



LAND PROTECTION BY THE NUMBERS

Land Protection is essential to Build Healthy Communities

Building thriving towns, supporting a healthy economy, and environmental conservation are complementary forces.

Through our work at the Open Land Trust, we have a daily opportunity to engage in strategic land protection and both protect our natural resources and help our communities prosper. Strategic land protection around developing towns and cities helps guide population growth and support our natural communities. This region one of America's most biologically diverse yet fastest-growing regions. In the last census, Jasper County grew by 21.3%; by investing in land protection, our region can continue to grow and enjoy economic prosperity and natural resource protection benefiting wildlife, water quality and our quality of life.

Statewide Numbers

Almost 3 million acres are protected statewide -

Federal (28.3%)
State (20.6%),
Private (34.7%)

Local (1.9%) and
Otherwise (14.6%).

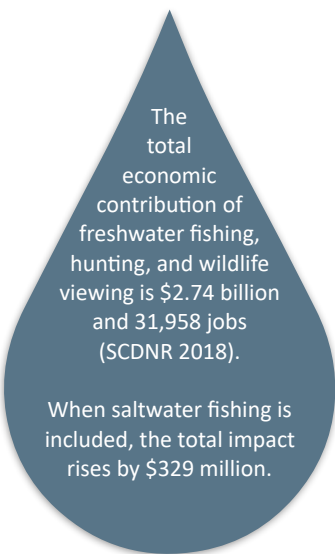
Locally, Jasper County boasts 85,100 protected acres countywide, Beaufort 99,700 acres and Hampton 70,000 acres.

Land Protection is Fundamental to Water Quality

Our region is best known for its many meandering rivers and the salt marshes that dominate the landscape. In fact, half of all South Carolina's salt marsh occurs in the Port Royal Sound watershed, which actually is more like a marine ecosystem (with Cobia! Red Drum!) for over 10 miles inland. Surrounding the salt marsh, our regions 56,915 acres of wetlands provide important habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

Strategic land protection to protect sensitive river headwaters in the Chechessee, Coosawhatchie and Okatie Rivers, forested uplands in Jasper and Hampton counties that drain into the salt marsh, and protection of wetland resources will continue to benefit fishing, shrimping, hunting, and recreation.

Shrimping and fishing in the area has resulted in extensive economic impact, enjoyment and tourism. There are currently 11 boat landings in Jasper County that provide public access to the rivers.



Development in the watershed comes with risks: Stormwater from roads and rooftops act as a pollutant to this fragile, salty system. Water quality will be impacted by development in the watershed, especially on properties adjacent to these sensitive river systems. This affects the ability to shrimp, fish, recreate and enjoy the water in the Broad River corridor.

Healthy river systems help us weather storms: Protecting uplands and salt marsh in the landscape can protect us from impacts with sea level rise and flooding and reduce impacts to roadways and stormwater utilities in the short term, and protect longevity of critical infrastructure, water and sewer utilities, and rural and suburban development areas in the long term.

Forested river systems produce clean drinking water: The Savannah River is the primary drinking water source for over a half million residents in South Carolina and Georgia, including the DoD installations in the Lowcountry.

The Savannah River Clean Water Fund (SRCWF) set a goal to help keep 60% forests intact in the lower Savannah watershed to protect our drinking water at the source. BJWSA is an active partner in land protection in the region.



Land Protection enriches Traditional Working Lands, Forestry, Agriculture

Forestry and Agriculture

Statewide, forestry creates 75,222 jobs and \$19.4 billion to the economy.

Combined with agriculture, to represent “agribusiness”, the two contribute \$42 billion and over 200,000 jobs to the state's economy (SCDNR 2018).

Forestry and agriculture are the backbone of the state's natural resource economy and Jasper County and our larger region play an important role. Beaufort and Jasper Counties represent forestry hotspots and areas of opportunity.

Connected, protected, working forests allow the larger industries to thrive, mills to locate, truckers to aggregate operations and other

support services to exist in high demand. Conservation Easements on working forests allow for prescribed burns, ensure best management practices are followed, and this connected forested landscape is protected in perpetuity, even as valuable timber is harvested on a rotating basis.

Jasper County is also home to 135 farms totaling 63,146 acres according to the USDA-National Agricultural Census. These farms produce over \$13,367,000 in market value of all products sold including produce, animal products, and sod. Of these 135 farms, 94 are family farms.



Cattle on Protected Property, Burton 2021

Land Protection spurs Innovation

In addition to more traditional economic sectors, land protection is a complementary source to economic innovation. OLT holds a conservation easement on the 600-acre solar farm in Beaufort County, providing for its operation as a solar farm which creates 72MW of electricity to power homes and the Jasper County Solar farm is surrounded by protected land off of Highway 278. OLT and land conservation partners are proud to plan with our landowners for innovative outcomes as the green energy industry, among others, grows in South Carolina. It helps decision makers on all levels choose how best to operate in concert with something proactively, instead of reactively.

Land Protection supports Public Access



In 2021 and 2022, land conservation partners (The Nature Conservancy and Open Space Institute) assembled over 12,000 acres for public access at the headwaters of the Coosawhatchie River. Known as “Slater-Buckfield” this entire property is expected to be transferred to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) to become a wildlife management area with public access for all. Strategic land protection like this supports tourism and related activities including bird-watching, kayaking, and sightseeing that are in increasingly high demand.

The property includes upland longleaf pine forests providing habitat for rare gopher tortoise populations, 36 miles of river frontage on the Coosawhatchie River, Tulifinny River and their many braided streams and drains into the Port Royal Sound. Several federally threatened or endangered species and well as numerous species that are at-risk call this region home including the red-cockaded Woodpeckers, flatwoods

salamanders, and gopher tortoises. This investment will allow the public to access recreation, wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities in an area where no public access existed before and help build a coastal greenbelt from the ACE Basin to the Savannah River.

OPEN LAND MAKES AN IMPACT

Join us to create our regional greenbelt and protect special places

