

the CONSERVATION Chronicle

Newsletter of the Aiken Land Conservancy

FEBRUARY, 2010

Aiken Land Conservancy: Past, Present and Future

by Lisa Hosang

Dedicated to the preservation of undeveloped land in Aiken County, the Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC) is a non-profit organization, begun in 1991 as the Aiken County Open Land Trust (ACOLT).

With over 1,800 acres under protection and several important new acquisitions, the ALC is becoming a major player in land management in our region.

And, we've been busy lately. The ALC recently was instrumental, working with the County of Aiken, in protecting two of the most precious corners of the county, the historic and beautiful Langley Pond and the former Savannah River Site recreation area known as the ORA, and now named Boyd Pond Park.

A property actually owned by ALC that most residents of Aiken are familiar with is Winthrop Polo Field, the product of a five-year \$600,000 private fundraising drive. That was a monumental task and it remains an ongoing challenge, physically and financially, to maintain the field and manage its uses. No public funds go to the huge field's maintenance costs, which are substantial. The ALC partners with the Aiken Polo Club and others who regularly use the field, who make substantial contributions to the upkeep.

Many ALC members also enjoy equestrian pursuits and the group has a long history of working together with Aiken County's horse industry on open space issues to preserve the large areas needed by local equestrians. The ALC brings together people who enjoy fox hunting,

carriage driving, polo, hunter jumpers, dressage, eventing, cutting, reining, pleasure riding and all sorts of other equestrian pursuits. It is hoped that the equestrian community will continue to come to the ALC to work

together to preserve the lands they must have to enjoy

their pursuits. Anyone passionate about

land preservation and green space

is welcome to become involved.

We strongly encourage land

owners to get in touch with

ALC regarding conservation

easements and their consequent

tax benefits.



Meanwhile, financial contributions to the Aiken Land Conservancy will always be vital in retaining what we have so far

and will be put to good use conserving more land in the future. Financial contributions can be doubled or more by using funding sources such as the South Carolina Conservation Bank. Other funding for the ALC comes from the Aiken Garden Show, the Spring Classic Horse Show, several social events sponsored by the group, and the Aiken Trials. The conservancy is required to maintain the land it owns and to monitor the land on which it holds easement—and all of that is expensive.

Personally, I believe that conservation and development are not mutually exclusive terms. Development will happen. We all need to be involved in order to try to give some order and direction to development. We must educate landowners and developers as to possible tax vehicles that will enable them to afford lower density development. We must be proactive. It is a law of nature that change will happen. Public complacency and apathy will damage the quality of life in Aiken County. It is up

(continued on page 6)

Executive Director's Report

Dacre Stoker

Winthrop Polo Field tree restoration project



The ALC has taken another significant step toward restoring the entire tree line around the Winthrop Polo Field. In 1998, we began cutting away at the understory of the volunteer trees and shrubs around the live oaks on the Grace Avenue end of the field. A few years later we continued at the opposite end, clearing underneath the delicate magnolias along Mead Avenue.

I am pleased to report that over the past few months, in partnership with the City of Aiken, we undertook the clearing out of volunteer trees and shrubbery along the Sumter Street line of trees. Thanks to a large donation by Bob Gore, which was met by the city's matching grant, funds were available to complete this very large project in just a few weeks.

Clearing out the tree line will give more light, nutrients and water to the existing significant trees, and will allow them to fill out and flourish. In addition, the city planted a row of dwarf magnolias inside the tree line, which will fill in the gaps between the larger existing specimen trees and in a few years provide a very suitable vegetative privacy screen.

The next step to follow this spring will be the addition of a two-board fence inside the tree line along Sumter, which will match the fencing at the ends of the field.

The partnership with the City of Aiken is a very significant step in the city's role of supporting preservation of open/green space in the Historic Horse District and Aiken in general. The ALC has entered into an agreement with the city, which ensures the Winthrop Polo Field will never be developed. This will help maintain a low density of residences, and help prevent any increase in automobile traffic on the dirt roads, both of which are necessary for the Horse District to remain viable.

Thanks to generosity of Mr. Gore and the foresight of the city, the ALC has been able to take another step towards preserving the integrity of this neighborhood forever. It is the hope of the ALC that owners of other large open spaces in the Horse District, such as the Whitney Trust and the Green Boundary Club, will also look at similar partnerships with the city as ways to preserve their acreage intact. 

Aiken Land Conservancy

Preserving Aiken's natural heritage

The mission of the
Aiken Land Conservancy is to
preserve natural and historic resources
through land conservation.

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Charlie Fliflet, Vice President
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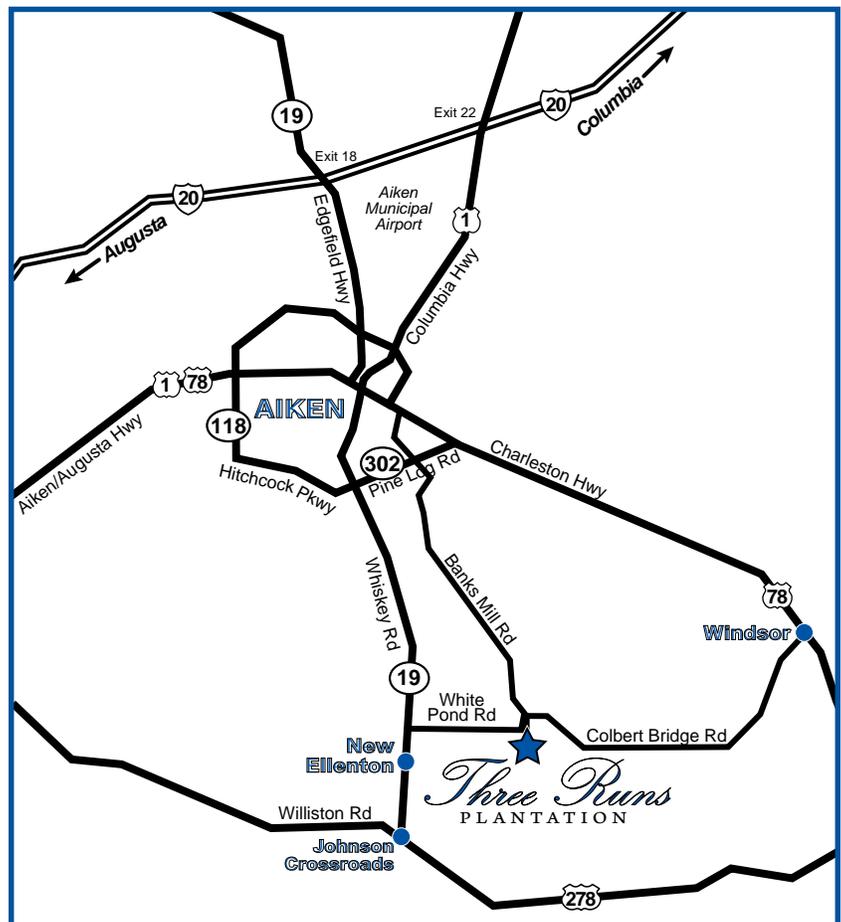
DON'T MISS THE 2010 ALC ANNUAL MEETING WITH FEATURED SPEAKER RUDY MANCKE

The ALC is pleased to have Rudy Mancke as the featured speaker at this year's annual meeting. Rudy has been described as "South Carolina's most famous contemporary naturalist" with good reason. Few people have the knowledge, or the enthusiasm, to hold an audience's interest on the larval food plant of a butterfly one minute and the uplift of a mountain range the next. A Spartanburg native, before Rudy graduated from Wofford College his passion for all things natural was obvious, whether it involved catching queen snakes in his neighborhood lake or marveling at metamorphic rock in the Appalachian foothills. His time as a Medic in the Army stationed in Germany gave him time to bone up on anatomy, and graduate work at USC—coupled with his insatiable thirst to learn more natural history—prepared him well for his future as an educator. He taught a variety of ecological studies at Spartanburg High School for three years before the opportunity of a lifetime (that is, aside from marrying his wife Ellen) presented itself in 1975—being named the first Curator of Natural History at the newly forming SC State Museum in Columbia.



Fortunately for all of us who love natural history, Rudy had some great neighbors in his museum neighborhood in the form of SC Educational Television. Rudy and SCETV teamed up to make *NatureScene*, the wildly popular public television series that highlighted natural areas of interest and beauty for more than 20 years. Rudy's accomplishments and accolades are too numerous to list here (so come to his talk!). He founded the South Carolina Association of Naturalists (SCAN), was distinguished lecturer in Natural History at the USC School of the Environment (retired 2008, currently adjunct faculty), hosts public radio's daily Nature Notes, has been awarded six honorary doctorates, served as SCETV's Director of Science and Nature Programming, and has received numerous state and national educational and conservation awards. Please join Rudy as he shares with us the values we all can learn from the natural world. 🌿

Join us for the
Aiken Land
Conservancy
ANNUAL MEETING
from **2-4 PM** on
Sunday,
February 28, 2010
at the **Clubhouse** at
Three Runs
Plantation.



ALC Welcomes a new member to the Board of Trustees

As we begin a new year and a new decade, the Conservancy welcomes a new member to the Board of Trustees: Kent Cabbage.

Kent Cabbage holds a B.S. in ecology and an M.S. in zoology, and recently earned his Ph.D. in educational administration. He was employed as an environmental scientist for Tetra Tech NUS in Aiken from 1995-2001, working on projects that involved conservation issues, environmental toxicology, and adaptive re-use of property. Since 2002 he has been a biology professor at Aiken Technical College, and is the head of the biology program there. In addition, Kent gives haunted history tours of downtown Aiken. He is married to Cynthia, a professional horse trainer, and the two have a three-year old daughter, Lucy. In regards to joining the ALC board, Kent states that "Land is the foundation of all efforts to preserve flora, fauna, waterways, and outdoor aesthetics. In that sense, I believe that there is nothing more critical than the preservation of land."

ALC extends a big "Thank You" to out-going Board members John Pickett and Bill Soucy. John served on the Board of Trustees for many years and was active with the Stewardship and Membership Committees. Bill, who served on the Board since 2006, was active on the Land Acquisition and Fundraising Committees. We wish both John and Bill good luck with their future endeavors. 🍁



Kent and Cynthia Cabbage, on a recent vacation.

"WE ABUSE THE LAND BECAUSE WE REGARD IT AS A COMMODITY BELONGING TO US. WHEN WE SEE LAND AS A COMMUNITY TO WHICH WE BELONG, WE MAY BEGIN TO USE IT WITH LOVE AND RESPECT." *Aldo Leopold*

Update on the ALC Watershed Committee

The Watershed Committee is seeking two (or more) volunteers to coordinate two tasks.

(1) Maintenance and upkeep of Hidden Bay, the Carolina bay wetland adjacent to the O'Dell Weeks Center. We removed invasive plant species around a portion of the site from 2006 to 2008, and planted a variety of native tree, shrub, and grass species. Though much of the hard work is done, efforts must continue three or four times per year to maintain the plantings, as well as trail upkeep, trash removal, and other projects. We have an existing group of 30 or more volunteer workers, but they need a leader who will plan the events and marshal the forces.

(2) A primary goal of ALC's vision is to establish a network of connected conservation easements with interested landowners throughout Aiken County, especially in high conservation-value areas near streams and creeks. We need someone (preferably with GIS expertise) who can help identify lands in Aiken County that would be high priority for conservation easements. The task would involve creating a database of these parcels for use by ALC committees to gauge landowner interest in an easement network.

For more information about either of these stewardship positions, please contact David Scott (scott@srel.edu).

President's Message

Paul Rideout

2009 was a challenging year for almost all people and organizations, and ALC certainly faced its share of challenges. Staffing was affected when our Administrative Director, Laura Janecek, had to reduce hours due to other work responsibilities, and our Executive Director, Dacre Stoker, went on an extended leave of absence to promote his new book, *Dracula the Undead*. If you haven't yet read it, you need to do so. We wish Dacre great success with his endeavor. Dacre has continued to support Aiken Land Conservancy in every way possible, and will continue to serve on the board and help guide and grow the organization. However, changes in his life mean we are seeking a new Executive Director who can continue to capitalize on the momentum that Dacre and Laura have been instrumental in building. We are working to finalize this process now.

Finance issues also were a big factor in 2009. The South Carolina Conservation Bank faced steep budget cuts, resulting in the inability to fund many worthwhile projects. ALC was fortunate to be one of five land conservation groups out of thirteen applicants that were awarded funding for land acquisition in late 2009. This enabled us to acquire 350 acres of green space, and additional funding has been approved and will be allocated to us if the state budget allows. Funding of the Conservation Bank will continue to be a concern, so we must continue to do all we can ourselves to raise support for preserving land in Aiken County. I am proud of the fact that in 2009 the board members of ALC personally contributed over \$8,000 to the organization. I am also grateful



to the many individuals and organizations which helped make 2009 a great year by contributing major funds and time to the cause of land conservation. Through your efforts, we were able to acquire or place under conservation easement about 620 acres of important green space. We give a big THANK YOU to all who have supported ALC over the years.

Aiken is a jewel that continues to gain national and even international acclaim. The growth in the equine industry has major economic impact on the area, and is possible because of the green space available. The quality of life is improved for everyone when open space is purposefully incorporated into growth and development plans. Studies nationwide show that parks, greenways, and natural lands boost property values in an area, help attract businesses concerned about hiring and retaining employees looking for a good quality of life, and protect natural systems on which economic well-being depend. Parks in cities help increase the value of surrounding land and developments, resulting in potential for improved city property tax revenues. Residents enjoy a higher quality of life and are happier, and people tend to be more active in areas where open space is available for recreation. This can even lead to reduced health costs as people are more physically fit.

Thank you for all you have done in helping make this possible, and please help us continue the work. But don't forget to take time to enjoy the fruits of your labor, so get out and enjoy the natural beauty of Aiken. 

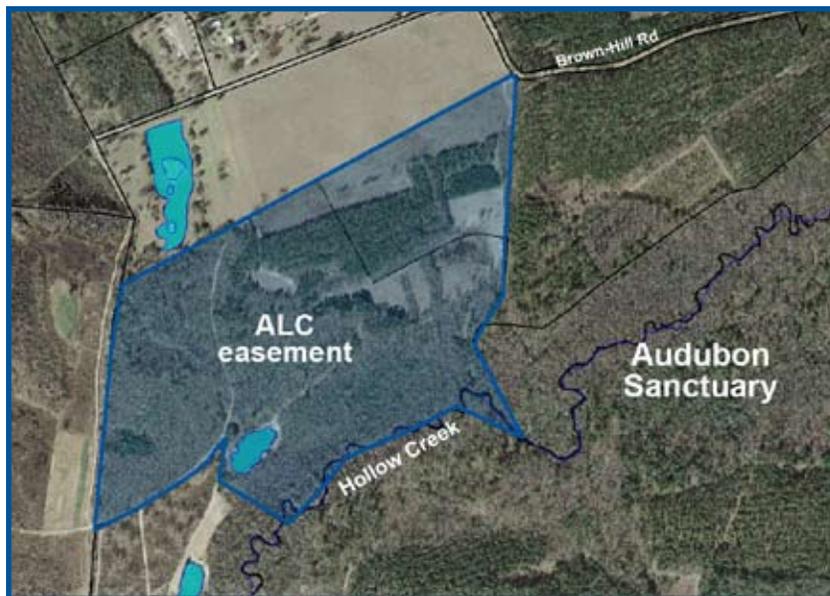
Don't let this be your **LAST** Land Trust newsletter!
Renew your membership TODAY!

Not sure if your membership is up to date?
Check on the "Members" page of the ALC website (www.ConserveAiken.org)
for a list of 2010 members.

ALC Joins with the National Audubon Society to Protect Aiken County Land

One of ALC's newest conservation easements comes from the National Audubon Society. This 95.72-acre parcel is located on the Audubon Center and Sanctuary at Silver Bluff Plantation near Jackson, SC. It includes the Hollow Creek floodplain and is 70% forested and 30% agricultural and recently cut land. The land features upland hardwood forest with scattered planted loblolly pine that has been thinned once, wildlife food plots, and additional pine in deep

sand. Future land management calls for conversion of currently open and loblolly habitat to a longleaf pine and wiregrass community. Pine stands will have prescribed burning on a 3-yr cycle, and hardwood stands will be kept intact as wildlife habitat. The forested and non-forested portions of the easement support a large number of bird species and other wildlife, including neotropical songbirds and game species such as deer and turkey. 🌿



Aerial photograph showing one of the new ALC easements acquired in partnership with the National Audubon Society.

**“THE FROG DOES NOT DRINK UP
THE POND IN WHICH IT LIVES.”** *Chinese Proverb*

Aiken Land Conservancy: Past, Present and Future *(continued from page 1)*

to each and every one of us to do our best to see that, when development happens, it does so in a way that preserves the qualities that make Aiken such a special place to live.

For more information about ALC or to contact us, please visit our Web site (www.ConserveAiken.org).

Lisa Hosang was born and raised in Aiken. She is married to Mike Hosang, also a native of Aiken. Both are Real Estate Brokers with the Carolina Real Estate Company. 🌿

Dedicated Land Owners and the ALC Conserved 620 Acres in 2009

by Harry E. Shealy, Jr.

You may be thinking that you sure haven't heard much about or from The Aiken Land Conservancy this past year. While that may be true, we were very busy in 2009. We have acquired conservation easements on six new properties ranging in size from 2.21 to 349 acres and totaling nearly 620 acres. Our newest acquisitions are listed below.

The **Julia T. Hall** property is 8.7 acres located on Audubon Dr. S.E. near the corner with Powder House Rd and adjacent to the Aiken Training Track. The property was formerly allowed to be subdivided into separate lots. Presently the property contains a house, barn, and a two car garage.

Holly Houghton's 2.21 acres is located at 422 South Boundary Ave. This property was formerly allowed to be subdivided into separate lots. Presently the property contains a house, a two car garage, a pool and a small pool house. It is on the right just as you enter the South Boundary entrance to Hitchcock Woods.

Both the Hall and the Houghton properties are located near unique equine areas and they are integral to the protection to the historic equine nature of Aiken. These are critical areas to protect, since recently the Horse District has come under intense pressure to convert to smaller residential lots. If this were allowed to happen, the horse industry may be forced to move outside of city.

Frank and Catherine Chew placed a conservation easement on 43.368 acres located at 181 Fox Pond Rd. This property contains a house, a pool and a pool house, a guesthouse, a four-stall barn, two run in sheds, and three small storage sheds. This property is very close to other properties on which the ALC either holds a title or an easement, such as Alibi Farm and the Preston tract.

The **Gibbs Tract** is 95.72 acres off of Brown Hill Lane Road near the intersection of Kathwood and Silver Bluff Rd. What makes this property even more valuable is that it is contiguous to the nearly 3,200 acre Audubon Silver Bluff Plantation which is protected by the Audubon Society.

J. Wayne Raiford and Three Runs Plantation donated easements on 119.6 acres near Plantation Drive and Cedar Creek. These tracts protect portions of the Upper Three Runs Creek, which is one of the most insect diverse streams in the world. Yes, the world!

Mac Toole placed a conservation easement five separate parcels totaling 349 acres located off of Hwy. 39 outside of Perry, SC very near the 39.27 acres eased last year by Wade Brodie. There is a farmhouse and shed on the 118 acre parcel. The property is a combination of farmland, forest, and two ponds. This easement not only protects the open space and habitat for wildlife but the easement supports the economic base of the area with working farmlands and working forests.

All six hundred twenty acres help to provide a better quality of life for the future of Aiken County. These properties help provide wildlife habitat, wonderful open space for all to see and enjoy, while helping to maintain the economic base for forestry, agriculture, and the equine industry. If we were at our annual meeting, I would ask everyone to stand and give Ms. Hall, Ms. Houghton, the Chew's, Dr. Gibbs, Mr. Raiford, and Mr. Toole a big round of applause for their foresight and generosity in setting these properties aside for us and future generations to enjoy.

As you can see we were busy and The Aiken Land Conservancy had a really good year in 2009 and with your financial support and help, we can have an even better year in 2010!!!! The Aiken Land Conservancy would like to thank you for all that you do to keep Aiken green. 

Want to use your credit card to renew your ALC membership or make a donation?
Check out the "Members" page of the ALC web site (www.conserveAiken.org) to make secure on-line payments via PayPal.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK ONCE AGAIN FUNDS AN AIKEN LAND CONSERVANCY PROJECT IN AIKEN COUNTY

by Harry E. Shealy, Jr.

The Aiken Land Conservancy has recently been awarded the third of four grants that guarantee more open space in Aiken County. The grant for \$250,000 received in September 2009 was to purchase the conservation easement on five contiguous tracts totaling about 350 acres known as the Toole tract. The properties are located in Aiken County, north of Salley, South Carolina, west of Festival Trail Road (SC 39). The properties are primarily agricultural lands consisting of cleared fields and planted pines interspersed with natural wooded areas. With the exception of a few old buildings on the tracts, the land is mostly undeveloped. By putting a conservation easement on the land, the owner has agreed to keep the land agricultural/open space in perpetuity with only limited rights to build on the land. ALC is very fortunate to have received one of only five grants funded at the September 2009 meeting of the South Carolina Conservation Bank board.

In December 2008 the ALC received a grant for \$300,000 for the ORA/Boyd Pond tract located southwest of Aiken which the ALC and Aiken County own jointly. The ALC owns 92 acres of the 207 acres park. ALC owns the pond and the land which was never developed for recreational uses. We are pleased that the ALC and the Aiken County could jointly acquire this excellent recreational park which features both active and passive recreational facilities for all to use and enjoy.

The Aiken Land Conservancy received its very first grant in the fall of 2006 for a 130 acre tract of land adjacent to the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve. The preserve is owned and managed by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' Heritage Trust Program. The acquisition of the land was funded jointly by Aiken County, The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and the South Carolina Conservation Bank. The majority of the almost \$550,000 purchase price was from the South Carolina Conservation Bank. The 130 acres was deeded to the SCDNR, and it is now part of the 1630 acre Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve located on the Oak Ridge Club Road east of Aiken, more or less between Windsor and Springfield, South Carolina. The wonderful thing about this property is

that it provides additional habitat for the northern most known population of the Gopher Tortoise, and it also affords access to the South Fork of the Edisto River from the preserve. The Gopher Tortoise is currently being considered for listing as an endangered species. The 1630 acre preserve is open to the public for hiking, hunting, fishing, and horseback riding, all thanks to the South Carolina Conservation Bank, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Aiken County and the Aiken Land Conservancy.

Our fourth grant is to purchase land on Langley Pond west of Aiken. We have been granted \$648,000 for the purchase of 64 acres of what will become a county park of about 400 acres including Langley Pond. As of this writing in mid-October 2009 the negotiations between the land owners and Aiken County have not been concluded. When Aiken County acquires the property, the ALC will receive the funds from the South Carolina Conservation Bank, and we will own the 64 acres of the land. The county will own the remainder, including the pond to be managed for all to use as both an active and passive recreational park. Once again this grant was made possible by the partnering of the South Carolina Conservation Bank, Aiken County, and the Aiken Land Conservancy.

As you can see the people of Aiken County are by far the winners in the cooperative efforts of the Aiken Land Conservancy with state and local governments all working together. When we receive the fourth grant for Langley Pond, the ALC will have received a total of \$1,750,000 for open space in Aiken County. Over 90% of the funds have come from the South Carolina Conservation Bank with the remainder coming from The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Aiken County. While the land actually acquired, eased, or donated is only about 636 acres, the larger tracts in which these parcels are embedded represents almost 2,600 acres of beautiful land and water that will be here for our great-grand children to use and enjoy just as we do today. What a nice legacy to leave! 

New and Current Members of the Aiken Land Conservancy

Listed below are members who have joined or renewed their memberships from June 2, 2009 through January 31, 2010.

FRIEND LEVEL

Mr. Robert Chelburg
Mr. and Mrs. Wofford Clayton
Mr. Thomas Coleman
Ms. Bea Crawford
Ms. Joannah Glass
Mr. and Mrs. James Hammond
Ms. Laura Holley
Mr. and Mrs. F. Delano Knight
Ms. Margery Smoak
Ms. Ellen Towler
Ms. Evelyn Vought
Ms. Anna Zouck

FAMILY LEVEL

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Giobbe
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Thomas

SUPPORTING LEVEL

Ms. Doris Baumgarten, in memory of
P.K. Baumgarten
Ms. Katrina Becker
Ms. Bernadette Clayton
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Juvonen
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Lemmon
Ms. Margaret Marion
Ms. Rosamond McDuffie
Mrs. William Mitsch
Mr. William Pidcoe, Jr.
Mr. Richard Sears, III
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Simmons
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stoddard
Dr. Arch Templeton

SPONSOR LEVEL

Mr. and Mrs. Rob Johnston
Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Paterniti
Dr. and Mrs. Harry Shealy

PATRON LEVEL

Mr. and Mrs. Roger Dane
Mr. and Mrs. Russell McKnight
McNeill Appraisal Service
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Rideout
Mr. and Mrs. Bennett Tucker

BENEFACTOR LEVEL

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gurr
Ms. Suzanne Haslup
Mr. and Mrs. David Hathaway
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Hosang
Ms. Hollister Houghton
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Soucy
Dr. and Mrs. Bauer Vaughters

*"Thank You" to everyone who has joined or renewed their memberships with the Aiken Land Conservancy.
ALC relies upon membership payments and donations to fund our mission of preserving Aiken's natural heritage.*

ALC extends a special "Thank You" to Allegra Print & Imaging for the award of a 2010 FootPRINT grant, which is helping defray the cost of this newsletter.

Clip and mail this form to renew your membership with the Aiken Land Conservancy

JOIN THE AIKEN LAND CONSERVANCY AND HELP PRESERVE AIKEN'S GREAT SPACES

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

e-mail address: _____

Levels of membership: Friend – \$35 Family – \$50 Supporting – \$100
 Sponsor – \$250 Patron – \$500 Benefactor – \$1,000
 Conservator – \$2,500 Steward – \$5,000 and above

Make checks payable to: Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC)

Make payments to: ALC, PO Box 3096, Aiken, SC 29802

SECURE ON-LINE GIVING IS NOW AVAILABLE AT WWW.CONSERVEAIKEN.ORG

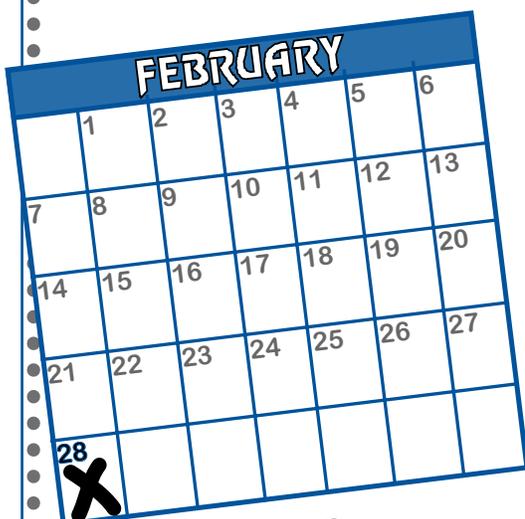
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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



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Aiken Land Conservancy
ANNUAL MEETING
from **2-4 PM** on
Sunday, February 28, 2010
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Three Runs Plantation.

Our guest speaker at the annual meeting
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South Carolina's most famous contemporary naturalist

When you've finished reading your newsletter, please pass it along to a friend.



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