

Beaufort County News Release

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH SECTION | COMMUNICATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY DEPARTMENT

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County Saves Trees Identified for Removal at Hilton Head Island Airport

Hilton Head Island Airport is currently working to remove tree obstructions from both the north and south approaches to its runways. To execute the Airport Obstruction Removal Project, the County teamed with Michael Murphy of Preservation Tree Care and AllCare Tree Surgery on the Runway 21 end, and State Tree Service on the Runway 3 end. Together with the County's consultant, Talbert, Bright and Ellington, they have been working with Airport staff to ensure the project is accomplished thoughtfully and within Town of Hilton Head Island guidelines.

Project engineers developed a mathematical process to help assess whether a tree should be trimmed or removed. Following a pre-project field inspection, the project team realized that an arboricultural solution should be considered and might supersede the technical method while still accomplishing the project goal. This approach enabled the County to preserve and trim many trees that had adequate quality, live growth below the predetermined "cut to" point, and also allowed retention of a considerable amount of tree canopy that would otherwise have been removed.

The most challenging trees were identified near the Runway 21 Approach on the north end, particularly four specimen Live oaks. Three of these trees, which are located on private parcels, were scheduled to be trimmed. A remaining tree located on Beach City Road in the right-of-way was scheduled for removal, but Murphy, the project arborist and owner of Preservation Tree Care, was determined to find a way that it could be trimmed and therefore saved. The tree was vine-covered and partially suppressed from some other understory growth, but Murphy indicated it had many good quality growth points where reduction cuts could be made, enhancing its chance for a long life.

"Reduction pruning is a major component of conservation arboriculture, a practice that has been a proven factor in assuring tree stability and longevity in Europe for hundreds of years and we thought we could use it to save the tree," said Murphy.

This multi-trunked Live oak has an 18/21/16 inch diameter at breast height and a measurable trunk of 46 inches at 4 feet from the ground. According to Murphy, the tree is estimated to be 90 to 125 years old. The surgery team involved two bucket trucks each with an operator, two flagmen for traffic control, three grounds persons, one arborist and one engineer to save the tree. They spent over two hours trimming the tree piece by piece, exercising extreme care for the preservation of this resource.

"We are happy to report that these techniques are being employed on our airport projects with great success. We are able to accomplish the mission of airport safety while also being considerate of the County's treasured natural resources," said Beaufort County Airports Director Jon Rembold.

The entire project is scheduled to be completed this month. For more information about the Hilton Head Island Airport, visit www.hiltonheadairport.com.

