

the CONSERVATION Chronicle

Newsletter of the Aiken Land Conservancy

NOVEMBER, 2008

NEW LOGO, BRAND, AND NAME ANNOUNCED FOR ACOLT

by Sarah Eakin and Stephen Hale

The Aiken County Open Land Trust has amassed over 1,200 acres of protected land in Aiken County over the past 18 years. The time had come for the public announcement of a new name, a new logo and a new slogan as the organization enjoyed a 'coming of age.'

Several think-tank meetings were held with public relations consultants Sarah Eakin and Stephen Hale of Eakin-Hale publicists. As a result of these highly productive sessions involving board members and Land Trust supporters, the renamed **Aiken Land Conservancy** revealed its new look to community leaders and the media at roll-out events held in October at The Willcox.

The launch of the Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC) was combined with the unveiling of the tag line, "*Preserving Aiken's Natural Heritage*," and a new logo to represent the organization's broad new role in conserving wetlands,

watersheds, farmland, forests, and open spaces. ALC also has a new Web site: www.ConserveAiken.org



Executive Director Dacre Stoker ushered in the changes in an informative speech punctuated by a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the achievements and aspirations of the Aiken Land Conservancy.

"Remember, our little group with two part-time employees [Stoker and newly-arrived administrator Laura Janecek] and 20 volunteer board members contribute very long lasting work," said Stoker. "The land that we help to preserve either through our purchase, through receiving donations, or by assisting landowners in placing conservation easements are permanent – not subject to change based on the economy. Not a bad investment to preserve the cherished landscape of Aiken County." 🌿



Executive Director Dacre Stoker introduces the new ALC logo.



Guests leaving the ALC press event, held at The Willcox.

Executive Director's Report

Dacre Stoker



What a summer and fall it has been for our organization. If you remember last year's annual meeting, I announced that I was planning to step down as the part-time Executive Director of ACOLT. I stated that I felt the needs of ACOLT had exceeded my capacity and expertise as the Director. It was time for ACOLT to move in the same direction that the Hitchcock Woods Foundation did three years ago, and that was to hire its first full-time E.D. This move would seriously challenge the ACOLT Board to raise the necessary funds to support such an endeavor. After a few meetings with a consultant, Ron Altman, who we hired to guide us through the process, we came to the conclusion that ACOLT may be a few years away from being ready for such a substantial undertaking. However, this process did help us focus our attention on finishing our Board handbook, forming a Board Development Committee, and tightening up our internal policies.

In the mean time, land conservation continues to be a serious issue in Aiken County and we are doing our best by providing reasonable conservation alternatives to willing landowners. So I decided to stay on and guide our organization in the direction we need to go. Instead of embarking on a full-time director, we decided to search for an administrator who could assist me by taking over many administrative tasks. We got very lucky when we found Laura Janecek, a former administrator from the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory. Laura has redesigned our web site; taken on the role of leading our much needed strategic planning process, implemented some new software for our member database, and has become the editor of our newsletter.

Over the summer we also hired Sarah Eakin and Steve Hale to lead us thru a public relations overhaul, and we assembled several focus groups to discuss ACOLT's name, logo, and mission. It was both my opinion and that shared by others in our focus groups that the word "Trust" in our name led to confusion—people seemed to think ACOLT was a financially wealthy trust that did not need financial donations. Additionally, the word "County" in our name was confusing, as many people thought I worked for the Aiken County planning department. As a result, we have taken on a fresh look with a new logo, slogan ("Preserving Aiken's natural heritage"), and name: the Aiken Land Conservancy. I feel these changes have been received very well and also have invigorated our Board members, who in the past three months have increased both their level of financial support and the time they have dedicated to committee work on behalf of the Land Trust.

In order for the Aiken Land Conservancy to continue to mature into a formidable conservation organization we need to recruit new

(continued on page 8)

Aiken Land Conservancy

Preserving Aiken's natural heritage

The mission of the Aiken Land Conservancy is to preserve open land in and around Aiken County for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, to foster the study of this area's wildlife, and to educate citizens about the interaction of human activity with the natural environment.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Charlie Fliflet, Vice President
Paul Rideout, Treasurer
Deedee Vaughters, Recording Secretary
Rosamond McDuffie, Corresponding Secretary

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STAFF

Dacre Stoker, Executive Director
Laura Janecek, Administrator

Aiken Land Conservancy, Inc.
PO Box 3096
Aiken, SC 29802
803.649.7139
mail@ConserveAiken.org

www.ConserveAiken.org

Rideout Takes Helm from Shealy as New Land Trust President

by Sarah Eakin and Stephen Hale

The newly named Aiken Land Conservancy installed a new President, Paul Rideout of Security Federal Bank, who took over the reins from USC Aiken professor Harry Shealy after six years of service. Shealy was the third President of the Aiken Land Conservancy, following in the wake of local conservationists and benefactors to the land trust, Iris Freeman, and Lee Dane.


"I want to thank Lee and Iris for the foundation they built before I took over," said Shealy. "Paul has been a resident of Aiken for many years and is quite an outdoorsman. Only the other day he was telling me about his kayaking..."

Rideout was thrilled to take up the mantle of a cause that is close to his heart. "I was lucky enough to be born and raised in Aiken," said Rideout. "And I am happy to be back. I am real pleased to be here and to be a part of this [ALC]."

ALC also has a new administrator, Laura Janecek, who comes to the Conservancy from the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory; and ALC retains executive director Dacre Stoker.



ALC Presidents (left to right): new President Paul Rideout, 2nd President Lee Dane, 1st President Iris Freeman, and out-going 3rd President Dr. Harry Shealy.

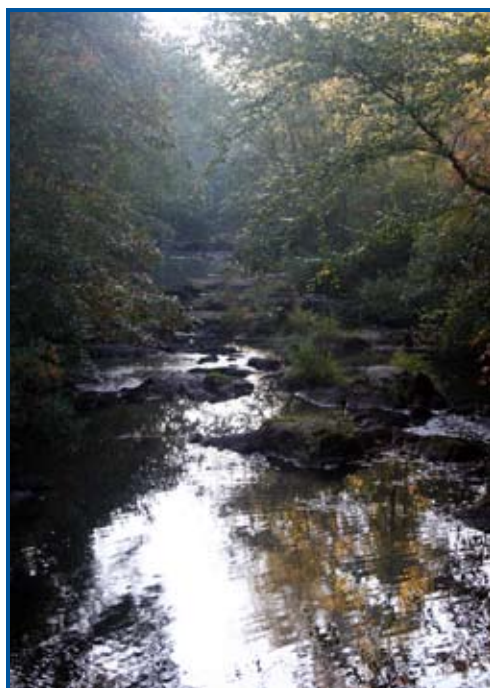
Shealy, it was pointed out, will not be 'retiring' from his duties at ALC and his experience in overseeing the preservation of approximately 470 acres in Aiken County will be called upon to help as ALC continues to grow. Stoker made a point of acknowledging Shealy's specific contribution to ALC in working closely with Aiken County to instigate the acquisition and preservation of the ORA and Langley Pond projects (*see page 4*). 

Former Presidents Place Easements on Property to Benefit ALC

by Sarah Eakin and Stephen Hale

Iris Freeman, founding President of ACOLT, now ALC, in 1990, and her successor Lee Dane signed documentation at the ALC relaunch at The Willcox concerning conservation easements on their own properties.

Ron Monahan, Mrs. Freeman's partner in The Ridge at Chukker Creek – an impressive and very "green" new equestrian housing development south of Aiken – announced that a recently preserved 53 acres will be named the Freeman Preserve after Iris and her husband, Hall of Fame trainer Mike Freeman.



Lee Dane signed a letter of intent to place a conservation easement on 300 acres of her Ridge Spring area farm that includes several streams and the North Fork of the Edisto River where huge "Civil War" hardwoods near the water will, in her words, "be preserved as long as they can stand."

Stoker also read a letter from Scott Riviere, who was out of town, stating that due to Mrs. Freeman's influence, he has agreed to sign an easement on his 17 prime acres along Grace Avenue in the heart of Aiken's horse district. "Iris and

(continued on page 8)

..... Aiken County Partners with ALC in Two Recreational Conservation Projects

by Sarah Eakin and Stephen Hale

Aiken County Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director, Brian Sanders impressed the audience at the recent ALC relaunch with the announcement of the Aiken Land Conservancy's and Aiken County's joint acquisition of 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 park and now named Boyd Pond Park have been targeted for conservation easements by both groups.



Brian Sanders discusses Boyd Pond Park, a joint project between ALC and Aiken County.

Sanders hopes that the Boyd Pond Park property will close within a matter of days and the Langley Pond arrangement will be finalized by the end of this year. Built as the cooling system for cotton mills in Horse Creek Valley over 100 years ago, Langley Pond is a treasure for boaters, rowers, swimmers, and nature lovers.

Aiken County and the Aiken Land Conservancy are in the final stages of purchasing 409 acres, including the 280 acres that constitute the pond itself.


"We partner with a lot of different organizations and the most fruitful and most enjoyable partnership has

been working with what is now called the Aiken Land Conservancy. The group is very organized and they are a joy to work with. There are certain grants that we can't access but that ALC can access. We put our energies together and we can get a lot more done as partners than we can individually. It's a true partnership that is mutually beneficial."

Already a nationally and internationally known site for rowing and sculling races, the county will use much of the 65 waterfront acres they will acquire to build a boat house, grandstand, a finish line tower, picnic shelter and other support facilities to make it among the world's top rowing venues.

The ALC will manage 64 acres to be left forested between the county land and commercial development expected to take place along U.S. Hwy 1. The ALC property will be leased to Aiken County for perpetual care and use for passive recreation such as hiking.

Similarly, the county will convey 92+ acres of the 206-acre Boyd Pond Park to the ALC to be leased from them for passive recreation. In both projects, the undeveloped portions owned by the ALC will complement the developed portions owned by Aiken County.

"We all prize the beauty of our area and working together we can slow the growth of urban sprawl and preserve many of our natural treasures for our grandchildren and theirs," said Stoker. "We all instinctively understand the intrinsic value of keeping the natural world the way it was created, but protecting land also makes good economic sense. New tax laws allow landowners to defer taxes for up to fifteen years and the value of adjacent land is greatly enhanced when a conservation easement is applied to a property – just think of the value of property around Hitchcock Woods!" 



check it out!

the Aiken Land Conservancy has a new web site:

www.ConserveAiken.org

Past-President's Letter

Harry E. Shealy, Jr.

I have had a wonderful and productive six years as president of the Aiken County Open Land Trust now, the Aiken Land Conservancy. When I became president of ACOLT, I built upon the hard work of our past two presidents, Iris Freeman and Lee Dane, and the boards that served with them. Since the founding of ACOLT, we have worked hard to educate the public about all the reasons for conserving land in Aiken County, and the benefits that a donation can provide a land owner.


When I became president, we had either title or conservation easements on over 800 acres of land. During my term, we increased that amount by over 400 acres. One of the major accomplishments of my time as president was new the era of partnerships that we developed with the county and city of Aiken as well as the SC Department of Natural Resources and the SC Conservation Bank. This may be due to the fact that governments are becoming more aware of the need to conserve land and the pivotal role that local land trusts such as the Aiken Land Conservancy can play in land conservation. With the help of state and local government, we were able in one year to add almost 300 acres of public use land in Aiken County with \$1.7 million in grants for three projects from the SC Conservation Bank. When the 300 acres are added to the other state and county owned

lands, of which they are a part, the total available to the people of Aiken County is almost 2,300 acres...not bad for a small local land trust!

We are now changing our name, adding new staff, getting a new look, and getting a new president. However, our goal to conserve land is exactly the same!

I am very excited by all of the changes within the Aiken Land Conservancy, and I am especially happy that Paul Rideout has become our next president. I am sure that you will be hearing more from Paul in the coming year, but let me tell you a little bit about him. Paul is a life-long resident of Aiken, he and his wife are avid outdoors enthusiast, he is a vice-president with Security Federal Bank, he is involved in other activities in our community, and

he is young, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about land conservation. I look forward to working with him!!!

My last comment as I retire as president is to express my deep appreciation for all the help that so many people gave to me to make land conservation a reality in Aiken County. Whether forested, wetland, or open pasture, the gift of land to the people of Aiken County has long range economic benefits. Regardless of the appraised value of the land now, as we look to the future, the land will be priceless to our children. 



President's Letter

Paul Rideout

Dear Conservation Supporters,

Change is a word we have been hearing a lot lately. Everyone seems to be promising change, and trying to convince us they know best. Only time will tell if many of the promised changes are beneficial, or even come about.

Our organization has experienced its share of change this year. We have changed our name to Aiken Land Conservancy. We have adopted a new logo and re-examined our mission. We have hired a new administrative manager, and we have changed presidents. We are in the midst of a strategic planning process, and bringing on new board members. All these changes have come about because we feel there are significant opportunities to continue growing and expanding the influence of the organization throughout Aiken County.

(continued on page 7)



Become an ALC Business Partner

As the Aiken Land Conservancy launches our new name, logo, and web site, we also are working to increase our visibility and expand our efforts to educate the public and landowners on the value of preserving Aiken County's great spaces. To that end, we are seeking Business Partners who share our commitment and will join with us in our mission to preserve Aiken's natural heritage.

AS AN ALC BUSINESS PARTNER, YOU WILL RECEIVE:


- A framed membership certificate.
- Recognition as an ALC Business Partner on ALC's website. Donations of \$1,000 or more will include your business logo and a link to your business website.
- Recognition as an ALC Business Partner in ALC's regular newsletter. **
- Recognition as an ALC Business Partner at ALC's annual members meeting. **
- Recognition as an ALC Business Partner at future ALC public events. **
- Donations of at least \$2,500 will include recognition as an ALC Business Partner in at least two press releases each year, one of which will include a profile of your business.
- Appreciation from your customers that you support ALC's efforts to preserve Aiken County lands for the enjoyment use by the public.

*** The magnitude of recognition will vary based on membership level.*

ALC BUSINESS PARTNER MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

- Business Sponsor – \$250
- Business Benefactor – \$1,000
- Business Conservator – \$2,500 and above

If you own or manage a business, we encourage you to join with the Aiken Land Conservancy to help preserve our county's natural heritage. It is with the support of the public and Aiken's business community that ALC will achieve its mission of preserving Aiken County's special lands.

For more information on becoming an ALC Business Partner, please contact: Dacre Stoker, *Executive Director* (803.270-3231; Dacre@bellsouth.net) or visit the ALC website (www.ConserveAiken.org). 

“Thank You”
to ALC's first three
Business Partners:
Allegra Print & Imaging
Howell Printing Company
The Willcox

TAX CUT FOR CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND

Congress recently passed an extension, through 2009, to the tax law that helps those interested in protecting clean water, natural areas, and family farms. The law enhances the federal tax benefits for landowners who donate voluntary conservation agreements. These agreements can provide a win-win solution for protecting resources important to our community while keeping land in productive private ownership.

Congress' action makes the tax law work much better for many modest income landowners who, under the old rules, only got credit for a small portion of the value of their donation. Now, a conservation donor can deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%), and, if most of their income is from farming, ranching or forestry, they can deduct all of their income. Even more important is that if the value of their donation is larger than this, they can continue to use the deduction for up to 16 years (up from six).

These agreements, often referred to as conservation easements, are donations of a landowner's develop-

ment rights to land, to protect specific natural, scenic, or historic resources. The landowner continues to own and manage their land, and continues to pay local taxes. The public gets protection of resources that are an important heritage for our community.

The Aiken Land Conservancy has been accepting donations like this since 1991, and has protected over 1,200 acres in Aiken County. This change in the law will enable ALC to help many more landowners to protect resources for our children and for our community's future.

The people of Aiken believe in protecting our family farms, ranches, forests, and wildlife habitat--part of the traditions that make this a great place to live. Thanks to a helping hand from Congress, we will be able to do even more of this in the next several years.


For more information on the federal and state tax incentives associated with land conservation, please see the ALC Web site:

www.conserveaiken.org/landowner.html 

President's Letter *(continued from page 5)*


I am now ALC's fourth president. I am very fortunate to have three past presidents who continue to work with us, providing the benefit of their experience and successes. I can't thank enough all the hard working board members and volunteers who have given so much time and energy to make Aiken such a great place to live. With your continued support, I know we will see many more positive changes come about.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been born and raised in Aiken. I have seen many changes and much growth over the years, but overall Aiken has maintained its charm. This has not just happened. It has taken the input of many dedicated citizens who have fought to maintain the beauty that is Aiken. We are blessed to have so many community leaders and political leaders who are passionate about growing an Aiken that preserves its charm and natural heritage.

All the hard work that goes into making Aiken a great place to work also makes it a great place to play. My wife Dana and I love to hike in Hitchcock Woods, bike our tree-lined roadways, and kayak the Edisto River. We are able to enjoy a wide variety of outdoor activities that make our city the envy of many. We will be working hard to ensure we can continue to do the things we love, and we invite you to join us in keeping Aiken great. 

Former Presidents

(continued from page 3)


I serve together on the Hitchcock Woods Foundation Board,” he wrote, “and take the preservation of our natural resources very seriously. We’ve talked for a long time about the benefits of land conservation, especially in our neighborhood. I had encouraged Iris, and others in our district just last year to join me in placing a conservation easement on each of our own very special properties...It’s a privilege to partner with the ALC.... what an outstanding legacy your mission is establishing for the entire community.” 



Former Land Trust President Lee Dane signs a letter of intent to place a conservation easement on her Ridge Spring property.

Executive Director's Report

(continued from page 2)

supporters from the concerned citizen base in Aiken County. We have embarked on a series of three informative events at The Willcox, trying our best to shake the tag as the best kept secret in Aiken County. Please remember during this present economic downturn, that the bulldozers are only just idling, and land conversion in South Carolina is the fourth highest in the country per capita. We are converting land at a rate six times faster than our population growth. So if you are in the position to either join us, renew your membership, or make a donation to support our conservation efforts in Aiken County, please do so now. 

**“GOD BLESS AMERICA.
LET’S SAVE SOME OF IT.”**

Edward Abbey



Got E-Mail?

If so, please send us your e-mail address, and we’ll send you the next ALC newsletter via e-mail. This not only will save paper and postage, but you’ll get your newsletter in a more timely manner and in

FULL color.

Send your e-mail address to:
Mail@ConserveAiken.org.

***More photos from ALC's October press conference announcing
the Land Trust's new beginning...***



Executive Director Dacre Stoker presents a resolution from the ALC Board in honor of out-going President Dr. Harry Shealy's many years of service to ALC.



New President Paul Rideout toasts ALC's past successes and ALC's new beginning.



Several press outlets covered the announcement of ALC's new beginning.

Photos courtesy of
Lista's Studio of
Photography.

-- ✂ -- -- -- -- 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:

<input type="checkbox"/> Friend – \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> Family – \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting – \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor – \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron – \$500	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor – \$1,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservator – \$2,500		<input type="checkbox"/> 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
Donations to the Aiken Land Conservancy are tax-deductible.

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Don't let this be your
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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 2009 members.

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



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