

ConservationChronicle

Aiken Land Conservancy Newsletter

January 2013




The Perfect Beginning to a Perfect Day

“The perfect beginning to a perfect day” is how one Bloodies and Bagels attendee described this year’s stellar event. With beautiful blue skies and warm temperatures, the weather couldn’t have been more glorious for this uniquely Aiken tradition. According to Katie Roth, Aiken Land Conservancy’s (ALC) Executive Director, “this is the third year for the event and we were pleased that so many friends, families and neighbors joined us.” “Serving as the ALC’s largest “friend-raiser,” Bloodies and Bagels’ true mission is to raise awareness of the ALC in the Aiken Community,” stated ALC President, Larry Comegys. “With a nice crowd this morning, Bloodies and Bagels has certainly achieved its goal.”

ALC would like to extend a special thanks to presenting sponsors: Einstein Brothers, Harvard’s Wine and Beverage, High Country Olive Oil, and Ryan’s Downtown Market, and supporting sponsors Aiken Dry Goods, Aiken Saddlery and Supply, Banks Mill Feeds, Michael and Lisa Hosang with the Carolina Real Estate Company, Charlie Fliflet CPA, PA, Folly, Innovative Solutions and New Moon Café. Their generous contributions made this event possible. 🌿





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Executive Director's Report

Katie Roth

I'd like to thank everyone who attended Bloodies and Bagels on Thanksgiving morning. For the third year, we enjoyed picture perfect weather. This event is a "friend" raiser for the ALC – it provides a great opportunity for us to share our mission to protect open space with the community. I'd like to extend special thanks to our sponsors for making this event possible (see story and photos on page 1).

2013 will be a busy year for the ALC. Along with some hefty strategic goals and initiatives (see President' report on page 4), we also look forward to bringing back some "members only" events. We hope to offer several of these free events during the year. They give us the opportunity to get outdoors and enjoy the land we are working so hard to protect. For our first event, we are teaming up with the Augusta/Aiken Audubon Society. We are thrilled to work with these experts and conservation partners, which started as the Augusta Bird Club in 1954. Together, we are planning a birding field trip scheduled for the spring (see page 11 for details). Look for an e-blast with more detailed information, as we get closer. Field trips such as these are not only educational, they are a great way to meet new friends and neighbors who share an interest in land conservation. So, mark your calendar and let's go birding!

If you have not already, I encourage you to join or renew your membership with us. A strong membership base is vital for the ALC to succeed in our mission to protect land in Aiken County. Feel free to pass this newsletter along to friends or neighbors and visit our website www.conserveaiken.org. I look forward to seeing you in 2013. 🌿

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



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President's Report

Larry Comegys

Ring in the New Year is a time to celebrate the achievements, big and small, of the year just ending. At ALC for 2012 we can celebrate a year of solid growth and many achievements. A short list includes the updating of our strategic plan, completing the first critical steps to become an accredited land trust, and adding a new computerized land mapping system (GIS). GIS not only assists our stewardship of existing properties, it also allows us to more effectively identify and prioritize potential land for future protection.

It's also a time to focus on the opportunities in the New Year. As we look to 2013 our focus will be in four important areas. One, continue the needed steps toward accreditation. Two, continue growing our membership and financial resources. Three, continue the solid strides we have taken to improve the stewardship (management) of our lands. Four, and most important, protect more land in 2013. Protecting more land is my number one New Years "Land Conservation" Resolution.

Our mission as a land conservancy is very simple: Preserve Natural and Historic Resources. However, there is no magic formula for protecting our land and historic resources. Mostly it's about talking with people who control the land we'd like to protect. Some of those property owners may have already decided they want to protect their property for future generations and can benefit from the generous tax savings which that allows. Other property owners may never have thought about land conservation but would be willing to know more about it. Others may say put a conservation easement on my land, not in a million years! Whatever the situation and owner's needs and concerns, it always takes time and hard work to make it happen. That's our job as staff and board members. But we need your help.

As friends and members of ALC you bring the organization its financial support, and that needs to grow to achieve our mission. But we can also use your help in other ways including letting us know about land that needs to be protected and property owners who might consider conservation easements. So please be part of the "Land Conservation Team" of ALC, our extra eyes and ears in the community. A call or email to me, our staff members Katie Roth or Meg Ferguson, or any of our board members, on any property that you'd like to suggest or owner you think we should contact. If you have any questions on conservation easements, how they work, or want to run the suitability of a property by us, just call. Land conservation is truly a team effort!

Thank you for your support of the Aiken Land Conservancy. Best wishes for a very Happy and Prosperous 2013. 🌸

larrycomegys@aol.com cell 813-220-4630

Aiken Driving Club
Enjoys Winthrop Polo
Field on Saturday,
December 8, during
their Christmas Games
and Holiday Drive.

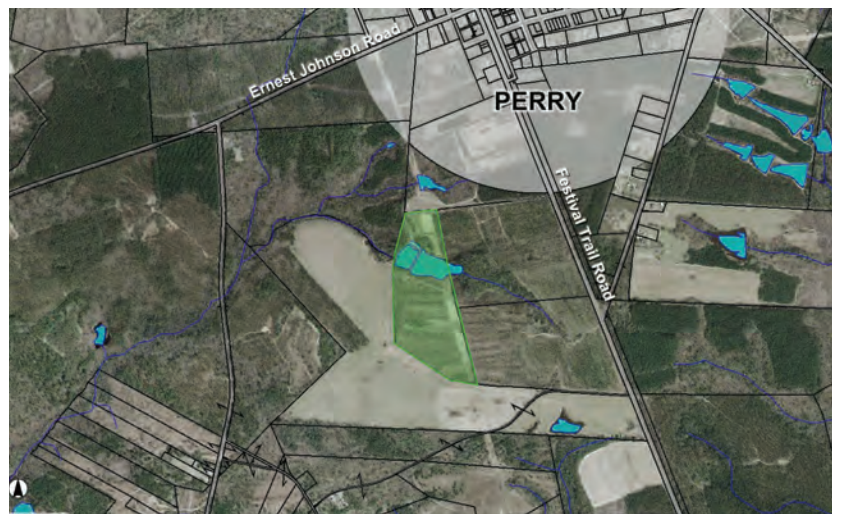


Conservation Conversation

With Wade and Sissy Brodie

Why did you place a conservation easement on your land?

“In the early 1700’s, my family received property via an original land grant. This property has been in my family for more than 200 years and my family grew up enjoying it thoroughly. Sissy and I felt a need to preserve the property for generations to come. More recently, we donated forty acres of this land including three ponds and a clubhouse to the town of Perry, subject to the terms of the conservation easement to be used as a public park, insuring others will get to enjoy this tract as much as we have.”





Nancy Henze

New ALC Board Member

After serving on the advisory council for the past year, the Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC) is pleased to announce that Nancy Henze will join our board of trustees. Ms. Henze has been an integral part of the ALC and our fundraising and development initiatives.

Ms. Henze served as the Executive Director of the Municipal Assistance Corporation for the City of New York from 1998 until 2008 when the Corporation closed in accordance with the statutory mandate. In March of 2005, she was appointed the Executive Director of the New York State Commission on Public Authority Reform. The Commission delivered its report to Governor Pataki in June of 2006. She continued to serve as a consultant to the Commission and the Authority Budget Office until 2007. She is currently a member of the Governor's Task Force for Public Authority Reform in the state of New York. Ms. Henze also serves as a board member of Provident Resources Group Inc., a national multi-mission non-profit corporation.

Ms. Henze's public sector service was preceded by a long career on Wall Street in public finance investment banking. She served as a managing director at Lehman Brothers and as Senior Vice-President and Manager at M.R. Beal & Co. She was the lead investment banker to numerous state and local issuers nationwide.

Ms. Henze resides in Pine Plains, New York and Aiken, S.C. She is a graduate of the New York University Stern School of Business (MBA in finance) and Vassar College. 🌿



ALC Announces Advisory Council

The Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC) is excited to announce the formation of an Advisory Council, a consortium of individuals who either have a background in land conservation or are ardent supporters of the ALC mission. Many times these individuals have the knowledge and expertise that we so desperately need but are unable to devote the time necessary to become a full time Board Trustee. Members of the Advisory Council are welcome to join one of our many committees and to attend our board meetings as non-voting participants. They are encouraged to give as much or as little of their time as their schedules allow and of course to serve as important advisors to our board leaders.

Our current advisory council members include:

Sara and Richard McNeil
Tammy Thatcher
Brandon Heitkamp
Thomas Coleman
Kiki Murphy

We thank them for their interest and continued dedication to the preservation of Aiken County's natural and historic resources.

If you are interested in giving your time to the Aiken Land Conservancy, please contact Meg Ferguson at megferguson@bellsouth.net.

The ALC Welcomes Our New Business Partner, Quality Tree Service Inc.

The Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC) would like to welcome our new business partner, Quality Tree Service, Inc. When the ALC decided to give the oaks on Winthrop Field some much needed "TLC", Tim George of Quality Tree was highly recommended again and again. This winter you will see Tim and his crew taking good care of the trees along the perimeter of the field.

Quality Tree specializes in tree removal, stump grinding and landscaping. They provide free local estimates and work on both residential and commercial property.

"Quality Tree is proud to work with the Aiken Land Conservancy in their efforts to keep the trees healthy at Winthrop Field, and we applaud their mission to conserve precious open space in Aiken County", said Tim George, owner.

Quality Tree's professional crew is highly trained to assist you with determining which trees need to be removed, treated, or simply trimmed. They are committed to safe, quick and beautiful results. Contact them at 803-663-3278 to schedule a consultation.

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SC Conservation Bank Fulfills Promise to ALC

A project begun in 2007, to purchase sixty – four acres along Langley Pond, was finally put to bed this Fall with the issuance of a \$648,000 check by the South Carolina Conservation Bank to the Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC). Expanding the 285 acre Langley Pond Park with the purchase of sixty - four acres of this “upland” portion has proven to be yet another successful public – private partnership between Aiken County and the ALC. Thanks to a grant from the SC Conservation Bank in 2007, the ALC was able to purchase this tract of land from a private owner thus securing a natural buffer between the commercial businesses located along Highway 1 and the banks of Langley Pond. The ALC has a 99 year lease with the county that allows them to rent this property for use as part of Langley Pond Park. When funds for the Conservation Bank dried up in the economic downturn of 2008, Aiken County was able to free up funds to complete this important land deal. With the issuance of the \$648,000 check, Aiken Land Conservancy was finally able to pay the county back in a partnership deal that has taken many more years to complete than initially expected. To quote Aiken County Councilwoman LaWana McKenzie, *“I call Langley Pond a lady. She’s been mistreated, abused and gossiped about, but she’s coming back. There are many possibilities for all of Aiken County.”*



ALC Thanks Mary Guynn

Mary Guynn, long-time ALC board member and legal counsel, will step off our board of trustees in January. Mary has been instrumental in the ALC’s success and she leaves some very big shoes to fill! Although we are sad to



lose her as a board member, we know that Mary will always be one of our organization’s biggest supporters!

Born and raised in Aiken, Mary joined the board in 2004. She had never heard of a conservation easement until former Executive Director, Dacre Stoker approached her about the ALC. She jumped right in, ordering Stephen Small’s Preserving Family Lands to begin educating herself on private land protection options and strategies. Mary then took the time to type the easement documents herself, creating a form that would serve as a starting point for future easements. In doing so, she became familiar with the legal verbiage and information required for all conservation easement documents.

When asked how the ALC has changed during her time on the board, Mary says that the visibility and presence of the organization is much more significant now and has become more “polished”. Today, she is proud of the ALC for having definite direction, strategic plans for the future and the people who can accomplish the organization’s goals.

One of Mary’s favorite memories is going to visit property that would eventually become protected in a conservation easement. This is the ALC’s usual protocol to get an idea of what the property looks like and what attributes are most important to preserve. She and several other board members went to see the property and Mary remarked that although they all had different backgrounds and careers, it was an honor to be involved with a group that had a common interest to save the property.

Mary has not only helped the ALC with legal matters, she has also been a major part of our fundraising and has attended and worked all ALC events. Her favorite event is Bloodies and Bagels on Thanksgiving morning. Next year, she will be able to relax and enjoy a Bloody Mary and a bagel!

Mary’s expertise, hard work and enthusiasm have been invaluable to the ALC. We are very thankful to have had the opportunity to have her as part of our organization for the past eight years. We won’t say goodbye, we’ll say see you at the next ALC event.

Observation Deck Opens at Carolina Bay



Students from Millbrook Elementary and St. Mary's Catholic School braved chilly temperatures to join with city officials, scientists from the Savannah River Ecology Lab, members of the Aiken Land Conservancy Board of Trustees and Aiken County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Beth Everett, to celebrate the opening of the newly constructed observation deck at the Carolina Bay. Paid for as part of the Capital Sales Tax, the new observation deck was met by rave reviews by children and grownups alike.

Larry Comegys, Aiken Land Conservancy president, commented that, "This building came out even better than in the plans!"

The two level 36-by-28 feet structure is covered and will hold approximately forty students. With a sink and work table, it was designed to be used by area schools and scouting troops and provides a safe accessible area for teachers and youth leaders to conduct classes and informational sessions. The Carolina Bay is home to a variety of plants, birds, reptiles and insects.

It is important to remember that the Aiken Land Conservancy (ALC) held a fundraising campaign to protect the bay that spanned a period of six years, culminating in the final purchase of twenty-four acres in 2002. More than \$600,000 was raised through generous donations from the city and county, local businesses and members of the community, as well as grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the S.C. Legacy Trust Fund. After acquiring the land, the ALC deeded the property back to the City of Aiken which then placed a conservation easement on the property in 2003, removing any rights to develop the twenty-four acre parcel and preserving it for educational purposes and the enjoyment of the public.

The Carolina Bay is located off Price Avenue near the H. Odell Weeks Activities Center. The deck is available for public use seven days a week from sunrise to sunset, as long as it's not reserved for an event.





2012 Aiken Land Conservancy Membership

*Thank you
for supporting
our mission
to preserve
Aiken's
natural
heritage!*

Listed members have joined or renewed memberships on or after January 2012.

Donors who have continuously given over the past five years are notated in green.



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SPRING BIRDING DAY

An ALC member's only event in cooperation
with The Aiken/Augusta Audubon Society

Join us on Saturday, March 16th

for a birding field trip and BBQ lunch

At Three Runs Plantation RSVP Required.

Look for more details in our upcoming e-blast
or on conserveaiken.org.

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