



Annual Report 2020

To: Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program Board
Beaufort County County Council

By: Beaufort County Open Land Trust,
contractor Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program

2020 stands out as a uniquely challenging year; however, the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program permanently protected three properties, totaling 349 acres, and secured forested parks, farmland, river frontage, and a historic battlefield for Beaufort County citizens, visitors and generations to come. The Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program board worked diligently in-person and on-line to protect these properties and make improvements to the application process and updates to the 2020 Beaufort County Greenprint.

2020 Land Protection

Fee Simple: 122 acres
PDR/CE: 227 acres
Total: 349 acres

Dollars spent: \$3,897,037.00
Partner dollars invested: \$1,622,963.00 +
\$50,000 earmarked for passive park development of Pineview Park, Lady's Island

Total Land Protection

Fee Simple: 13,144.98 acres
PDR/CE: 13,211.87 acres
Total: 26,357 acres

Dollars Spent: \$137,641,456.00 (*includes ~\$8.4 million spent prior to first referendum*)
Partner Dollars Invested: \$42,022,211.00



Pineview: Fee Simple purchase, 108 acres for future passive park, Lady's Island (District 2)



Closed, February 2020. Pineview is a 108-acre forested property on Lady's Island, located between Sams Point Road and Rock Springs Creek. The largest expenditure for the year at \$2,980,000, it is important to note the property was acquired below fair market value in a rapidly growing part of the county. Without land protection, as many as 220 homes could have been built.

Pineview has over 2,200 feet of water frontage on Rock Springs Creek, is adjacent to a Beaufort County Open Land Trust

privately protected property and is across Rock Springs Creek from protected Holly Hall Plantation (517 acres). The undeveloped land contains a mixture of forested uplands and wetlands, providing significant wildlife habitat and natural stormwater filtration and recharge benefits. The property may be developed into a future passive park; the landowner donated \$50,000 to the County towards passive park expenditures on the property. The County has hired planning firm DesignWorkshop to complete an initial site plan for the property.

Longwood: Purchase of Development Rights / Conservation Easement, 227 acres, St. Helena (District 3)



Closed, October 2020. Longwood, 227 upland and 44 marsh acres on southern St. Helena Island, provides significant habitat, migration corridors for wildlife, and expansive views of intertidal salt marsh from public roadways. Longwood contains mixed upland forest, evergreen upland forest and forested and non-forested wetlands. Although some timbering historically took place, the oak trees have remained untouched.

Beaufort County Open Land Trust holds the conservation easement. Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program paid \$360,000 for the development rights, with the land owner donating an equivalent value. Longwood will continue to be owned and maintained privately with no ongoing cost to the County. While this area of St. Helena Island has remained rural, it faces constant development pressure - including the

recent attempt to develop Bay Point Island into an exclusive resort.

The Port Royal Island Battlefield: Fee Simple acquisition + conservation easement, 14 acres, Port Royal Island (District 1)



Closed, December 2020. This 14-acre Revolutionary War Battlefield contains significant historic value and artifacts and is protected as a critical piece of the county’s rich cultural landscape. This property has been a long-sought acquisition and fulfills cross-cutting goals including supporting the military installation, protecting critical cultural resources and connecting with the SC Liberty Trail.

The property represents key partnerships for the program. The Department of Defense contributed \$910,000 and placed a restrictive easement on the property to protect from future development that would affect the air station. Beaufort County’s Rural and Critical Lands Program contributed \$557,037. The South Carolina State Conservation Bank contributed \$352,963 to protect the property and SC Battleground Trust will hold an easement to protect its historic val-

ue. In the future, the property will be an anchor along the SC Liberty Trail, a network of battle-grounds across South Carolina.

2020 Snapshot: Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program



Program Notes

New Board Members

Michael Matthews (District 9) and Walter Mack (District 3) serve as Chairman and Vice Chairman. John Maffei (District 7) and Chris Marsh (District 4) joined the Board.

Bob Bender (District 4) resigned, receiving County proclamation for his service before his passing in fall 2020. Doug Koop (District 5) resigned in December 2020 and is in the process of relocating to Florida for new career opportunities.

2021 Vacancies: representatives are needed from District 10 and District 5.

2020 Beaufort County Greenprint

The RCLPP staff and board served as stakeholders in the 2020 Greenprint process. Perhaps the single-most referenced document, the Greenprint provides a strong outline for program priorities and helps staff, board and consultant review projects. In March 2020, County Council selected DesignWorkshop to complete the 2020 Comprehensive Plan update, which includes the Greenprint map and inventory. Board members have attended in person and virtual meetings, participated in surveys and provided feedback from March to December. The board has been diligent in its review throughout the process. A subcommittee was formed to review the draft document in Fall 2020 and continued revisions are expected in early 2021 before full board review and recommendation.

Ordinance and Application Process

Projects reviewed in 2020 were reviewed according to revised scoring rubric. The 2019-47, 2019-48, 2019-49 ordinances, approved in late 2019, were reviewed by the Board in early 2020. Designed to streamline board processes and program operations, the ordinances offered a needed update and introduced new efficiencies including an application process, improved definitions, and improved descriptions of board members and responsibilities. The changes also added a protective measure if fee land is ever re-sold from the program. Understanding these changes was a focus of early 2020.

In March 2020, the RCLPP board adopted a flow chart and application form to streamline the project review and approval process. The application was used for all projects originating from March 2020 forward and therefore is still a relatively new innovation that the Board will continue to learn, use and improve on in 2021.

Program Finances and Contracting services

In Fall 2020, the bond approved by the 2018 referendum was issued and \$25 million dollars was received into program. According to County Finance Department, as of September 2020 the Rural and Critical Lands Program had \$20,777,469 available for land acquisition.

The contract with Beaufort County Open Land Trust ended in June 2020. A request for proposals for contracting services was released and then further revised by Council. The Beaufort County Open Land Trust entered into a three month contract to support the program beginning December 2020. A new RFP was issued for a long-term contractor.

Projects under review

- Near-term review in 2021: 2019G, 2019 Dale PDR
- Due diligence: 2019K, 2020B, 2019J
- Inactive: 2019L, 2019F,
- Denied projects: 2019H, 2020D

Goals for 2021

- Fine tune Greenprint for each district to best illustrate priorities and aid in project review and prioritization
- Streamline application process to improve efficiencies for landowner and county, allowing all parties to act quickly and urgently to meet program goals
- Site visits with Council, RCLPP board, constituents to protected properties to build support from the program and its investments to date
- Increase community partnerships and invest regional land conservation to leverage all possible dollars and maximize partnerships as our region grows

Attachments

RCLPP Process Flow Chart - adopted

RCLPP Application Form - adopted and meet quarterly