



Conservancy Protects Nearly 2,200 Acres With Seven Conservation Easement Agreements

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Geographical Descriptions

ACE Basin

Strategically positioned around the Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto rivers, the 350,000-acre watershed is one of the largest areas of undeveloped wetlands/ uplands ecosystems remaining on the Atlantic Coast. This remarkable interlocking web of ecosystems includes forested uplands and wetlands, extensive tidal marshes, managed wetlands, barrier islands, and peatlands. The Basin supports 33 types of natural plant communities and provides critical habitat for waterfowl, migratory birds and endangered species. To date, the Conservancy has helped to protect 56,088 acres in the ACE Basin.

South Lowcountry

The South Lowcountry encompasses 1.5 million acres in Beaufort, Jasper, Hampton, Allendale, and Barnwell counties. This is a region of stark contrasts. Residential and commercial development along the southeastern coast rivals other growth centers throughout South Carolina and perhaps the nation. Yet, the bounty of biological diversity is unequalled in areas of similar size. Included in this area are longleaf pine sandhills, longleaf pine flatwoods and savannahs, bluffs and ravines, bottomland hardwoods, isolated wetlands, blackwater rivers and tributaries, shoals and tidal freshwater marshes, and extensive saltwater marshes. These natural communities provide habitats for more than 75 species of rare plants and animals. Land conservation efforts by various organizations, agencies, and private landowners have made significant inroads toward preserving the natural integrity of the South Lowcountry area. To date, 74,889 acres have been protected and include over 25,000 acres of federal lands, approximately 13,000 acres of state lands, and 27,800 acres of private lands protected through conservation easements and land gifts to conservation groups.

Sewee to Santee

The 796,223-acre Sewee to Santee region extends along approximately 35 miles of coastline, from Dewees Inlet to the North Santee River. The immediate coastal portion of this region consists of six state and federally protected barrier islands with numerous tidal inlets and is backed by 73,000 acres of salt and brackish marshes and intertidal mud flats. It includes the Santee River Delta with 20,000 acres of managed wetlands. The western portion of the region is dominated by the Francis Marion National Forest, which supports extensive longleaf pine and bottomland hardwood forests. In addition to the federally protected Francis Marion National Forest, the Sewee to Santee region includes Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge; Capers Island, a South Carolina Heritage Trust Preserve; the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center, managed by the South Carolina Heritage Trust; and the Santee Coastal Preserve, managed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Overall, the Sewee to Santee region has a rich diversity of natural systems and native species, including resident and migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds and endangered species. To date, the Conservancy has helped to protect 37,137 acres in the Sewee to Santee region and has received more than 20 conservation easements protecting more than 220,000 acres.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements have been used to protect millions of acres of wildlife habitat and open space. A legally binding agreement between a voluntary landowner and a private organization or public entity, conservation

easements enable the landowner to retain ownership of the land which remains private property, while restricting certain land uses associated with the property - usually the right to subdivide or develop the land. The terms of each conservation easement are unique based on the ecology of the land and the needs of the landowner; however, easements typically allow for traditional land uses such as hunting, fishing, forest management and farming. In all cases, the terms of the easement are forever attached to the property and apply to all future owners. Of the 15.3 million acres protected by the Conservancy in the United States, more than 2 million acres have been protected through conservation easements granted to the Conservancy. The Conservancy has also assisted other U.S. land trusts and public agencies with conservation easements on an additional 984,000 acres. Their use by land trusts across the country and increasingly in Canada, Latin America and Australia has escalated dramatically in the past decade. Today conservation easements are one of the most popular conservation tools employed by land trusts.

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