



South Carolina

2025 IMPACT REPORT

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Thanks to you, 2025 has been a banner year for conservation in South Carolina. We've protected critical lands, wrapped up our largest living shoreline project to-date and welcomed a threatened bird onto one of our preserves.

But our work is far from done. We are at a pivotal time for conservation in the Palmetto State.

South Carolina's population is growing at a faster rate than any other state. That rapid expansion will put tremendous pressure on our natural resources—from rivers and reservoirs that supply clean drinking water to forests that shelter wildlife and clean our air.

Those resources are already under strain. More than 280,000 acres of South Carolina farmland and forests were converted for new homes and industries between 2001 and 2016. Increased inland flooding from heavier rainfall events is impacting residents across the state—with four major events happening since August 2024. And rising sea levels are reclaiming up to two feet every 100 years from our coasts.

But we have hope—and a plan. Your support in South Carolina is critical to ensuring that our children and their children will enjoy a livable climate, healthy communities and thriving natural systems. The actions we take now will have a huge impact on our future.

Your support is making a difference, here in South Carolina and around the world. Thank you—it means so much.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale Threatt-Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dale Threatt-Taylor
Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina

Project Spotlight

Keeping Family Farms Working

Small family farms form the backbone of rural South Carolina communities, but keeping these operations profitable can be a challenge. Expenses are driven up by the rising cost of raw materials and machinery, as well as rising property taxes from expanding development. Extreme weather events that impact farm yield—including drought, floods, and fire—also are becoming more common.

When we lose these small farms, we lose not only cultural heritage and economic impact, but also valuable natural resources. Keeping these lands rural helps protect air and water quality, provides wildlife habitat and reduces flooding, among other benefits.

In 2023, The Nature Conservancy launched an initiative with the Beaufort Soil and Water Conservation District to identify challenges and work toward solutions for small farmers in the Lowcountry and Gullah-Geechee community. At its helm is Walter Mack, a local farmer for more than 25 years and one of Beaufort County's foremost conservation voices.

Mack reaches out to local farmers to share information about which crops are most profitable on small acreages, help them understand tax breaks and assist them with applying for a U.S. Department of Agriculture farm number. The latter grants farmers eligibility for disaster relief, loans, insurance and conservation incentives.

The initiative is a small program with a big impact on the future of Lowcountry culture, economic revenue and natural resources.





YOUR IMPACT: PROTECTING LAND

You Secured Land from Development

When Jasper County's Chelsea Plantation went on the market in 2019, it came as a shock to residents. Chelsea's large acreage, abundant forests and water frontage and proximity to Hilton Head meant that the future of this single property was a tipping point for the entire region's water quality, wildlife habitat and resilience. Local communities immediately began to push for the land to be protected. Unfortunately, no conservation group in the state was prepared to handle a transaction of that size.

Chelsea was bought by new private owners that year, who sold off large subdivisions to developers. The fate of this special place seemed sealed.

But the people of Beaufort and Jasper Counties hadn't given up. They attended town meetings, handed out flyers and rented billboards, pleading to "Keep Chelsea Rural." And it worked. Proposals to develop Chelsea kept getting deferred.

At the end of 2024, The Nature Conservancy approached the developers about selling. After a series of negotiations, they agreed. As closing approached, though, TNC was still \$10M short of the \$32M selling price. We reached out to our donors, and, in just three weeks, they pieced together gifts of stock, cash, IRA distributions, low-interest loans and even a new LLC to make the project happen. On May 13, thanks to your extraordinary support, TNC announced the acquisition of 2,737 acres of Chelsea.



MILESTONES ▼

70

Trees cleared from trails at TNC's Nine Times Preserve in Pickens County after Hurricane Helene. Thanks to a hardworking crew from the Southeast Conservation Corps, we were able to reopen the preserve just in time for spring wildflower season.

2,000

Acres of the family-owned Creekland Farms that were placed under easement with TNC in April. It is the largest easement in Laurens County history. The private farm will continue to be managed for forestry, agriculture and recreation.



YOUR IMPACT: SAFEGUARDING FRESH WATER

You're Reconnecting Streams

Most of us don't give much thought to how water passes underneath the roads on which we drive. Is the culvert below us a metal pipe or concrete arch? How much water can pass through it? Can fish make it through?

These oft-overlooked road crossings can have a huge impact on the creeks and streams they convey. Undersized culverts are a public safety hazard. Standard metal-pipe culverts are often too small for heavy rain events, so they are prone to blowing out and taking the road with them. Even during normal flows, too-small culverts can concentrate stream flow like a garden hose, creating a current much too powerful for fish to swim against. Even strong swimmers like brook

trout can be turned back by a culvert that is too long, too dark and devoid of places for the fish to rest against the flow of the current.

When a culvert blows out, the easiest thing to do is just replace it with the same model—but that doesn't solve long-term problems of public safety and fish passage. When the U.S. Forest Service was looking to replace several culverts in the Long Cane Ranger District of Sumter National Forest, The Nature Conservancy stepped in with a grant to create new design plans that would address these issues. This summer, three of those new culverts were installed on Forest Service roads.

MILESTONES ▼

61

Percent of the state that will be covered by TNC's new In-Lieu Fee Mitigation program, the proposal for which was submitted this year to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

70

Feet of new bridge installed at TNC's Blue Wall Preserve in Landrum this spring. The bridge replaced an eroding concrete structure dating back to the 1920s, which was becoming a concern for both public access and water quality in the creek below.



YOUR IMPACT: SUPPORTING HEALTHY OCEANS

You're Protecting Marine Habitats

More than 13 million people live on the coastline between North Carolina and Florida. Nearly all of them are connected to offshore activities, including fishing, tourism, shipping, energy and defense. The waters of the South Atlantic support thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic impact every year.

The large number of competing interests make it challenging for agencies and planners to figure out which areas of the ocean offer the least amount of conflict for new uses, such as drawing a new shipping lane or harvesting sand for beach renourishment.

Of course, it's not just business and tourism at stake: human offshore activities can interfere with habitats that are vital to marine life. Whales and sea turtles swim in the same waters used for shipping. Deepwater fish spawn on the same sea floor crossed by communications cables.

In April, The Nature Conservancy relaunched its Southeast Marine Mapping Tool, a resource to gather data from multiple sources and make it accessible to state agencies, local governments, environmental groups and other stakeholders who make decisions regarding ocean space. The goal is to improve outcomes for marine life by connecting species and habitat data with other ocean use data.

TNC's ocean team has since begun a similar project in the Gulf, mapping animal movements and threats. That tool will be used to help inform the location of future restoration projects.

MILESTONES ▼

3 Research trips funded by TNC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to three Spawning Special Management Zones off the South Atlantic coast. The trips gathered data on fish spawning to help inform future protections.

2 Southern U.S. focus estuaries designated by TNC for watershed-scale protection and restoration, similar to what South Carolina already has accomplished in the ACE Basin. The effort will focus on land protection, water quality, military partnerships and marsh restoration in the same areas to benefit coastal communities and marine life.



YOUR IMPACT: RESTORING FORESTS

You're Bringing Back Threatened Birds

In the fall of 2024, a hiker at The Nature Conservancy's Peachtree Rock Heritage Preserve near Lexington, S.C., heard the distinctive whistle of a red-cockaded woodpecker. Prior to that day, these threatened birds had not been seen in Lexington County for more than 50 years.

Red-cockaded woodpeckers are unique in that they carve their nest cavities in still-living trees. Their population suffered in the 1950s and 60s, when many old-growth longleaf pines were cleared for timber or new land uses. The birds were listed as federally endangered in 1973. By then, there were estimated to be just 1,470 breeding groups in the United States.

Thanks to the Endangered Species Act and habitat-restoration activities by government agencies, conservation organizations and private landowners, the birds made a comeback, reaching an estimated 7,800 breeding groups nationwide. The birds were downlisted from endangered to threatened last October.

This spring, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and TNC began a focused effort to help a population take hold at Peachtree. SCDNR installed four starter cavities to attract additional birds, and TNC has continued implementing controlled burns to help the native longleaf pines thrive.

MILESTONES ▼

70 Members of TNC's North America fire crew that attended orientation and training at a TNC property near Awendaw, S.C. The crew was instructed on using controlled burns to benefit longleaf pine and prepared for a three-week assignment in the Francis Marion National Forest.

16 Hours per day worked by TNC fire crews to help contain the Table Rock Fire in March and April. Twelve crew members completed complex burnout operations that starved the fire of fuel in its path.





YOUR IMPACT: CREATING RESILIENCE

You're Creating Stronger Shorelines

Morgan Park lies just a short walk from the historic district in Georgetown, S.C. Its location at the tip of a peninsula offers stunning views of the Sampit River and Winyah Bay, but also exposed it to significant erosion from high tides and boat wakes. Surging brackish water inundated the trees closest to shore, causing them to die and eventually topple. Once those roots were lost, that section of sediment would wash away, and the process began anew on the next trees in line. If nothing was done, this beloved community park would have been entirely reclaimed by water.

In 2019, working with officials from Georgetown County and the City of Georgetown, as well as local community ambassadors, The Nature Conservancy embarked on an ambitious one-acre living shoreline project that would help Morgan Park heal itself. Composed of wooden breakwaters, wattle fences and oyster cages, it was the first structure to go through the state's new private permit process for living shorelines. Funding for the project came from a visionary gift from the Darnall W. and Susan F. Boyd Foundation, as well as Boeing South Carolina.

Seven years later, the Boyd Living Shoreline is officially complete. In addition to protecting the shoreline and regrowing new marsh grasses, the shoreline serves as vital habitat for juvenile fish, feeds wading birds and shorebirds and filters pollution from stormwater runoff. Learn more at nature.org/boydshoreline.

MILESTONES ▼

825 Feet of reef laid thus far at TNC's living shoreline at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. Staff plan to finish the remaining 175 feet of the southern half of the reef by the end of 2025. Sediment and marsh grasses already are collecting behind the Oyster Castles™ placed earlier this year.

5 Acres included in the new Bridgepointe Ecological Park, located in the Shadowmoss neighborhood in West Ashley, part of the Church Creek watershed. TNC funded the park design, following a state and federal buyout of frequently flooded homes, and now is creating educational signage to educate visitors about nature-based solutions.



YOUR IMPACT: REDUCING ATMOSPHERIC CARBON

You're Protecting Land that Stores Carbon

Studies show that healthy bottomland hardwood forests can absorb between 1.9 and 3.4 metric tons of carbon per hectare (about 2.5 acres) per year. That makes South Carolina's forests one of our greatest resources in removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Those gases otherwise can contribute to warmer temperatures, heavier rain events and more severe coastal storms.

In August 2024, The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina was one of eight recipients of a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to protect habitats like these that store carbon (the others being state agencies and TNC programs in South Carolina, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia).

Those funds started bearing fruit this year as the first projects closed in two states:

- As of October 2025, TNC is under contract to purchase 4,619 acres in Horry County, S.C. The land is planned for future public access, including camping and paddling, as part of the state's Department of Natural Resources Heritage Preserve program.
- In July 2025, TNC purchased the 2,727-acre "Light Ground Pocosin Property" in Pamlico County, N.C. TNC will restore the property to natural wetland conditions, then add it to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Light Ground Pocosin Game Land, more than tripling its size.
- In April 2025, TNC acquired 1,500 acres of land in Garrett County, Md. The "Potomac Highlands Property" will be restored from a history of extractive mining to a healthy forested ecosystem that provides clean air and water, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation.

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement 3D25824 to the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the Environmental Protection Agency endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document, as well as any images, video, text, or other content created by generative artificial intelligence tools, nor does any such content necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency.



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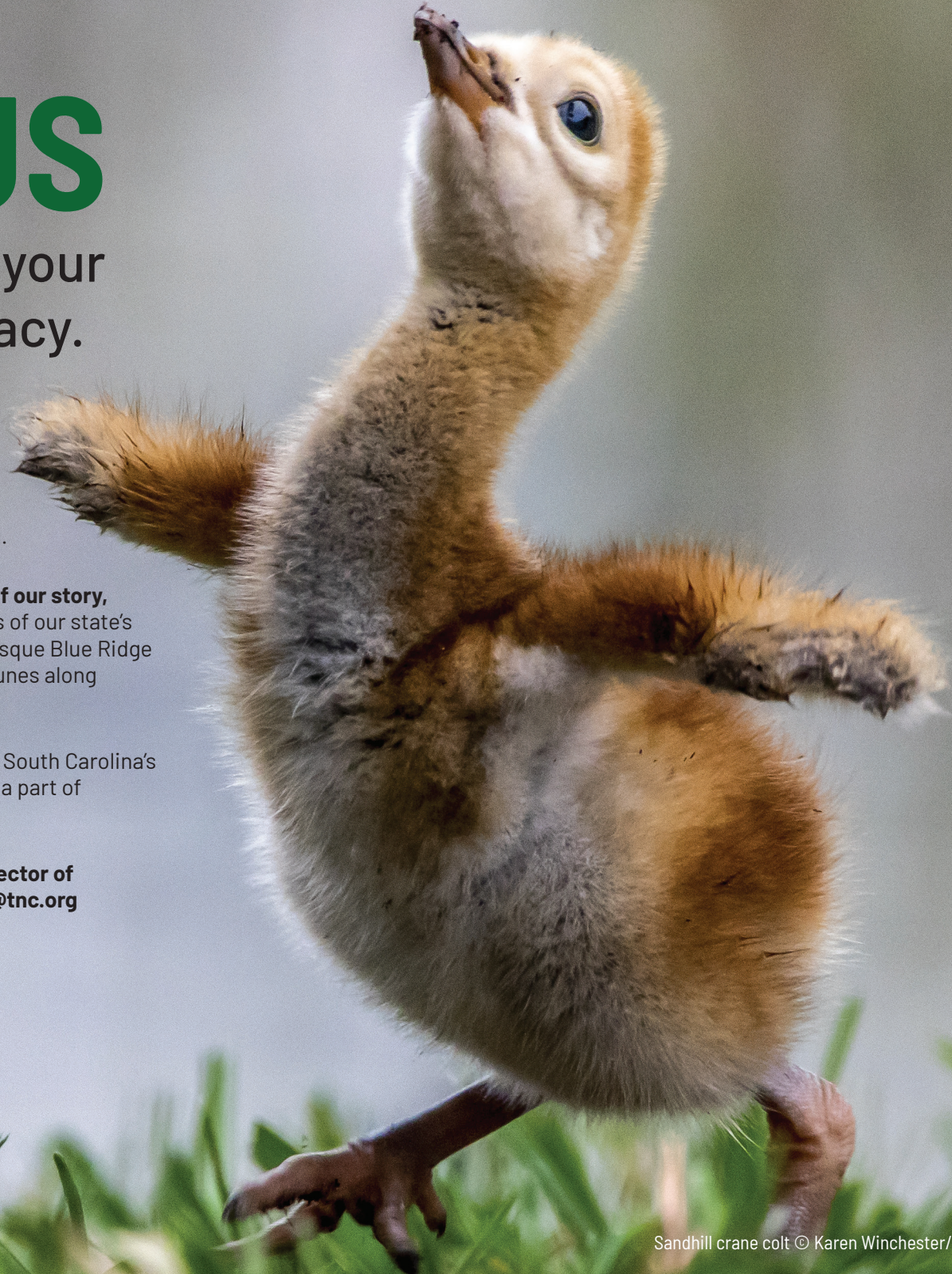
Help us continue your conservation legacy.

More than 55 years ago, a group of people like you—passionate about protecting South Carolina's lands, waters and wildlife—united to protect the future of our state. Those early volunteers formed The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina.

Since then, you have been at the center of our story, helping to protect more than 417,000 acres of our state's natural lands and waters, from the picturesque Blue Ridge mountains to the stunning marshes and dunes along our coast.

Learn more about ways you can help meet South Carolina's most pressing conservation needs and be a part of continuing this proud legacy.

For more information, please contact Director of Philanthropy Elizabeth Foster at efoster@tnc.org or (843) 800-1274.





Make a Difference

There are many ways to give to The Nature Conservancy. TNC's giving options may offer tax savings, income for life and other potential benefits for you and our natural world.

Gifts of Cash

To support the South Carolina chapter's most pressing priorities, please use the envelope in this report or give online securely at <http://nature.org/donatesc>

Gifts of Stock

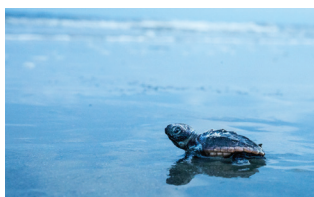
Gifts of appreciated stock, bonds or mutual funds are a smart and simple way to support TNC. These gifts allow you to give more with less because you may be able to take an income tax deduction and avoid capital gains taxes.

IRA Distribution

Direct distributions from your IRA to TNC can be made without incurring income tax on the withdrawal and are a great way to satisfy a Required Minimum Distribution in an impactful way.

Donor-Advised Funds

Through TNC's Donor-Advised Fund, you make a charitable gift when the time is best for you and then advise us about how you would like your donation meet your other philanthropic objectives. You can participate in TNC's Donor-Advised Fund with a minimum contribution of \$100,000.



The Legacy Club

The Legacy Club includes people of all means who have included TNC in their will or estate plans or established a life-

income gift with TNC. You can name TNC as the beneficiary of specific assets, a portion of your estate or your residual estate after payment of other bequests.

Bequests to TNC are free from federal estate tax and can offer substantial tax savings. There is no limit to the amount you can leave to TNC—or other charitable organizations—through your will.

If you wish to name TNC in your will or estate plan, or designate us as a beneficiary of your retirement accounts or life insurance, please name us as:

The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the District of Columbia, and with principal business address of 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington, Virginia 22203-1616.

Our tax identification number is 53-0242652.



The Nature Conservancy does not render tax or legal advice. Please consult your professional financial or tax advisor before making a charitable gift. If you are interested in having a conversation about options for giving to TNC, please reach out to Elizabeth Foster, director of philanthropy, at efoster@tnc.org or (843) 800-1274.