all the closing documents. After a property closes, the Planning Department maintains a master document (spreadsheet) of all the RCLPP transaction details. The Planning Department also sends an update to the GIS Department so the RCLPP GIS layer can be updated. Accurate mapping information is critical from a programmatic standpoint.

### **Security**

At a minimum, RCLPP lands require proper security. Security ensures properties are not a liability and there is no damage to the conservation values. To increase security and bolster the existing efforts consider the following:

Gates and Keys: The most basic security measure is gating the property to control access. Regulating access allows the County a measure of control over inappropriate uses of property. Proper gating brings the need for a controlled and organized system of keying. As more activities occur on RCLPP lands, who has access to the keys will become important.

Boundary Posting and Signage: Posting the boundaries, clearly identifying property as belonging to Beaufort County and part of the RCLPP, is imperative. There are existing signs on some properties, but many are large and difficult to maintain and clean. New signs can be designed that are cost effective and easier to maintain. For properties accessed by the public, property rules should clearly be displayed. This may deter unwanted activities, but more importantly it allows for enforceability.

Inspections and Enforcement: Proper management requires regular inspection. Dumping, poaching and trespassing harm conservation values and prevents safe use. Conservation easements require annual monitoring. Records should be kept documenting both conservation easement and fee inspections. Timely enforcement of rules and regulations should follow when problems occur.

The Beaufort County Sheriff's office maintains a four person Environmental Crime Unit (ECU). They routinely visit RCLPP lands as part of their duties to ensure continued protection from trespassing, dumping or any other misuse. They also investigate other environmental crimes including marine safety, recycling and litter control. Despite having this knowledgeable team, Beaufort County does not have ordinances in place regulating use. This is not surprising because Beaufort County's ownership is unique. Charleston County Parks or DNR's ordinances for regulating Wildlife Management Areas and Natural Heritage Preserves are places to begin looking to structure a County ordinance.

### **Natural Resource Management and Forest Health**

Each property is unique and should have its own natural resource management plan. The County should be a model for land management. This means not only providing access, but also eradicating invasive plant species, preventing erosion, deterring littering and dumping and preventing poaching.

The natural resource management plans do not have to be complicated, but should contain the following basic elements:

- Inventory of important natural, cultural and historic resources
- Description of current uses
- Known restrictions that limit use or park development
- Management schedule, goals, and objectives
- Department responsible for maintenance and monitoring and access to the property
- Identification and solutions to the natural resource threats

## Public Access and Passive Parks

### Public Opinion Survey

To obtain community input on the RCLPP properties and potential uses, the Planning Department, contracted Clemson University's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management and Strom Thurmond Institute to conduct a community survey of Beaufort County residents, non-resident property owners, and workers, regarding their views.<sup>22</sup> Most responses were gathered online and the results were statistically significant. Of the participants, 96.14% were residents, 3.40% were non-resident property owners, and 0.46% were non-resident workers.

Below are some of the most significant results:

- 97% identified a positive impact on their overall quality of life from conserved lands, confirming the public's commitment to the preservation of important natural and conservation areas.
- 86% believe conservation lands should be more publically accessible. At the same time, a clear majority, 93%, believe continued protection of those lands is important if they are made accessible.
- 65.1% believe that conservation lands contribute a great deal to the County's economic prosperity.
- Top activities include nature-based activities, with a focus on enjoying view sheds, wildlife, and hiking. Also, activities such as fishing, running, kayaking and biking were also preferred but to a slightly lesser extent.
- Over 83% of respondents are willing to travel over 3 miles to visit a passive park and over 57% would travel 6 miles or more to visit one of the County's passive parks.
- The survey showed the desire to emphasize the basic needs of users, with access to bathroom facilities, hiking trails and trash cans while a community garden and rental cabins were of the least interest.
- Approximately 47% of responses chose sales or property taxes and 32.4% identified user fees as a potential funding source.
- Over 50% of respondents said they would pay between \$1 and \$4 in user fees per passive park visit. Approximately 12% will pay \$5 or more.

This report provided information about some key relationships between the community and preferred activities and amenities on the RCLPP lands. The survey also indicates a strong directive to uphold the natural or cultural values of conservation lands, still leaving ample opportunity for complimentary activities

---

<sup>22</sup> For a complete description of survey results and its methodology, see the full report.

that do not diminish the property's conservation values or the mission and purpose of the Program. Careful oversight and management is critical.

Citizens appear well informed on the RCLPP according to the survey, but there are opportunities for additional education and information on specific parks, their designated uses, funding mechanisms, and development.

This opinion survey is an important tool for outreach and engagement with County residents. Ongoing citizen engagement should consider additional education and transparency in projects, understanding of project mechanics, further exploring the needs and ideas of the community in a way that is in sync with community values and the wellbeing of citizens. Next steps for public input as park planning gets underway should include further needs assessments including focus groups, facilitated interviews, and stakeholder engagement.

## Passive Parks

### Tourism and Recreation

While Beaufort County is receiving immeasurable benefits from protecting open space, there are missed opportunities if some of these properties are not accessible. Recreation outdoors makes up a large sector of the tourism industry in the United States. Parks and open space create places for people to participate in the type of activities they enjoy. While they do this they are putting money into the economy through purchases such as food and lodging. According to the Outdoor Industry Association more than 140 million Americans participate in outdoor recreation and each year \$646 billion is spent on outdoor recreation spending.<sup>23</sup> In 2011, 91.1 million U.S. residents fished, hunted, or wildlife watched, an increase of 2.6 million participants since 2006. These residents spent \$145 billion on their activities. Since 2006, participation in fishing increased by 11 percent, hunting by 9 percent, and wildlife watching by 2 percent.<sup>24</sup> As a follow-up to the public opinion survey, it is important to also determine the specific impact and benefit of eco-tourism as it relates to County passive parks.

The 2012 and 2014 bond referendums allowed for up to 20 percent of the borrowed amount to be utilized for the construction of passive parks. Each passive park will require its own solution regarding operations and maintenance depending on its level of use, resources, and revenue opportunities. The Opinion Survey Report indicated that approximately 47 percent of responses would prefer sales or property taxes and 32.4 percent identified user fees as a potential funding source. Also, over 50 percent of respondents said they would pay between \$1 and \$4 in user fees per passive park visit, but only 12 percent will pay \$5 or more. These statistics demonstrate willingness to pay for park amenities, but user fees alone will not pay for all the costs involved, and revenue and funding for park operations and maintenance will have to be provided through multiple sources utilizing entrepreneurial opportunities, partnerships, and creativity. Specific revenue sources and opportunities are discussed later on in this report.

---

<sup>23</sup> Outdoor Industry Association. 2012. The Outdoor Recreation Economy.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

## Development of the Passive Parks

### The “Friends” Groups

Properties become passive park candidates because of the location, size, and the ability to withstand certain impacts, and because of the surrounding community. Several Friends groups have formed with a focus on a particular park. These groups adopt a property and help to determine use by bringing forward their aptitudes to develop a park theme. As an example, many of the “Friends of Crystal Lake” are master gardeners and master naturalists, which helped to form Crystal Lake Park into an environmental center for the County.

The public opinion survey clearly shows that the public is most interested in low impact activities such as hiking and wildlife viewing, but trails can be costly to maintain and generate little revenue. The Friends groups are a partial answer to the maintenance and operation of parks that do not have any dedicated funds.

The Planning Department works with the Friends groups because of its traditional role supporting community preservation committees. There is still a need for interdepartmental cooperation between the Planning Department, Facility Management, and other departments as these passive parks come to fruition. The four referendums passed with large support from the community, with over 73 percent support in 2014. It is likely there will be future referendums and if the public is able to have interactive experiences on RCLPP lands, support will be generated. The approved funds from previous referendums to date will not cover all the park infrastructure and development needs and these future referendums may be important for future park development.

### Public-Private Partnerships

A mechanism exists to allow for private-public ventures. A resolution was adopted in 2012 outlining the policy of Beaufort County with regards to public-private ventures for use on properties acquired through the Program that allows for the use of private enterprise to fully utilize parkland. This resolution sets the stage for many alternative partnership opportunities that restricts uses on sensitive lands and brings awareness to the unique resources of the County.

Public-private partnerships, in addition to the Friends groups, are also a partial answer to maintenance and operations. Some revenue can be generated through rent/leases (ex. Crystal Lake Park). There are many other examples of opportunities for private-public partnerships. As a specific example, Carolina Heritage Outfitters, a Lowcountry ecotourism business, rents treehouses on the Edisto River as part of their services. It is a unique experience and has been named one of the "Top 50 Vacation Destinations" by Men's Journal, "Favorite off-the-beaten-path Adventure in South Carolina" Outside Magazine, and "Top 5 Southern Summer Escapes," by Garden & Gun Magazine.<sup>25</sup> The outfitter charges up to \$180/night per person for a kayak/canoe rental and an overnight stay in the treehouse. Crafting unique opportunities such as this generates revenue, creates educational opportunities, and promotes local businesses. Treehouses would be a tremendous addition to a park at New Riverside or Garvey Hall.

---

<sup>25</sup> Excerpt from Carolina Heritage Outfitters website. 2016. <http://www.canoesc.com/home.html>

### **Partnerships with Municipalities and NGO partners**

Some of the most successful partnerships to maintain County lands have been through local partnerships between the County and a local municipality, or the County and a non-governmental organization. The Town of Bluffton is successfully managing Oyster Factory Creek. The Town accepts the responsibility of maintenance and operations, but also derives tremendous benefits for the municipality. BCOLT also manages Widgeon Point. There are additional opportunities for these partnerships.

### **Product Development**

The Beaufort County Planning Department has had success recently in bringing several parks to fruition. Fort Fremont and Crystal Lake promise to be excellent facilities and good use of RCLPP lands. As the demand grows for increased use the process for opening properties to the public needs to be institutionalized.

Product origination is where the development process begins. Sometimes the idea originates with staff or volunteer groups or sometimes an outside group approaches the County. This process can be improved by identifying potential in advance through a Passive Park Plan. Preparing a plan allows for better allocation of resources, fewer missed opportunities for grants or other funding, and public input.

Park design and development rests with the Planning Department. They receive this responsibility through the County Administrator. The Planning Department implements a design by working with private engineering firms, landscape designers, and other consultants to produce a design plan. Typically, a concept or theme develops, but a plan can go through many revisions as it makes its way through the approval process to County Council for final approval. With a comprehensive Passive Park Plan in place, parks would be anticipated. This preview allows some vetting to take place before staff resources are poured into a project and provides staff with better direction.

Park designs, once approved by Council, go through permitting. The local permitting process involves review by many County Boards. Wetlands issues, traffic access and historic preservation reviews often have to be completed for each development. A successful navigation of these reviews can require several months and a great deal of staff time.

Next is the procurement process. Procurement establishes standards and specifications for construction and awards the bid based on County procedures. Upon a successful awarding of a bid, another department is responsible for overseeing the project and ensuring the contractor follows the guidelines in the bid package.

### **Advisory Board**

The RCLP Board has been valuable in an advisory role for park planning, but there is currently a mechanism for creating a five-person Park Advisory Body as mentioned earlier in this report. The Park Advisory Body resolution (Resolution 2014/1) also calls for these members to have a very specific skill set to advise on issues related to park development, operations, and maintenance. If the RCLP Board's advisory role and responsibilities shift to include parks, it should be determined how this will affect the functioning of the land protection aspect of the Program, especially since there is significant funding left. Board policies and guidelines should be drafted to outline the process for how the RCL Board or Advisory Body will work with and advise staff and Council, and consideration should be given to the amount of time this group will need allocated each month to properly fulfill their advisory role.

### **Park Maintenance and Management<sup>26</sup>**

As part of this assessment, other County and municipal park programs were investigated and reviewed. Also, Beaufort County staff members were interviewed along with staff from other County programs. It became clear that it is important to have designated responsibility for natural resources and park management.

Given that most RCLPP lands are infrequently used by the public, maintenance is minimal. If public use increases, increased coordination of maintenance will become critical. The RCLPP lands lack a lead for the overall management responsibility. Many departments and organizations do something, but no one party has been designated as the responsible manager. Simple maintenance such as cutting grass and trash pick-up is currently performed by Facility Management or Parks and Leisure Services (PALS). Existing maintenance meets a basic standard, but it has not reflected the sensitivity of the properties or their potential for sustainable development. Facility Management is perhaps the appropriate lead department within the current structure to oversee the operations and maintenance of RCLPP.

Many maintenance functions have been assumed by the Friends groups, non-profit partners, or local municipalities. This cost effective approach works well on certain properties. Friends groups also require coordination from County staff. The County has had success with co-ownership and a partner assumes the maintenance responsibility including Widgeon Point Preserve, Greens Shell Ring Park, Oyster Factory Park, Factory Creek Park, and several others.

Items of larger maintenance or special projects fall under the guidance of the Public Works Department. Constructing or repairing a road, building a boat dock can be handled by Public Works. The current system was coined during interviews as an “on demand” system. This has functioned well enough, but a system where large maintenance is scheduled and planned is needed especially on property with increased public use. Public Works only charges the RCLPP for external costs and is capable of expanding their role if a comprehensive plan is formulated.

### **Drafting an Operational Budget**

Any government initiative requires budgeting. The operation of and improvements to RCLPP lands will require an annual budget that reflects the cost of operation. Given that some revenues will be derived from RCLPP properties, the County may choose to dedicate all such revenues to the operation and development of the program. This will build an entrepreneurial spirit in the operation of the Program and will also protect from absorbing funds back into the general County funds which are not returned to the stewardship and park program to meet its needs.

The budget should reflect all revenues expected to be received in a given year. Expenses should include staffing, supplies and other non-capital expenses on an annual basis. It is recommended that current expenses, although absorbed into the existing budgets are tracked so future budgeting can be as accurate as possible and reflect the actual expenses of stewardship.

Beaufort County will need to consider to what extent it is willing to subsidize the operation and maintenance of the stewardship and park program especially in the beginning. General budgeted funds could be used to get the program up and running through building capacity with a full time

---

<sup>26</sup> Current maintenance responsibilities for all RCLPP lands are defined in Table 2

employee or Stewardship Manager. This investment will demonstrate a vision for the Program in a financial capacity and allocate responsibility. It will also allow decisions to be made that reflect the reality of managing these properties.

It is critical that parks are maintained. If the passive parks are not maintained, then support for the Program will diminish. The public opinion survey clearly reveals the public demand for basic amenities, including access to bathroom facilities, trash cans, and parking lots.<sup>27</sup> While the Friends groups are helpful and a partial answer, the County cannot be entirely dependent on volunteers. Staff will be required to pick up trash and maintain bathrooms. Those services can be provided internally or contractually, but regardless of the arrangement, in order to have a well-functioning park in some cases there will be a need for parks to be staffed.

There is also a relationship between the build-out of a park and the staffing requirement. With an increase in amenities (bike and kayak rentals, cabins, or rental facilities) additional staff will be required, but there are then amplified opportunities to generate revenue and offset costs. Finding the balance between operational costs and revenue generation, while keeping focused on maintaining a quality product is a balancing act, but it is also absolutely critical to the success of the passive park program.

#### **Adding Additional Lands to the Management Process**

Beaufort County is encouraged to look at all land holdings and determine if other properties should be included in the Passive Park Plan or Stewardship Program and managed through the same mechanisms as RCLPP lands. Camp St. Mary's is a good example.

---

<sup>27</sup> Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Opinion Survey Results. Table 5. Clemson University, 2016.

## **Resources for Passive Parks and Property Management**

---

RCLPP lands have been acquired via a number of revenue sources. Funding from the Program combined with contributions or matched grants from the US Department of Defense, US Department of Agriculture, SC Department of Natural Resources, local municipalities, non-governmental organizations, landowner contributions and generous charitable gifts have formed unparalleled revenues for land conservation.

Increased public access requires a new approach to funding operations and maintenance of these lands. Amplifying the level of public use requires new and increased funding. Beaufort County must consider a variety funding streams and sources. There is not one single revenue stream that will meet all the management needs of the County properties. Some revenues can support operations; some are restricted to capital needs; and some are flexible.

### **Operations Funding Opportunities**

#### **Direct Appropriation from Beaufort County**

Beaufort County Council could choose to fund development and operations of passive parks through direct appropriations from its general fund. This is the primary method for funding County Departments and functions under the normal budgeting authority of South Carolina local governments.

#### **Dedicated Millage for Park Development and Maintenance**

Many government agencies operate with a special millage dedicated to a specific purpose. A special millage for operations and maintenance could be placed on tax bills, allowing citizens to see what they are funding. County Council would continue to approve budget, personnel and administrative operations for the service.

Charleston County Parks, Recreation and Tourism uses a dedicated millage. The Charleston County PRT Commission was created in 1968 as a special purpose district by an act of the South Carolina legislature.<sup>28</sup> As a special purpose district, CCPRT is a separate governmental entity and is not a department or division of Charleston County Government, nor the State of South Carolina. Charleston County Government is not involved in the overall direction or management of CCPRC; however, Charleston County Council does have budgetary oversight of CCPRC's tax related budget.<sup>29</sup>

### **Capital Funding Opportunities**

#### **Rural and Critical Bond Referendum Financing**

Beaufort County citizens have supported the RCLPP four times to fund the protection of important natural resources and the 2012 and 2014 bonds have allowed for up to \$5 mil in 2012 and \$4 mil in 2014, for a total of \$9 million, for passive park development. Future referendums could include an increased percentage for passive parks and decreased percentage for land protection or include the maintenance of passive parks in addition to infrastructure.

---

<sup>28</sup> Charleston County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. 2016. <https://www.ccprc.com/3/About-Us>

<sup>29</sup> Charleston County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. 2016. <https://www.ccprc.com/1545/Finance-Budget>

### **Capital Bonding Authority**

Improvements to RCLPP properties could be funded through the normal bonding authority of Beaufort County. Local governments regularly use General Obligation Bonds to advance funding for capital projects. Bonds can only be used for capital expenses, not operations. RCLPP capital needs will be judged against the County's other demands in capital bonding. South Carolina governments can only bond up to 8 percent of their assessed land value.

### **Impact Fees**

In the state of South Carolina, county governments may adopt impact fees pursuant to the South Carolina Development Impact Fee Act (S.C. Code of Laws, Sec. 6-1-910 et seq).<sup>30</sup> Community growth causes rising demands on surrounding infrastructure which necessitates improvements to maintain adequate levels of public service. Impact fees help to mitigate the negative impacts of growth and pass the costs onto new development rather than taxpayers.

For communities, like Beaufort County, experiencing rapid growth, impact fees can be a useful tool but they are also controversial. In Beaufort County, impact fees, collected on new commercial and residential development, are assessed to help pay for off-site capital improvements but primarily the fees go to traffic related projects. In place since 1999, the Impact Fee Program rate structure is currently being reviewed to determine if it is a needed source of revenue. Revenue from these impacts would be extremely useful for capital projects on RCLPP lands, but a change in the impact fee ordinance must occur to include passive parks since the funds must be attributed to a specific source. Other sources are probably more readily available for funding, but impact fees can be a potential tool.

### **Operations and/or Capital Funding Opportunities**

#### **User Fees**

It is expected that some revenue will be generated through user fees. The rationale behind user fees is that those who use specific services and facilities should pay for a larger portion of the costs, rather than require taxpayers to assume the entire cost. User fees may take several forms.

As an example, the federal recreational system uses several types of user fees.<sup>31</sup> Standard amenity fees are day use fees covered by a day or annual pass. Each site or area contains at least six amenities which are picnic tables, trash receptacle, toilet, parking, interpretive signing and security. Expanded amenity fees are charged provide direct benefits to individuals or groups including campgrounds, swimming areas, cabin rentals special tours, and transportation systems. Special recreation permits are issued when extra measures are required for natural and cultural resource protection, or the health and safety of visitors. They may also be used to disperse recreation use or help ensure that the number of visitors does not exceed the capacity of the land.

Clemson's recent Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Opinion Survey Report revealed that over 50% of respondents would pay between \$1 and \$4 in user fees per passive park visit. The population groups 30-44 and 75 years of age are more likely than others to be willing to pay a \$5 or more user fee. This response validates some willingness to pay user fees to contribute to the cost of operations and maintenance.

<sup>30</sup> South Carolina Code of Laws. 2016. <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t06c001.php>

<sup>31</sup> Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA). 2016. <https://www.fws.gov/laws/lawsdigest/REA.html>

## Property Revenue Sources

The unique qualities of RCLPP lands lend themselves to a series of activities that could allow for revenues to develop, maintain and operate the properties. Specific examples of these ecosystem services, those services that provide material or energy outputs through their use, include mitigation banking, green energy (solar or wind), aquaculture/mariculture, timber, and agriculture uses.

### Mitigation Banking

A mitigation bank is a wetland, stream, or other aquatic resource area that has been restored, established, enhanced, or (in certain circumstances) preserved for the purpose of providing compensation for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources permitted under Section 404 or a similar state or local wetland regulation.<sup>32</sup> A mitigation bank is created when a government agency, corporation, nonprofit organization, or other entity undertakes activities under a formal agreement with a regulatory agency. The value of a bank is defined in compensatory mitigation credits. Based on the property characteristics, the number of credits available for sale is identified and ecological assessment are conducted to certify that those credits provide the required ecological functions.<sup>33</sup>

Mitigation is an opportunity to steward a property while also creating a revenue stream. Properties can be set up as mitigation banks and still be utilized for recreation. It would be advantageous for Beaufort County to work with a firm specializing in mitigation to investigate mitigation banking opportunities on RCLPP lands. New Riverside, Manigault Neck and several other larger properties appear to have some potential for mitigation.

### Green Energy

Because of the small size of many RCLPP lands or public locations, there will be limitations for green energy uses like solar or wind energy. Those opportunities still exist and should be explored. Solar in particular is a land use that is in demand, and the largest solar farm in South Carolina, an 80 acre site owned by Hudson Energy Development, is opening in Jasper County to supply energy to SCE&G.

### Aquaculture/Mariculture

Seafood is in high demand and much of what Americans eat is not local. There's an ever increasing demand for local food products and now would be an excellent time to investigate and design specific uses and programs on RCLPP lands related to aquaculture and mariculture. This use is a win-win, generating revenue for parks, creating jobs, contributing to the local food market, bolstering the local economy, and an opportunity for research and education. Waddell Mariculture Center would be an excellent resource to begin formulating a plan for how to use some RCLPP lands for this purpose.

### Timber and Agriculture

Timber proceeds generate revenue and are a frequent source of revenue for landowners. Several properties, (ex. Wilson/Bathey, E. Adams, Okatie Marsh, Barrell Landing) have stands of timber that could be harvested sustainably, and should in fact be harvested and managed for the ecological health of the property. Others could be planted now with timber for future harvests (ex. Ihly, Lucky, Pinckney Point). Timber management is an important task regardless of the revenue potential. Several of the

---

<sup>32</sup> EPA, Compensatory Mitigation Fact Sheet. 2015. <https://www.epa.gov/cwa-404/compensatory-mitigation-factsheet>

<sup>33</sup> Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use and Operation of Mitigation Banks. 1995. <https://www.epa.gov/cwa-404/federal-guidance-establishment-use-and-operation-mitigation-banks>

properties assessed had southern pine beetle outbreaks or invasive plant infestations because of lack of management.

Other agricultural based revenues may also be available including incubator farming and agricultural leases. Ihly Farms, Lucky, Pinckney Point, and Duncan Farms could all be used for agriculture in addition to or instead of timber, with revenue comes from leases or a portion of the proceeds from the sale of goods. These properties could even be leased to beekeepers to create a RCLPP honey.

The best management strategy likely involves a variety of these management scenarios and uses.

### **Rental Fees**

RCLPP lands may be rented to special users or user groups. With responsible usage policies and procedures, land, homes, structures, barns, etc. could be rented.

The public opinion survey did indicate that there is not a large demand for rental opportunities so rental opportunities will have to be marketed and promoted to create demand. The Beaufort County Open Land Trust has been successful at renting the Widgeon Point Barn for weddings. This is not a large revenue generator but it does offset the cost of maintenance. Crystal Lake Park is another good example. This property will have nature trails, interpretive facilities, while a standing building is rented to partners and non-profit organizations. These renters also provide an on-site presence that helps secure the property leveraging the County's assets in multiple ways.

### **Government Grants**

Several State and Federal agencies provide grants to or match County funds.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has cost share programs available. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is familiar to landowners as they receive support to improve the condition and yield of their properties.<sup>34</sup> Rural and Critical Lands are eligible for inclusion in these cost share programs. EQIP provides up to 75% cost share for conservation practices including reduction in soil erosion, enhancing water supplies, improving water quality, increasing wildlife habitat, and reducing damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. NRCS also makes available annually the Conservation Innovation Grant.<sup>35</sup> This grant provides funding in a statewide (up to \$75,000) or nationwide (up to \$350,000) grant for innovative practices or programs (including education and research). The County would have to act through non-government partners to receive these funds.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federally funded reimbursable grant that is for acquisition or development of land for public outdoor recreational use purposes.<sup>36</sup>

The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism has several grants to assist with development of parks and match County funds. The SCPRT Recreational Trails Program, is a federal-aid

---

<sup>34</sup> Natural Resources Conservation Service. EQIP Program.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>

<sup>35</sup> Natural Resources Conservation Service. Conservation Innovation Grants.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/>

<sup>36</sup> Land and Water Conservation Fund. <https://www.doi.gov/lwcf>

assistance program designed to help States provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use.<sup>37</sup>

The Park and Recreation Development Fund is also available from SCPRT. The PARD grant program is a state funded non-competitive reimbursable grant program for eligible local governments within each county which provide recreational opportunities.<sup>38</sup>

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Water Resources Fund is available for projects that provide water recreational activities or facilities for public use. Included in the list of possible activities are installations or improvements to public boat landings and development of fishing access.<sup>39</sup>

### **Philanthropic Sources**

A public park program has the potential to attract strong support from philanthropic and other charitable giving sources. Opportunities for charitable giving can also come from loyalty to the Program and make voters feel connected to conservation in Beaufort County. Partners like Beaufort County Open Land Trust or the Port Royal Sound Foundation can be important partners in this effort with an ability to reach out to the community.

Occasionally financial stewardship contributions from landowners are negotiated at the time of purchase such as with New Riverside. These gifts can be dedicated for use on a specific parcel or sometimes for use on any property

### **Park Foundations**

The development of a park foundation is also a good option. A RCLPP foundation could raise funds to help with education, capital projects, fundraising, and set up endowments for land management. These foundations have an organized structure, budget, and operations and are more sustainable than a neighborhood group or volunteer group.

Foundations also build a network of program supporters with a diverse membership made of up of passionate advocates. These advocates help raise funds to support the develop programs that facilitating educational programs, habitat restoration, land acquisition, and capital improvements. The City of Charleston Parks Conservancy is a good example of a park foundation.<sup>40</sup>

### **Friends Groups**

Friends Groups are individual nonprofit organizations that support a specific property with time, expertise, and privately-raised funds. As champions of parks or natural areas, Friends groups engage the community and provide financial support and volunteer time to support park priorities. Several Friends groups exist currently for parks that are being developed.

---

<sup>37</sup> South Carolina PRT grants. <https://www.scprt.com/our-partners/Grants.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> South Carolina PARD grant. <https://www.scprt.com/our-partners/grants/pard.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> SCDNR. <https://www.dnr.sc.gov>

<sup>40</sup> Charleston County Parks Conservancy. <http://www.charlestonparksconservancy.org/>

## Branding and Marketing

Marketing and branding of the RCLPP Stewardship Program is a key part of the overall development. Recognizable branding with a compelling vision, and marketing of that vision, should be a concept that is fully developed very early on.

The RCLPP has done a notable job of branding and using recognizable themes. This includes common phrases like “Protecting Working Farms”, “Keeping Jets in the Air”, and “Maintaining Clean Water.”<sup>41</sup> These are relatable catch phrases and the public understands the message. Specific branding should be developed for the Stewardship Program including similar signage, bench design, building design, etc. and the language used to discuss the Program park lands.

Marketing promotes visibility and ultimately usability so economics comes into the equation very early on. Land stewardship and park development is an important part of increasing real estate values, promoting tourism, creating a healthier community, attracting businesses and creating a better labor pool, promoting and growing the aquaculture industry, and other types of economic development. It also is a critical way to address some of the needs of the community and leverage the monetary contribution of the taxpayers through the referendums beyond natural resource preservation.



---

<sup>41</sup> [www.ruralandcritical.org](http://www.ruralandcritical.org). 2015.

## **Opportunities**

---

### **Partners**

Beaufort County has numerous local organizations with solid environmental and community initiatives underway. The best projects are based on collaborative partnerships and existing partnerships should be maintained and new ones cultivated.

### **Locally Grown Food**

Buying or growing food grown close to where it is consumed is a movement sweeping across the County. The health and environmental benefits from locally grown food have become mainstays of many diets. This practice is very popular in Beaufort County.

Some RCLPP lands have a role to play in this movement including properties that have been used for agriculture in the past and have potential for similar use in the future. These uses could be as small garden plots or land could be leased to larger farmers for food production.

Using RCLPP lands for locally grown food production adds justification for the program's conservation purpose in protecting the property. The health benefits from local food can be made available to a wider segment of the population. Farmers can keep farming, helping to keep the agricultural infrastructure vibrant in Beaufort County.

### **Shrimping, Oysters, and Living Shorelines**

Beaufort County has a rich history of working waterfronts with several fishing and shrimp docks remaining in service. The continuation of the aquaculture reminds people that working on the sea is a significant part of the collective heritage.

The RCLPP has helped to protect some working waterfronts and proposed to preserve more of these resources. The Program can work to sustain island and coastal villages to further the sustainability of communities.

Several organizations are interested in the working waterfront initiative. The South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium, SCDNR, and the USDA all have participated in efforts to promote working waterfronts and build resilient living shorelines.

### **Blueways**

No resource has the potential to connect Beaufort County more than water. It dominates the landscape and the culture of Beaufort County and attracts thousands of tourists and residents to the area. Encouraging people to make recreational use of water is a priority of Beaufort County as expressed in its Comprehensive Plan.<sup>42</sup> County Planning staff has identified several routes that

---

<sup>42</sup> Appendix 10A: Beaufort County Trails and Blueways Master Plan

<http://www.bcgov.net/departments/administrative/beaufort-county-council/comprehensive-plan/documents/2010-comprehensive-plan-documents/appendix-10-a.pdf>

could provide exciting recreational opportunities. These Blueways provide access points and other ways for making use of the miles of creeks and rivers in Beaufort County.

County boat landings, maintained by the Department of Public Works, provide many of the existing or potential access points for Blueways. Efforts should be made through the RCLPP to expand the number and quality of boat landings included in the Blueways Master Plan.

### **Mid-County Recreation and Conservation Area**

An incredible opportunity exist to begin a branding effort and creation of a mid-county preserve system with a combination of Blueways and Greenways, with a focused effort on connecting these tracts through access easements on private land or neighborhoods (Map 2).

The RCLPP has acquired several parcels mid-county, with great recreational potential. These properties protect water quality but could be a great resource. Citizens can rent facilities for events, enjoy water based sports and experience nature through activities like hiking and bird watching. This can be a cooperative project. Non-profit organizations such as BCOLT and the PRSF have facilities in the corridor and could provide many program opportunities for County owned properties.

### **Spanish Moss Trail**

The Spanish Moss Trail (SMT) is a rails-to-trail greenway project located in the heart of Northern Beaufort County.<sup>43</sup> The Spanish Moss Trail will connect the towns of Port Royal, Beaufort, Burton, and Grays Hill to the Whale Branch Pier. The SMT is an excellent line of connectivity between communities. The McLeod and Sanders parcels can form useful links with trails in the system. Friends of Spanish Moss Trail, a non-profit organization, has shepherded the project to this point of success.

Trail projects have become major economic development originators in South Carolina cities. Greenville's Swamp Rabbit trail and the Mary Black Trail in Spartanburg have led to rebirth in some depressed part of those communities. The Spanish Moss Trail has the same potential.

---

<sup>43</sup> Friends of the Spanish Moss Trail. <http://www.spanishmosstrail.com/>

## Recommendations

As described throughout this report, and supported by Clemson University’s Opinion Survey results, the RCLPP must be guided by its stewardship goals and remain focused on its mission while allowing the public to use and enjoy some of the RCLPP properties, enhancing the quality of life and health of citizens and generating eco-tourism, recreation, and economic opportunities. The evolution of the program is already occurring. Outlined below are the overarching recommendations discussed throughout this report for evolving the Program. The next section provides a framework for implementation.

<b>Recommendations</b>	
<b>Records Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain a filing system with an agreed upon property naming system.</li> <li>▪ Maintain a current, accurate, and functional RCLPP GIS database.</li> </ul>
<b>Security and Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mark property boundaries of RCLPP lands.</li> <li>▪ Install gates starting with highest priority properties. Maintain a keying system.</li> <li>▪ Design and use consistent signage.</li> <li>▪ Develop a property monitoring schedule and coordinate with the Sherriff’s office.</li> <li>▪ Pass appropriate ordinances to allow for enforcement on Program lands.</li> <li>▪ Monitor conservation easements for compliance annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Resource Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop Natural Resource Management plans for each property to sustain and/or restore ecological health.</li> <li>▪ Consult with a SC Certified Forester for forest management activities.</li> <li>▪ Consult with an agricultural specialist to investigate agricultural opportunities on RCLPP lands.</li> <li>▪ Investigate ecosystem service opportunities and mitigation banking.</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Structure/Capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assign a lead department (Facility Management) to coordinate with contractors and other County departments to oversee the RCLPP stewardship program to include natural resource management and park maintenance.</li> <li>▪ Hire a designated staff person (Stewardship Manager) within the lead department to coordinate the Stewardship Program.</li> <li>▪ Consider forming a Passive Park Division within Facility Management with the Stewardship Manager as the lead staff person as the Program evolves and more staff is required.</li> <li>▪ Consider expanding or amending the roles of the RCLPP contract staff to build additional planning capacity.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Passive Parks</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Produce a Passive Park Plan coordinated by the Planning Department.</li> <li>▪ Engage partners, stakeholders, administration, decision makers, and seek additional public input during the drafting of the Passive Park Plan.</li> <li>▪ Utilize the RCLP Board in an advisory capacity or create the Park Advisory body for the Passive Park Plan and park implementation.</li> <li>▪ Create a specific process and procedure for park development including: concept design and operational feasibility, land planning and security, public input, bidding, permitting and construction. Outline the process in the Passive Park Plan.</li> <li>▪ Use the public opinion survey for guidance when designing passive parks.</li> <li>▪ Utilize outside funding and grants for park development to leverage available RCLPP funding.</li> <li>▪ Develop properties for multiple-uses with the lowest impact to natural resources.</li> <li>▪ Continue to grow the Friends groups and other volunteers and partners to help meet operational needs.</li> <li>▪ Use private-public partnership opportunities to generate revenue if the conservation values of the properties can be protected.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Operations/ Maintenance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Track current costs/employee hours to measure current Program expenses.</li> <li>▪ Create an annual operational budget for the Program reflecting all revenue streams and expenses.</li> <li>▪ Schedule and plan needed maintenance operations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Marketing and Branding</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and implement a standardized branding and marketing strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Special Opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider focusing on existing opportunities like the Mid-County Recreation and Conservation Area.</li> <li>▪ Using the successful "Friends model", build on existing constituencies to help develop parks themes.</li> </ul>

## Implementation

---

Although a Passive Park Plan is needed, the planning effort can be pursued in tandem with the organization of the stewardship program. Building capacity and assigning responsibility is critical to success. Without a focused approach and dedicated staff, the management of the RCLPP lands and passive park program will move forward as time permits amongst other duties, missing opportunities and squandering resources. Below is basic framework for the implementation of the recommendations within this report.

### Year 1

- Assign a lead department (Facility Management) with the responsibility of overseeing the stewardship program and the maintenance and operations of the passive parks.
- Budget annually in the annual budgetary process and begin tracking expenses and staff hours.
- Design and implement administrative processes and begin property monitoring.

### Year 2

- Hire a lead staff person (Stewardship Manager).
- Seek assistance from a consulting forester, technical agencies, and other consultants to determine which of the revenue opportunities detailed in this report are feasible and/or preferred.
- Draft natural resource management plans. The management plans should include stewardship needs (keying, gating, boundary posting etc.)
- Prepare the Passive Park Plan.
- Engage RCLPP Board, seek public input, and important stakeholders in an advisory capacity throughout the planning process.

### Year 3+

- Begin implementing management recommendations within the natural resource management plans and working through the various property issues, pulling in other departments as needed.
- Continue building passive parks working under the Passive Park Plan and following the process and implementation procedures outlined in that plan.

## Tables and Maps

**Table 1: Fee Property Classifications**

### Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program Land Classifications

Classification	Association	Intended Use	Extent of Development
<p><b>Passive Park</b></p> <p>Example: Ft Fremont, Crystal Lake</p>	<p>Passive outdoor recreation, parkland</p>	<p>Conserve the natural resources while providing passive outdoor experiences. Conservation values shape the type and intensity of use</p>	<p>Properties can accept a moderate level of park development to for public use. These may not all be developed into parks, but the opportunity exists if conservation values are protected.</p>
<p><b>Recreational/ Special Use</b></p> <p>Example: Bluffton Oyster Factory, Greene Shell Ring park</p>	<p>Active park</p>	<p>Opportunities for more frequent and varied use including daily public access to the water, group use, bike trails, agriculture, forestry, etc.</p>	<p>Property can withstand frequent use and more intense forms of infrastructure including boat docks and buildings.</p>
<p><b>Special Resource Site</b></p> <p>Example: Barrell Landing, Mitchellville tract</p>	<p>Archeological sites, rare habitats or species or Forestry/Agriculture</p>	<p>Resources of high significance. Low tolerance for development. Visitor traffic on these properties limited or available to be managed for a specific natural resource</p>	<p>Natural or cultural resources are the primary focus of management activities with a high level of sustainability and sensitivity to the fragile environments.</p>
<p><b>Open Space</b></p> <p>Example: The Green</p>	<p>Green space, vista, islands, buffers, forestry, agricultural tracts</p>	<p>Protect scenic character. Most too small for infrastructure or not properly located to be developed into a park.</p>	<p>Low intensity or no management required on these sites. Many of these properties have limited or no access.</p>

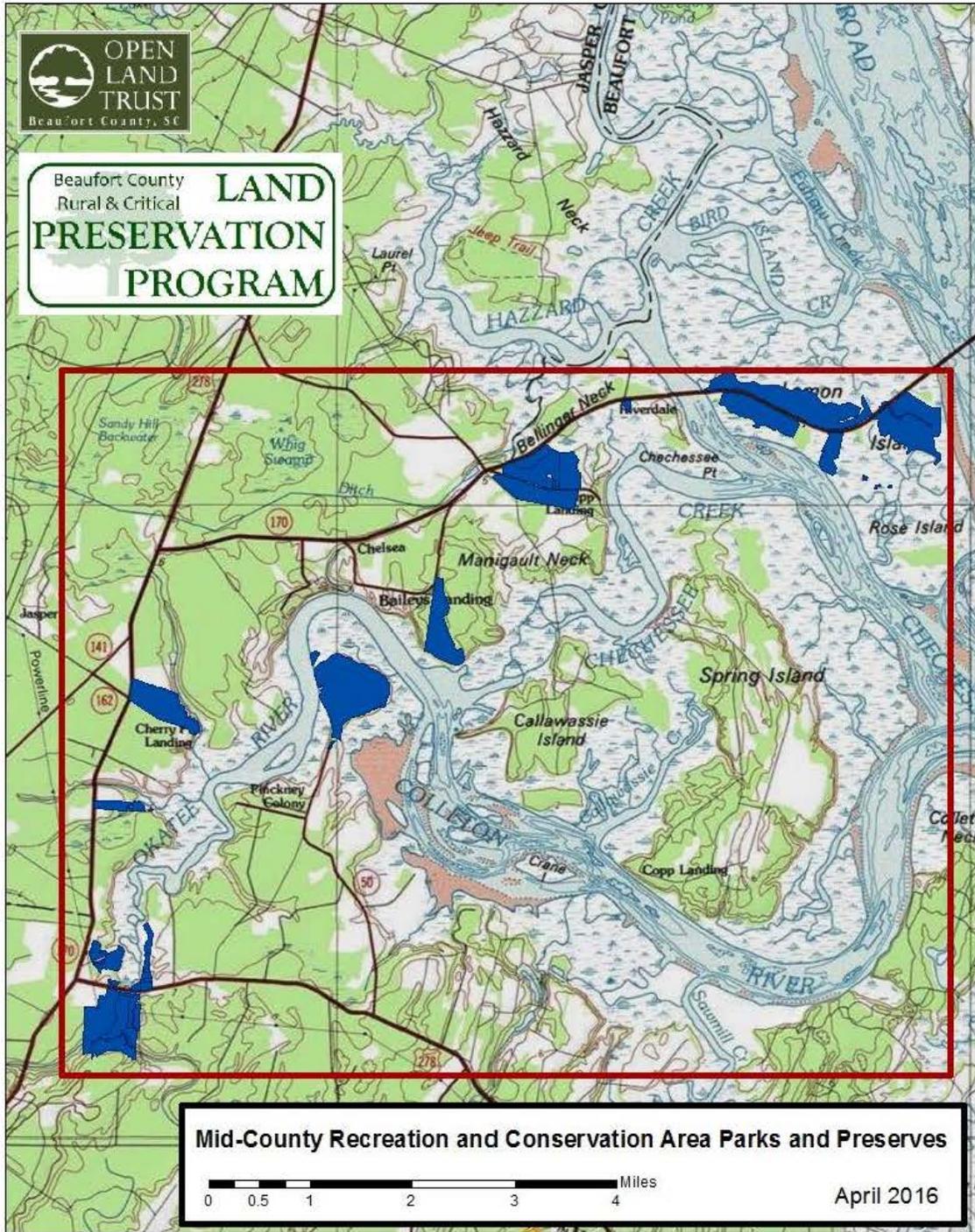
**Table 2: RCLPP Property Maintenance**

<b>Property Name</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>Location</b>
Crystal Lake	24.79	Passive Park (1)	Facility Management	Beaufort County
Fort Freemont	16.984	Passive Park (1)	Facility Management	Beaufort County
Widgeon Point (Lemon Island)	162.24	Passive Park (1)	BCOLT	Beaufort County
McLeod Farms	90	Passive Park (1)	Public Works	Beaufort County
Ihly Farms	63.07	Passive Park (1)	Public Works	Beaufort County
Okatie Marsh	97.7	Passive Park (1)	N/A	Beaufort County
Garvey Hall	87.17	Passive Park (1)	N/A	Town of Bluffton
New Riverside I & II	759.31	Passive Park (1)	N/A	Town of Bluffton
Bluffton Park	9.65	Passive Park (1)	Town of Bluffton	Town of Bluffton
Pinckney Point	229.18	Passive Park (1), Open Space (4)	Caretaker, Public Works, Facility Management	Beaufort County
Duncan	79	Passive Park (1)	Public Works	Beaufort County
Graves	18	Passive Park (1)	N/A	Beaufort County
Altamaha	100.07	Passive Park (1), Special Resource Site (3)	Facility Management	Beaufort County
Factory Creek	1	Passive Park (1), Open Space (4)	BCOLT	Beaufort County
Okatie Regional Preserve	186.62	Recreational Property (2)	N/A	Town of Bluffton
Greens Shell Ring Park	3.3	Recreational Property (2)	PALS	Town of Hilton Head
Oyster Factory Park	9.06	Recreational Property (2)	Town of Bluffton/PALS	Town of Bluffton
Pinckney Colony Park	38.21	Recreational Property (2)	Facility Management	Beaufort County
Keyserling (Fort Frederick)	2.58	Recreational Property (2)	N/A	Town of Port Royal
Jones Landing (Buddy and Zoo Boat Landing)	4.56	Recreational Property (2)	Facility Management	Beaufort County
Barringer	1.78	Recreational Property (2)	Public Works	Beaufort County

Barrell Landing	49.08	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Beaufort County
Ford Shell Ring	6.885	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Town of Hilton Head
Battey/Wilson	63.46	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Beaufort County
Lucky	70.41	Special Resource Site (3)	Caretaker	Beaufort County
Baxter Associates	25.29	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Beaufort County
Manigaults Neck (multiple tracts)	222	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Beaufort County
Pawley (Mitchelville)	2.31	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Town of Hilton Head
Mitchellville Beach Property	20	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Town of Hilton Head
Stoney Preserve (Aranda, Jarvis Creek)	8.109	Special Resource Site (3)	Town of HHI	Town of Hilton Head
Adams	57.17	Special Resource Site (3)	N/A	Beaufort County
Charlotte Island	34.69	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
Palm, Murdaugh, Legare Islands	24.24	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
North Williman Island	8,000	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
Buzzard Island	120	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
AMGRAY Donation	20.78	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
McDowell Hummocks	3.96	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
The Green	1.057	Open Space (4), Passive Park (1)	BCOLT, City of Beaufort	City of Beaufort
Beach City Road Lots	7.287	Open Space (4)	N/A	Town of Hilton Head
Amber Karr/Broad River Dr.	12.55	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
Shell Point	11.92	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County
4P	3.92	Open Space (4)	N/A	Beaufort County



Map 2  
Mid-County Recreation and Conservation Area





## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Natural Resources Committee of County Council  
**FROM:** Anthony Criscitiello, Planning Director  
**DATE:** May 10, 2017  
**SUBJECT:** 18-Month Review of Community Development Code – Proposed Text Amendments

---

### **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION from its May 1, 2017, draft minutes:**

Mr. Merchant briefed the Commission on the text amendments proposed by the staff. This is an 18-month review of the Code. He noted that the amendments included changes within the transect zones, the use table, tree standards, and corrections, clarifications, and provisions from the former Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO). Mr. Merchant then gave a summary of the text amendments. He summarized each change for clarification to the Commission.

### **Commission discussion included:**

- kudos to upgrading the fines on mistaken tree removal;
- clarification on whether the footprint from 30 to 50 feet would cover driveways, patios, and pools (*Mr. Merchant noted that the footprint covers the principal structure and all accessory buildings.*);
- concern that the phrase “maximum coverage space” was used instead of “minimum open space;”
- concern with stormwater runoff problems on new rather than existing lots with the added impervious space allowed (*Mr. Merchant noted that the goal was to retain the stormwater on the lot.*);
- concern with voting on all of the text amendments despite the lack of clarity on some;
- clarification on mitigation of trees that are cut down erroneously;
- clarification on the development bond process;
- clarification on the boat storage requirements for commercial operations;
- clarification on the tree reforestation fund and desiring an annual report on how the reforestation money is spent;
- clarification on the thoroughfare buffer requirement;
- concern of overstory trees under power lines;
- concern with utility company cutting trees without advising government entities;
- concern with forcing a property owner of a new home to plant two trees per acre when the owner’s preference is no trees; and
- a recommendation to pass the amendments with which the Commission agrees and to return to staff for additional work on items the Commission has concerns before passing them onto County Council—especially Table 3.1.60 Consolidated Use Table, Table 3.1.70 Land Use Definitions, and Section 4.1.340 Outdoor Boat/Vehicle Storage; Section 3.2.90.E. Building Form (Footprint); and Section 5.8.20.B Exemptions.

**Public Comments:** None were received.

**Motion:** Ms. Carolyn Fermin made a motion, and Mr. Marque Fireall seconded the motion, **to forward to County Council recommending approval of the following Text Amendments to the Community Development Code:**

1. Section 1.3.50 (Exemptions): Adds requirement to comply with Historic Preservation standards;
2. Section 2.2.50 (Lots): Specifies widths of flag lots;
3. Section 2.2.60 (Access Management): Clarification;
4. Table 3.1.70 (Land Use Definitions): Amends “Campground” to specify two or more recreational vehicles/RVs on a single property;
5. Section 5.6.120 (Freestanding Signs): Establishes minimum 10-foot setback from right-of-way/ROW;
6. Section 5.8.50.F (Existing Trees in Thoroughfare Buffer): Requires retention of existing vegetation in thoroughfare buffers;
7. Section 5.8.110.B.4 (Performance Guarantee): Establishes a two-year survival bond for landscaping;
8. Section 5.11.90 (Forests): Adds language that promotes interconnectivity of preserved forest habitat;
9. Section 5.11.100 (Trees): Adds longleaf pine and black cherry as specimen trees at 16 inches, and increases the penalty/mitigation of illegally removed trees from 1.25 times to 2 times the caliper inches removed; and
10. Section 6.2.70 (Maintenance Guarantee): Cross-references the landscaping survival bond from Article 5, Division 5.8.

The motion **was carried** (FOR: Chmelik, Fermin, Fireall, Hinchler, Semmler, Stewart, and Walsnovich; ABSENT: Mitchell and Pappas).

**Note:** The Commission, with no objections from any Commission member, has returned the following Text Amendments for additional work by the Planning Staff and to be reviewed by the Commission at its June 5, 2017, meeting:

- Table 3.1.60 (Use Table), Table 3.1.70 (Land Use Definitions), and Division 4.1 (Specific to Use): Adds outdoor boat/recreational vehicle (RV) storage as a new use and provides development standards;
- Section 3.2.90 (T3-Neighborhood): Changes maximum lot coverage from 30% to 50%; and
- Section 4.1.340 (Outdoor Boat/Vehicle Storage): Adds new subsection to provide conditions for the outdoor boat/vehicle storage use; and
- Section 5.11.100.B.4 (Specimen Trees – Penalty for Damaging or Cutting Protected Trees): Adds minimum tree planting requirements for new residential lots.

Mr. Jason Hinchler inquired about the text amendments being privileged information, but Mr. Semmler indicated the information was open to the public.

---

## **STAFF REPORT:**

When County Council adopted the Community Development Code (CDC) on December 8, 2014, the motion included a 6 month and 1 year evaluation of the code as a condition of approval. These two reviews took place in 2015 and 2016. Planning Staff sees the merit of continuing to

periodically evaluate and bring forward amendments to the CDC. As in the other two reviews, staff has learned of both minor and major corrections that should be made to the ordinance based on application and enforcement of the Code. These proposed amendments are provided in this memo.

To help navigate through this list of amendments, they have been categorized with the major changes first and minor fixes at the end of the document. The amendments are divided into the following categories:

- **Use Amendments:** These are changes to Articles 3 and 4 which amend uses, use definitions, and conditional use standards.
- **Tree Amendments:** These are changes to the Landscape Standards (Division 5.8) and Resource Protection Standards (Division 5.11) to respond to concerns about tree removal for new developments in the county.
- **Corrections, Clarifications, and provisions from the ZDSO:** These are minor amendments that do not change the substance of the code. These include clarifications, which are changes to wording that aid in the understanding of the requirements. These changes also include provisions that were in the former ZDSO and did not make it into the final draft of the CDC.

## Use Amendments

**Table 3.1.60 Consolidated Use Table.** Amend this table to clarify that a Recreational Campground is comprised of two or more camp sites for rent on a single piece of property.

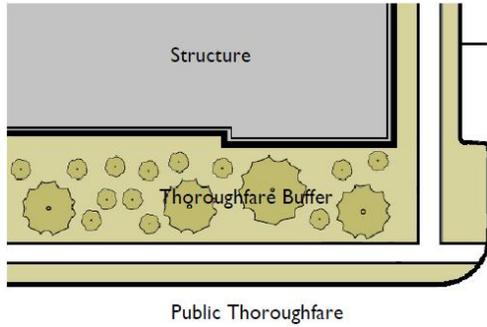
### RECREATION, EDUCATION, SAFETY, PUBLIC ASSEMBLY:

11. Recreation Facility: Campground – Form of lodging where guests bring tents, travel trailers, campers, or other similar forms of shelter to experience natural environments. Campgrounds rent **two (2) or more** pads or spaces to guests. May also include accessory uses such as a camp store, shower/bathroom facilities, and recreational facilities.

## Tree Amendments

**5.8.50 Thoroughfare Buffer – Requirement to preserve existing trees greater than 6” DBH.** The Corridor Overlay District in the ZDSO required that existing trees 6” DBH or greater to be preserved within the 50 foot buffer along the highway. This requirement is missing from the CDC. Staff recommends the following amendment:

**Table 5.8.50 Thoroughfare Buffer**



**A. Description**

The thoroughfare buffer provides visual screening between development and a public street or road. The width, quantity of plant materials, and opacity depends on the number of lanes of the public thoroughfare.

**B. Applicability**

A thoroughfare buffer is required along all collector and arterial roads within all conventional zones, community preservation districts, T2 Rural, T2 Rural Low, and T2 Rural Neighborhood.

**C. Minimum Buffer Width**

**Thoroughfares with 2 or 3 Lanes**

Minimum Buffer Width 20 feet<sup>1</sup>

**Thoroughfares with 4 Lanes or More**

Minimum Buffer Width 50 feet<sup>1</sup>

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Buffer widths are measured from the right-of-way line into the site

**D. Plant Requirements (per 100 linear feet)**

**Thoroughfares with 2 or 3 Lanes**

Overstory Trees	2
Understory Trees <sup>3</sup>	7
Shrubs	15

**Thoroughfares with 4 Lanes or More**

Overstory Trees	4
Understory Trees <sup>3</sup>	14
Shrubs	30

**E. Opacity**

**Thoroughfares with 2 or 3 Lanes**

Minimum Opacity 30%

**Thoroughfares with 4 Lanes or More**

Minimum Opacity 75%

**F. Existing Trees in Thoroughfare Buffer**

No tree 6 inches DBH or larger shall be removed from any thoroughfare buffer, exclusive of access drive location, required sight triangle area, diseased trees, or other safety issues subject to DRB and/or staff approval.

**5.11.90.F Forest Interconnectivity.** This amendment consists of adding a new subsection to require preserved forested areas within a development to connect to other preserved forest areas and open spaces in adjoining parcels parcel boundaries, where feasible. This implements a recommendation from the Natural Resources chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Protected forest resources shall, to the maximum extent practicable, be located to adjoin, extend, and enlarge any protected forest or other open space areas that exist adjacent to the development. Preservation of small, fragmented remnants of forest shall be avoided where possible.

**5.11.100.B Specimen Trees.** This amendment adds longleaf pine and black cherry to the list of overstory trees that are defined as specimen trees at a diameter of 16" dbh.

- Overstory trees – American Holly, Bald Cypress, Beech, **Black Cherry**, Black Oak, Black Tupelo, Cedar, Hickory, Live Oak, **Longleaf Pine**, Palmetto, Pecan, Red Maple, Southern Red Oak, Sycamore, or Walnut that are equal to or greater than a diameter of 16 inches (DBH).

## Corrections, Clarifications, and provisions from the ZDSO

### Article 1: General Provisions

- **1.3.50 Exemptions** (Correction). The proposed amendment is necessary to include historic preservation standards in the review of public utility and infrastructure projects.
  - C. A public utility or public infrastructure installation (water, sewer, roads, gas, stormwater, telephone, cable, etc.) is exempt from the standards of this Development Code, except:
    1. Thoroughfare standards, in Division 2.9 (Thoroughfare Standards);
    2. Wetland standards, in Section 5.11.30 (Tidal Wetlands), and Section 5.11.40 (Non-Tidal Wetlands);
    3. River Buffer standards, in Section 5.11.60 (River Buffer);
    4. Tree Protection standards, in Section 5.11.90 (Tree Protection);
    5. Stormwater management standards, in Section 5.12.30 (Stormwater Standards);
    6. Utility standards, in Section 4.1.210 (Regional (Major) Utility);
    7. Wireless communication facilities standards, in Section 4.1.320 (Wireless Communications Facility);
    8. **Historic Preservation standards, in Division 5.10 (Historic Preservation).**

### Article 2: Multi-Lot and Single Lot Community Scale Development

- **2.2.50.B Lots** (ZDSO Provision). This amendment provides a minimum width for a flag lot to ensure adequate access for public safety vehicles.
  4. **Resources Make Normal Lotting Difficult.** Where natural resources or property shape make normal lotting difficult, common drives, flag lots, or shared easements may be considered at the discretion of the Director. **Where a flag lot is approved, the minimum width of the portion of the lot that fronts the ROW or easement and extends to the rear “flag” shall be 50 ft., except in the T3N, T4HC, and T4NC zones, where the minimum width shall be 40 ft.**
- **2.2.60 Access Management** (Correction). This amendment allows buildings to front major roadways while taking access from a rear street or alley.
  - 2.c. To the maximum extent practical, lots fronting an arterial or major collector shall **front take access from** an internal street, parallel frontage road, or rear alley. This avoids multiple lots with individual access along the existing public road frontage or reverse frontage lots in which buildings turn their back to the public road frontage.

### Article 5: Supplemental to Zones

- **5.6.120 Freestanding Signs** (Clarification). Clarifies setback requirement by removing a reference to Corridor Overlay District which does not exist in the CDC.

## A. Description

**Freestanding Signs** encompass a variety of signs that are not attached to a building and have an integral support structure. Freestanding varieties include Monument and Pole Signs.

A Pole Sign, usually double-faced, mounted on a single or pair of round poles, square tubes, or other fabricated members without any type of secondary support.

A Monument Sign stands directly on the ground or ground level foundation and is often used to mark a place of significance or the entrance to a location.

## B. Standards

### Size

Signable Area	T4	All Other Districts
Single Tenant	24 SF max.	40 SF max.
Multiple Tenant with one highway frontage	32 SF max.	80 SF max.
Multiple Tenant with Two or more highway frontages	32 SF per frontage	80 SF per frontage

## Location

Signs per Highway Frontage:

Single Tenant	1 max.
Multiple Tenant	1 max. <sup>1,2</sup>

Height 10' max. **(A)**

Width 15' max. **(B)**

Distance from ground to the base of the sign 4' max.

Setback from ROW within Corridor Overlay District 10' min.

<sup>1</sup>Individual tenants may not have a Freestanding Sign.

<sup>2</sup>Frontages greater than 500 feet may include one additional freestanding sign not to exceed 80 SF in area and with a total allowable sign area not exceeding the maximum allowable sign area for the multiple tenant center.

## Miscellaneous

Changeable copy signs are allowed for gasoline price signs, houses of worship, schools, directory signs listing more than one tenant, and signs advertising restaurant food specials, films and live entertainment which change on a regular basis.

- **5.8.110 Landscape Construction and Maintenance Standards** (Correction). This amendment carries forward language from the ZDSO regarding landscape survival bonds.

B.4. **Performance Guarantee.** All initial replacement landscaping shall be subject to a two-year performance guarantee survival bond in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit, surety, or cash equal to 120% of the landscaping cost that ensures proper replacement and maintenance.

## Article 6: Subdivision and Land Development

- **6.2.70 Maintenance Guarantee** (Clarification). This amendment cross-references the landscaping survival bond from Division 5.8.110.

Upon completing the improvements required under this Development Code, the surety will be reduced or eliminated. A maintenance guarantee in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit, surety, or cash equal to ~~of~~ ten percent of the actual construction cost for improvements (e.g., road, sidewalk, landscaping, and drainage facilities) shall be deposited with the County Treasurer's Office for anticipated maintenance for a period of two years after the completion of all improvements. For landscaping improvements, a survival bond equal to 120% of the cost shall be required (refer to Sec. 5.8.110.B.4.).

**AN ORDINANCE OF BEAUFORT COUNTY COUNCIL CREATING A SPECIAL TAX ASSESSMENT FOR REHABILITATED HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN THE GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES KNOWN AS DAUFUSKIE ISLAND**

WHEREAS, Section 4-9-195 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, as amended (“S.C. Code”), provides that counties may by ordinance grant special property tax assessments to real property which qualifies as “rehabilitated historic property”; and

WHEREAS, the geography area known as Daufuskie Island, in the County of Beaufort, South Carolina (“Daufuskie”) contains a substantial amount of historic property, the preservation of which is beneficial for the economic development of the County and for its citizens; and

WHEREAS, Beaufort County Council (the “County Council”) has determined that it is in the best interests of the County and its citizens to allow for a special property tax assessment available and as set forth in S.C. Code §4-9-195 to qualifying properties located within the geographic boundaries of Daufuskie; and

WHEREAS, the County Council finds that providing for this special property tax assessment will (1) encourage the restoration of historic properties, (2) promote community development and redevelopment, (3) encourage sound community planning, and (4) promote the general health, safety, and welfare of the community; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to S.C. Code §4-9-195, the County must specify the minimum investment threshold and the number of years in which the special assessment shall apply, and in the absence of a board of architectural review the County may name an appropriate reviewing authority to consider proposed rehabilitation plans and actual rehabilitation work.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by Beaufort County Council that Chapter 66, Article III of the Beaufort County Code of Ordinances is hereby amended by inserting the following into Beaufort County Code of Ordinances Chapter 66 Division 4:

**Division 4. Special Assessment Ratio for Rehabilitated Historic Properties**

**Section 66-155. Special tax assessment created- Daufuskie Island.**

A special tax assessment is created for eligible rehabilitated historic properties located within the geographic boundaries of Daufuskie Island for 10 years equal to the appraised value of the property at the time of preliminary certification.

Section 66-156. Purpose.

It is the purpose of this division to:

- (a) Encourage the restoration of historic properties;
- (b) Promote community development and redevelopment;
- (c) Encourage sound community planning; and
- (d) Promote the general health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Section 66-157. Eligible properties.

(a) *Certification.* In order to be eligible for the special tax assessment, historic properties must receive preliminary and final certification.

(1) To receive preliminary certification a property must meet the following conditions:

- a. The property has received historic designation from the Daufuskie Island Council and in accordance with the Daufuskie Island Plan or is listed on the Beaufort County Above Ground Historic Resources Survey completed in 1989.
- b. The proposed rehabilitation work receives approval from the Daufuskie Island Cultural and Historical Preservation Committee (DICHPC) and, if required under Sec. 7.2.120 of the Beaufort County Community Development Code (CDC), the Beaufort County Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB); and
- c. Be a project that commences on or after the date of the adoption of this ordinance. Preliminary certification must be received prior to beginning work.

(2) To receive final certification, a property must have met the following conditions:

- a. The property has received preliminary certification.
- b. The minimum expenditures for rehabilitation were incurred and paid.
- c. The completed rehabilitation receives approval from the County of Beaufort's Director of Planning and Development Services, or designee, as being consistent with the plans approved by DICHPC and, if required, the HPRB as part of preliminary certification.

(b) *Historic designation.* As used in this section, "Historic Designation" means:

- (1) The structure is at least 50 years old and is located in the geographic area known as Daufuskie Island;
- (2) The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; or

- (3) The structure is listed on the “1998 Beaufort County Above Ground Historic Sites Survey,” and has been designated as “historic” according to Section \_\_\_\_\_ of the Beaufort County Community Development Code and its successors.

Section 66-158. Eligible rehabilitation.

- (a) *Standards for rehabilitation work.* To be eligible for the special tax assessment, historic rehabilitations must be appropriate for the historic building and the geographic district. This is achieved through adherence to the standards set forth by the ~~Daufuskie Island Council or the DICHPC or the Beaufort County Community Development Code.~~ and, if required, approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness in accordance with Sec. 7.2.120 of the CDC.
- (b) *Work to be reviewed.* The following work will be reviewed according to the standards set forth above:
  - (1) Repairs to the exterior of the designated building.
  - (2) Alterations to the exterior of the designated building.
  - (3) New construction on the property on which the building is located.
  - (4) Alterations to interior primary public spaces.
  - (5) Any remaining work where the expenditures for such work are being used to satisfy the minimum expenditures for rehabilitation.
- (c) *Minimum expenditures for rehabilitation* means the owner rehabilitates the building, with expenditures for rehabilitation exceeding 75 percent of the fair market value of the building. Fair market value means the appraised value as certified to the ~~Daufuskie Island Council~~ of DICHPC by a real estate appraiser licensed by the State of South Carolina, the sales price as delineated in a bona fide contract of sale within 12 months of the time it is submitted, or the most recent appraised value published by the Beaufort County Tax Assessor.
- (d) *Expenditures for rehabilitation* means the actual cost of rehabilitation relating to one or more of the following:
  - (1) Improvements located on or within the historic building as designated.
  - (2) Improvements outside of but directly attached to the historic building which are necessary to make the building fully useable (such as vertical circulation) but shall not include rentable/habitable floorspace attributable to new construction.
  - (3) Architectural and engineering services attributable to the design of the improvements.

- (4) Costs necessary to maintain the historic character or integrity of the building.
- (e) *Scope.* The special tax assessment may apply to the following:
  - (1) Structure(s) rehabilitated.
  - (2) Real property on which the building is located.
- (f) *Time limits.* To be eligible for the special tax assessment, rehabilitation must be completed within two years of the preliminary certification date. If the project is not complete after two years, but the minimum expenditures for rehabilitation have been incurred, the property continues to receive the special assessment until the project is completed or until the end of the special assessment period, whichever shall first occur.

Section 66-159. Process.

- (a) *Fee required.* A fee as set out in the County of Beaufort's Fee Schedule and ~~or the Daufuskie Island Council's DICHPC's Fee Schedule,~~ as appropriate, shall be required for final certification for each application.
- (b) *Plan required.* Owners of property seeking approval of rehabilitation work must submit an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, if required under Sec. 7.2.120 of the CDC, and a DICHPC application with supporting documentation and application fee(s) prior to beginning work.
- (c) *Preliminary certification.* Upon receipt of the completed application, the proposal shall be placed on the next available agenda of the HPRB and/or the DICHPC to determine if the project is consistent with the standards for rehabilitation in subsection ~~10-1004~~66-158(a). After the HPRB, if required, and the DICHPC makes ~~its~~ their determination(s), the owner shall be notified in writing. Upon receipt of this determination the owner may:
  - (1) If the application is approved, begin rehabilitation;
  - (2) If the application is not approved, may revise such application in accordance with comments provided by the HPRB and/or DICHPC;
- (d) *Substantive changes.* Once preliminary certification is granted to an application, substantive changes must be approved by the HPRB and/or DICHPC. Unapproved substantive changes are conducted at the risk of the property owner and may disqualify the project from eligibility. Additional expenditures will not qualify the project for an extension on the special assessment.

- (e) *Final certification.* Upon completion of the project, the project must receive final certification in order to be eligible for the special assessment. The County of Beaufort's Director of Planning and Development Services, or designee, will inspect completed projects to determine if the work is consistent with the approval granted by the DICHPC and HPRC, if required, pursuant to Section 10-1004-66-158(a). Final certification will be granted when the completed work meets the Standards and verification is made that expenditures have been made in accordance with Section 10-004— 66-158 (c) above. Upon receiving final certification, the property will be assessed for the remainder of the special assessment period on the fair market value of the property at the time the preliminary certification was made or the final certification was made, whichever occurred earlier.
- (f) *Additional work.* For the remainder of the special assessment period after final certification, the property owner shall notify the Beaufort County Planning and Development Department and the DICHPC of any additional work, other than ordinary maintenance. The DICHPC and the HPRB, if required, will review the work at a regularly scheduled hearing and determine whether the overall project is consistent with the standards for rehabilitation. If the additional work is found to be inconsistent, the property owner may withdraw his request and cancel or revise the proposed additional work.
- (g) *Decertification.* When the property has received final certification and has been assessed as rehabilitated historic property, it remains so certified and must be granted the special assessment until the property becomes disqualified by any one of the following:
- (1) Written notice from the owner to the DICHPC and the Beaufort County Auditor requesting removal of the preferential assessment; or
  - (2) Rescission of the approval of rehabilitation by the DICHPC because of alterations or renovation by the owner or the owner's estate, which causes the property to no longer possess the qualities and features which made it eligible for final certification.

Notification of any change affecting eligibility must be given immediately to the Beaufort County Assessor, Auditor, and Treasurer.

- (h) *Notification.* The Daufuskie Island Council shall, upon final certification of a property, notify the Beaufort County Assessor, Auditor and Treasurer that such property has been duly certified and is eligible for the special tax assessment.

- (i) *Date effective.* If an application for preliminary or final certification is filed by May 1 or the preliminary or final certification is approved by August 1, the special assessment authorized herein is effective for that year. Otherwise, it is effective beginning with the following year.

The special assessment only begins in the current or future tax years as provided for in this section. In no instance may the special assessment be applied retroactively.

- (j) *Application.* Once the Daufuskie Island Council has granted the special property tax assessments authorized herein, the owner of the property shall make application to the Beaufort County Auditor for the special assessment provided for herein.

SECTIONS 66-160. Reserved.

This ordinance shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

DONE, this \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
D. Paul Sommerville, Chairman

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas J. Keaveny, II, County Attorney

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ashley M. Bennett, Clerk to Council

First Reading:  
Second Reading:  
Public Hearing:  
Third and Final Reading:

**BEAUFORT COUNTY ABOVE GROUND HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY  
DAUFUSKIE ISLAND SITES**

SiteNo	HistName	Date	CommName	Address	City	PID
U-13-484.00	Haig's Point Lighthouse	<a href="#">1873</a>	--		Daufuskie Island	R800 022 000 0031
U-13-484.01	Haig's Point Light, Oil House	<a href="#">1892</a>	--		Daufuskie Island	R800 022 000 0031
U-13-485	Haig's Point Tabby Ruins	<a href="#">1800</a>	--		Daufuskie Island	R800 022 000 0001
U-13-486	Strachan House	<a href="#">1910</a>	--	1257 Haig Point Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 022 000 0001
U-13-487	Haig's Point Cemetery		--	Haig Point Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 000 000 0000
U-13-488	Holmes, Christopher, House	<a href="#">1921</a>	--	364 Haig Point Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 024 000 001B
U-13-489	Mt. Carmel Baptist Church	<a href="#">1941</a>	--	48 Old Haig Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 025 000 006B
U-13-490	Hamilton, Jane, School	<a href="#">1940</a>	--	24 Old Haig Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 025 000 0002
U-13-491	Hamilton, Johnny, House	<a href="#">1910</a>	--	Old Haig Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 025 000 007B
U-13-492	Tabby ruin	<a href="#">1800</a>	--	Haig Point Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 024 000 0001
U-13-493	Simmons, Plummey, House	<a href="#">1920</a>	--	82 Cooper River Landing Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 025 000 0003
U-13-494	Stafford House	<a href="#">1910</a>	--	128 Cooper River Landing Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 024 000 0007
U-13-495	Steven's Club	<a href="#">1950</a>	Cooper River Landing Club	94 Carvin Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 022 000 0032
U-13-496	Cooper River Cemetery		--	Melrose Landing Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 022 000 0001
U-13-497	Smith, Susie, House	<a href="#">1915</a>	--	38 Conroy Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 024 000 0008
U-13-498	Washington, Flossie, House	<a href="#">1920</a>	--	32 Conroy Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 024 000 0009
U-13-499.00	Bloody Point Lighthouse	<a href="#">1882</a>	--	Island Beach Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 027 000 008F
U-13-499.01	Bloody Point Light, Oil House	<a href="#">1882</a>	Silver Dew Winery	Island Beach Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 027 000 008F
U-13-499.02	Bloody Point Light, Storage Building	<a href="#">1900</a>	--	Island Beach Rd.	Daufuskie Island	R800 027 000 008F