

Conservation Chronicle

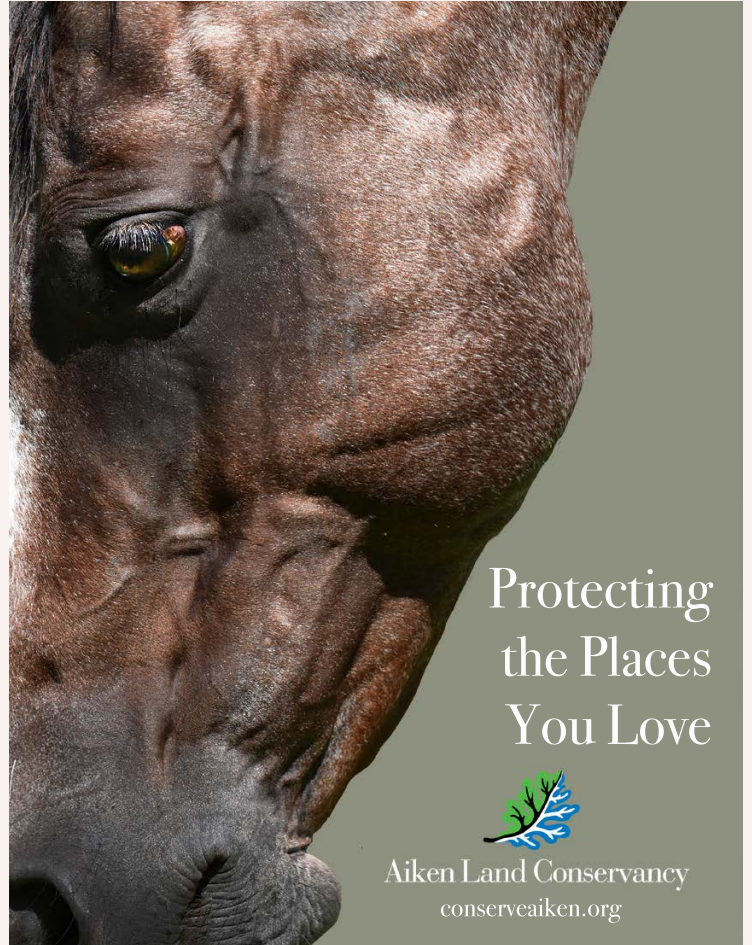
Aiken Land Conservancy Newsletter 2023 Vol. 2



Finding New Ways to Connect

Recently, the Aiken Land Conservancy decided to place a full-page ad in *The Aiken Horse*. This popular publication highlights the connection between Aiken and its horses, and we wanted to have a presence. The question was, how would we go about creating a visually-arresting advertisement? We lacked the ability to do it ourselves, so we were prepared to hire a professional (but expensive) graphic designer. Then, our board member and University of South Carolina - Aiken (USCA) professor, Ginny Southworth, presented a fabulous idea. What if we asked the students in a USCA design class to come up with an advertisement instead?

Thanks to the cooperation of Dr. Michael Fowler, a professor of graphic design at the school, this is what we pursued. We decided to hold a competition among the students where we would work with them on



Katherine Kruckow

concepts, review drafts, and ultimately select the “winning ad” to publish in *The Aiken Horse*. The winner would receive a \$50 gift card to Starbucks, courtesy of Ms. Southworth. As we all know, coffee can be a strong motivator for college students.

Were we ever blown away by the results! The innovative and gorgeous designs that the students came up with floored the review team that consisted of Ginny Southworth, Beth Harpham, Janet DePrince, and Peter Kleinhenz. We struggled to select the ad we liked most, but finally arrived at the ad produced by Katherine Kruckow. We vowed to submit the second and third place ads for publication in the future.

Clair Collum

See “Finding New Ways” on page 6

**PROTECTING
THE PLACES
YOU LOVE**

Aiken Land Conservancy

To learn more, donate, and/or volunteer, visit our website at conserveaiken.org or visit our socials!

(855) 252-5263 PO Box 3096
Aiken, South Carolina 29802 mail@conserveaiken.org [@aikenlandconservancy](https://www.facebook.com/aikenlandconservancy)

Design By: Claire Collum
Photographer By: Lenikawd Nieto

NOT OUR FIRST RODEO.



BRIDLE CREEK

EQUESTRIAN COMMUNITY

From the developer of Three Runs Plantation comes another wonderful equestrian neighborhood in Aiken, South Carolina. Bridle Creek meanders across 600 wooded acres, featuring five-acre lots and larger. Amenities include a dressage arena, jump arena, X-Country Schooling area and an activity center with meeting, social and fitness space. All this plus miles of scenic trails. Now selling in Phase Three. Inquire today by calling 1-888-297-8881 or email info@bridlecreekaiken.com

600 Acres • Miles of groomed and marked trails • Jump arena • Dressage arena • X-Country schooling area
Activity/Fitness Center • Homesites from 5+ acres • From the developer of Three Runs Plantation

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Marketed by The Carolina Real Estate Company, Aiken, SC. Plans and prices subject to change without notice. This does not constitute an offer in any state where prohibited by law. No time requirement to begin construction.



Executive Director's Letter

What a year 1990 was. I'm biased, because it happens to be the year I was born, but it also kicked off a remarkable decade. In the ensuing ten years, kids like me journeyed from Super Nintendo to PlayStation 2, teenagers went from Guns N' Roses to Radiohead, and adults saw the presidency go from George Bush to, well, George Bush.

A remarkable change that began in 1990 unfolded here in Aiken as well. That year, Dr. Harry Shealy and Iris Freeman decided to create the Aiken County Open Land Trust, known now as the Aiken Land Conservancy. New development pressures prompted the two to establish a nonprofit organization that would focus on conserving the wild places and open spaces of the Aiken region. Thirty-three years later, Aiken Land Conservancy has done just that, and then some.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Shealy face-to-face and talking to him at length. I was pleased to find him to be a warm, funny, and extremely intelligent man. He shared stories about Aiken Land Conservancy's past and his hopes for its future, in between us "nerding out" about rare plants and reptiles. I was struck by the fact that he'd probably seen this area change more than most of us, yet he still had optimism about what could be done in the future.

As I look towards the end of 2023, I see a lot of reasons to be optimistic too. More funding is being allocated to land conservation and land management in the next year than ever before. Land trusts like Aiken Land Conservancy are finally getting long overdue recognition for their role in everything from safeguarding drinking water to improving local economies. Counties all across the country are passing land conservation referendums, reflecting the desire of most Americans to see green spaces around them protected. Here in the Aiken region, our largest conservation project to date has been approved for funding and represents the close partnership we have with the City of Aiken.

Of course, it isn't all ideal in the world of land conservation. But I, for one, know that I need to spend more time focusing on the positives. That's what Dr. Shealy did, and look where we are thirty-three years later.

Peter Kleinhenz
ALC's New Executive Director

The mission of the Aiken Land Conservancy is to preserve Aiken's unique character and natural and historic resources for present and future generations through advocacy and land protection.

Aiken Land Conservancy



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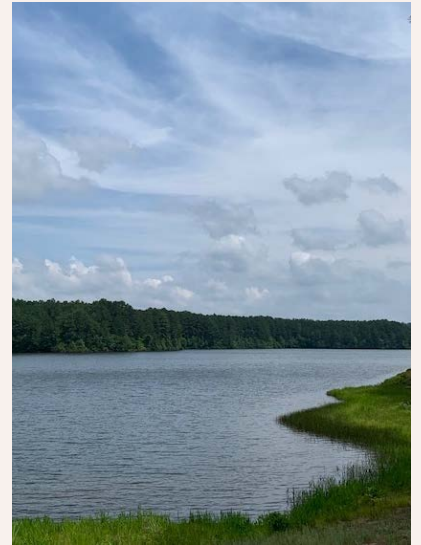
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Administrative Assistant

Aiken Land Conservancy, Inc.
P. O. Box 3096, Aiken, SC 29802
855-252-5263
mail@ConserveAiken.org
www.ConserveAiken.org

Shaws Creek Preserve Project Approved by South Carolina Conservation Bank



Just a couple of miles north of Interstate 20 and seven miles north of Aiken sits a very special property. The Shaws Creek Preserve consists of 2,658 acres of longleaf pine uplands, wetlands, the 92-acre Mason Branch Reservoir, part of Shaws Creek itself, and several tributaries that feed Shaws Creek. The City of Aiken proactively purchased the property in 2020 to buffer Mason Branch Reservoir because this reservoir provides approximately 20% of Aiken’s residents with clean drinking water. However, this purchase did not equate with the property being protected.



photo by Allen Conger

Fortunately, on September 27th, the South Carolina Conservation Bank voted to approve \$1,900,000 in funding for a conservation easement on the property held by the Aiken Land Conservancy. The award is conditional upon a favorable vote by the Joint Bond Review Committee, but all involved with the project are very optimistic about the outcome of that vote. The funding would cover a portion of the conservation easement value, and would be paid to the City of Aiken. After closing on a conservation easement, the City of Aiken plans to build trails, basic facilities, and work towards opening the property to the public. Ultimately, the City of Aiken envisions connecting the Shaws Creek Preserve with Generations Park via a public greenway.

The conservation easement limits the amount that can be constructed on site, protects the significant conservation values from impacts, eliminates the ability for the property to be subdivided, and



requires annual monitoring to ensure that its terms are being met. Aiken Land Conservancy is thrilled to partner with the City of Aiken on this project, and believes that the benefits of this project will continue to be felt for generations to come. 🌿

Planned Giving Page

Planned giving is one of the best ways to support an organization like Aiken Land Conservancy. Most Americans do not have a will, and yet many of us have a desire to leave a legacy that reflects our values and supports a cause we care deeply about.

We recently updated the Planned Giving page on our website to clearly outline different methods of planned giving that could satisfy your wishes while benefitting ALC simultaneously. We invite you to explore this page, and to consider a planned gift to Aiken Land Conservancy.



www.ConserveAiken.org



President's Letter

The old adage “timing is everything” often applies to our personal lives. It certainly applies today to Aiken Land Conservancy. For ALC the

“timing” is having all the “tools” in place to help Aiken protect and conserve our open space and water resources as the community grapples with the challenges of accelerating development pressures.

ALC’s “tools” include 33 years of experience, delivering results which have protected nearly 40 properties and thousands of acres for future generations, and our dedicated staff and board. The addition in July of an experienced land conservation professional, Peter Kleinhenz, as our Executive Director, added the full-time and focused leadership tool we need now to effectively face these challenges.

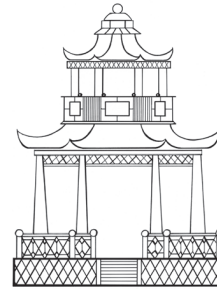
Another “tool” is a realistic and achievable vision for ALC’s role in the community. Our role is simple and clear, to protect Aiken’s quality of life by protecting its open space and water resources. No other organization in Aiken fills this role, and it is a critical one for Aiken’s future. Fulfilling that role requires more than just working with dedicated landowners to place their properties under conservation easement. It also requires active partnerships with local government because they determine land use policy. And it requires outreach to landowners, and the community at large, to demonstrate that a vibrant and growing Aiken also needs to conserve its open space. These are all easier said than done, but “timing is everything,” and we now have the tools to actively fill our role to help protect Aiken’s quality of life.

In the months ahead we will be using these tools to reach out to government, landowners, and the community with a heightened sense of urgency. This is an urgency that we should all feel. The actions to protect our open space and water resources that are set in motion today will help decide our quality of life tomorrow. “Timing is everything.”

Thank you for your support of ALC and its leadership role to protect Aiken’s quality of life.

Larry Comegys
President, Board of Trustees

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Finding New Ways *continued from page 1.....*

This experience provided the students with real-world experience working with a client, gave them excellent resume material, and provided them with a chance to get their work out to a broader audience. ALC had beautiful work produced for them at minimal cost, honed its messaging to a targeted audience, and shared ALC with students that were completely unfamiliar with our work previously. In short, it was a win-win for all involved. We hope you enjoy the creative designs featured here as much as we did. And, if you're ever looking for graphic designers, keep these students in mind! 🌿

Ravyn Mitchell



Protecting the future of Aiken for the ones you love and future generations.

Aiken Land Conservancy is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to help Aiken keep its unique character while protecting their natural and historic resources for present and future generations through advocacy and land protection. ALC is primarily a volunteer organization who are looking for more volunteers willing to help out their community to keep it the way that it is.

Get In Touch!

(855) 252-5263
conserveaiken.org
 Aiken Land Conservancy
[aiken_land_conservancy](https://www.instagram.com/aiken_land_conservancy)




**This is horse country
Let's keep it that way**

Aiken Land Conservancy


**Volunteer
Donate
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Natalie Prouty



*Every horse needs a place to run,
so let's continue to give them one!*



Through donations of property and conservation easements from landowners, ALC protects land. Approximately 733 acres are owned directly by ALC.

Aiken Land Conservancy

Tel: (855) 252-5263
 PO Box 3096
<https://conserveaiken.org>
Multi@mail@conserveaiken.org
<https://www.facebook.com/aikenlandconservancy>

Ashton Johnson



Aiken Land Conservancy

**Protect What's Good For
You and the Horses...**

Every year, thousands of acres of land are used for further industrial growth in Aiken. As areas of natural land decrease, farms and ranches are at risk of disappearing. At Aiken Land Conservancy, we strive to conserve natural land. But, to protect our horses, we need your help as well. To learn more about how to donate or volunteer work visit us at conserveaiken.org or call (855) 252-5263.

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Ashley Schumacher

Where horses roam, land conservation blooms



Since 1991, Aiken Land Conservancy has worked to preserve local properties in hopes of protecting natural resources and ensuring the future of equestrian use in Aiken.

To assist us in maintaining this way of life through our mission and learn more about how to get involved, please visit us at ConserveAiken.org.

Aiken Land Conservancy

Summer Burch and Gracie Willis

Conservation Chronicle 2023 Vol.2




**Share
Volunteer
Donate**

Because they both need space to grow.

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SOUTH CAROLINA LAND TRUST NETWORK

Brandy McSorley



Let Land Be Your Legacy.

Are you aware of those who conserve and protect the natural land in Aiken? The nonprofit, Aiken Land Conservancy, is dedicated to the "real" land. From Carolina Bay Nature Preserve to historical Wintthrop Polo Field, Aiken Land Conservancy works with all different types of local landowners. The impact of this work not only conserves land, but the wildlife that roam and enjoy it from horses to small birds. Our efforts have a large impact on the economy that often goes unnoticed. Equestrian farms are one such example that brings in over \$100 million to the community and hundreds of jobs. This work is not accomplished alone. Aiken Land Conservancy is always grateful for the help of volunteers and accepts pay amount of donation. You can be certain your help will go to a great cause. To learn more, visit our website at conserveaiken.org or call us at (855) 252-5263.

[@aiken_land_conservancy](https://www.instagram.com/aiken_land_conservancy) [aikenlandconservancy](https://www.facebook.com/aikenlandconservancy)

Land Trust Alliance **SOUTH CAROLINA LAND TRUST NETWORK** **ACRESERVE**

Amber Schumacher

New Social Media Pages

In today's digital age, staying connected is more important than ever. We want to make sure you're always in the loop with the latest updates, exciting content, and meaningful conversations. Thanks to the efforts of Ashley Blankenbeckler, ALC's administrative assistant, we are thrilled to announce our new Instagram and LinkedIn accounts. By following us on these platforms, you'll be able to engage with us more directly, connect with like-minded individuals, and stay updated on the topics that matter most to you.



Ashley created Aiken Land Conservancy's first Instagram account. This popular photo-sharing app lets ALC feature local photos, videos, and stories to an audience that we have not tapped into previously. You will be able to get a glimpse behind the scenes of our team, the work that we do, and some of the incredible properties that we work so hard to protect. We hope to feature photos from other contributors, so please reach out to us if you have ALC-related content that you'd like for us to consider sharing.

Ashley also created an ALC LinkedIn profile, enabling us to share updates of our work on this increasingly-popular social media and networking platform. In addition, LinkedIn allows for ALC to connect with people and groups especially tied to our mission. It's an excellent way to stay connected in our professional networks and reach a whole new audience at the same time.



We hope that you'll consider giving both of these new accounts a "follow," and stay tuned for many more updates on both! And, if you aren't already, make sure you're following our Facebook page as well!

*There is harmony in autumn,
and a luster in its sky,
which through the summer
is not heard or seen,
as if it could not be,
as if it had not been!
- Percy Bysshe Shelley*



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New ALC Hike Series a Success

The Aiken Land Conservancy Hike Series kicked off with a hike to the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve on Saturday, September 23rd. Over 30 participants joined Peter Kleinhenz, our executive director, for a three-mile hike through the property. On the way, participants learned about longleaf pine, prescribed fire, wiregrass, and the many species that are specialized to live in sandhill ecosystems. The participants got to observe a family group of federally-endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers up close and saw unusual plants such as the sandhill milkweed, which has leaves that resemble stained glass windows when the sun is observed through them.



Our second hike occurred at Langley Pond Park on October 7th. Over 40 participants observed a beautiful male American redstart, a sleeping raccoon, a ground skink, several Southern toads, and even a juvenile rat snake! The next hike will take place on November 4th at Boyd Pond Park.

Peter plans to lead one hike every month, each of which will take place at a different natural area within 45 minutes of Aiken. We hope to see you on a future hike! 🌿

The State of Aiken's Trees

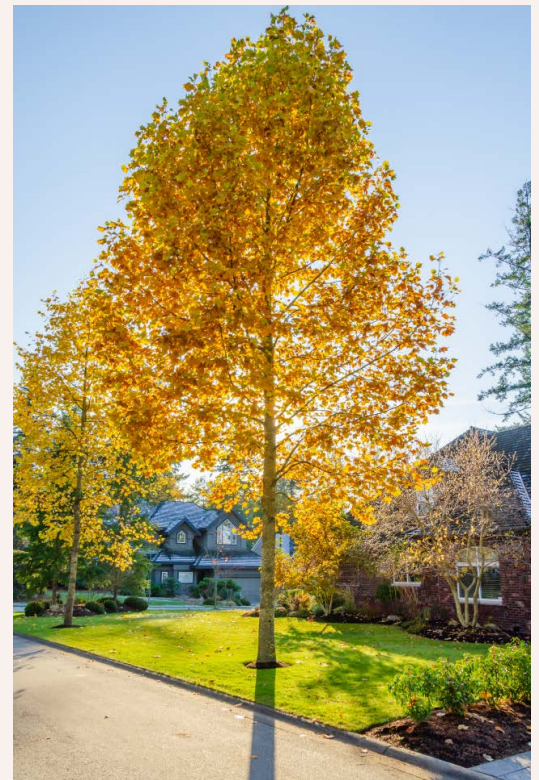
Contributed by Dacre Stoker, Executive Director, Aiken Streetscapes

In early November Aiken Streetscapes is once again partnering with the City of Aiken and the Aiken Land Conservancy to provide funding to Bartlett Tree Specialists to undergo proactive tree pruning to 108 Live Oak trees on South Boundary Avenue.

Earlier this year contractors for Dominion Energy finished the undergrounding of power lines along South Boundary Avenue, thus relieving the trees of the burden of harsh utility cuts in the future. For these magnificent trees to flourish they require, every few years, ongoing pruning to remove dead or dying limbs, and also “upwards pruning” to ensure that the limbs maintain a height of 14 feet from the road surface. The South Carolina Department of Transportation does not allow any limbs to encroach on this minimum height to protect vehicular traffic.

The project this fall also involves Bartlett providing soil care and fertilization to all of the 178 Live Oaks along South Boundary. This is also recommended every few years, especially after pruning and nearby ground boring to ensure that the Live Oaks absorb necessary nutrients.

In addition to the South Boundary corridor, Aiken Streetscapes and the City of Aiken will work together to undergo proactive pruning throughout the City of Aiken and surrounding neighborhoods. 🌿



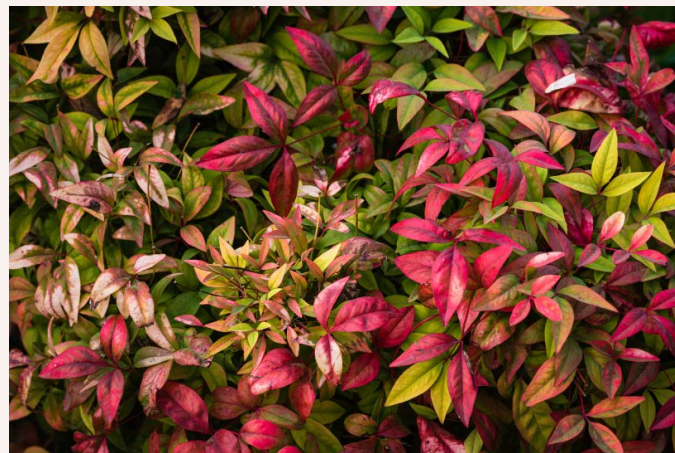
Carolina Bay Update

Have you been to Carolina Bay Nature Preserve recently? If so, you may see some areas where shrubs, small trees, and vines have been cut. Fear not! Although it looks destructive, this work benefits the upland habitat around the Carolina Bay and will bring a range of benefits to the property.

On September 22nd and 23rd, Auvenshine Land Management conducted work to mechanically reduce the hardwood undergrowth within the pine-dominated uplands of the property. Fires would have naturally passed through this habitat, including the wetland, every 2-3 years. Now, due to habitat fragmentation, nearby schools and businesses, and the small size of the preserve, even small-scale prescribed burning is not possible on-site. The next best thing consists of mechanically reducing the hardwoods.



Not only is this management beneficial for ecosystem health, but it will improve public safety, increase visibility, and help to control non-native invasive plant species. We want to thank the City of Aiken Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department for their excellent stewardship of this property, a property forever protected by a conservation easement held by Aiken Land Conservancy. 🌿



Invasive Species

What plant species in your yard are native to South Carolina? If you do not know the answer to that question, or even if you just think you know, read on!

Most of us love gardening, and our yards are extensions of ourselves. We want them to look nice, want them to feel inviting, and many of us want them to also support native species. But, unfortunately, many of us are creating major problems in our quest to accomplish those goals. A great many of the yards and properties around Aiken are filled with non-native, invasive plant species that are wreaking havoc on our native ecosystems.

Walk into any of the major home improvement stores, and you'll almost certainly see non-native, invasive plant species for sale. There are few laws against this, and a whole lot of people who think that the plants are pretty, buy them, put them in the ground, and stop there. However, plants like Japanese blood grass and Nandina spread rapidly in our climate. With few, if any, natural predators in our region, there are no controls on their spread. They range from our yards, overtake native ecosystems, and, in the case of Nandina, poison our local birds. Literally tens of millions of dollars are spent annually in the Southeast alone treating invasive plant species.

Fortunately, there are solutions! Educating yourself on the invasive plant species of South Carolina is a great start. If you have these species, find out the best way to remove them and do so with haste. Then, educate yourself about native plant species that you can replace them with. Native plants, because they are native, usually require less care than non-native species and they support local wildlife unlike most non-native species.

Our yards do not have to be barriers to wildlife. They can be bridges, allowing animals to pass between natural habitats that have increasingly become islands in a sea of development. A great resource to begin your native plant journey is the excellent book, *Bringing Nature Home* by Doug Tallamy. 🌿

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Valley View Farm
Multi-Discipline
40+ Acres & Covered Arena
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CISSIE SULLIVAN AND TRACEY TURNER
 are lifelong equestrians who pair their love of sport with a combined 40+ years of experience assisting buyers and sellers of farms, historic homes and luxury estates.

Whether your goal is to earn your colors with one of Aiken's local hunts, show in the Hunter Ring at Bruce's Field, have a cross country school at The Vista or enjoy a hack in Hitchcock Woods, Cissie and Tracey will bring their trusted expertise to guide you to the perfect property to complement your lifestyle!

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Wondering what to do with your
Thanksgiving weekend guests?
Why not bring them out for a fun day at

CLAYS FOR CONSERVATION

What's New This Year?

We are offering two beginner categories this year to improve training efficiency.

- ▷ **Gun Beginner** is for shooters who have limited or no experience handling a shotgun. You will receive hands-on professional instruction with a Palmetto Shooting Complex professional.
- ▷ **Clays Beginner** is a faster-paced refresher training for those who have shot a gun and/or shot clays before but need a quick overview and supervised practice before heading out on the course.

Experienced Shooter: \$150

- 50 rounds of sporting clays
- Eligible to win competition and medal (Best Adult, Team, Senior)

Beginner Shooter: \$150

- Professional instruction
- Eligible to win Best Beginner competition and medal

Junior Shooter: \$75 (18 and under)

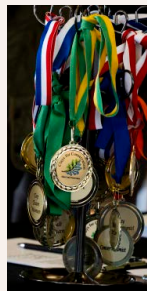
- 100 rounds of sporting clays
- Eligible to win Best Junior competition and medal

Spectator: \$75

- Golf cart tour of sporting clays course
- Southern-style catered lunch
- "Last Shot" bar

On Saturday, November 25, Aiken Land Conservancy will hold its ninth Clays for Conservation event. This is a signature fundraiser for ALC and is held at the prestigious, state-of-the-art Palmetto Shooting Complex in Edgefield.

The event offers instruction for beginners, a competition for experienced shooters, a Juniors division and tours for spectators.



Medals will be awarded for

- Best Adult (Man & Woman)
- Top Scoring Team (Men & Women)
- Best Beginner
- Best Junior (18 and under)
- Best Senior (70 and over)

Registration begins at 11:00 a.m. and ends with a Southern-style barbecue catered lunch and the "Last Shot" bar with Bloody Mary's, beer and wine.



photos by Ginny Southworth

What do I get for my ticket?

All Shooting Tickets Include:

- ▷ Southern-style catered lunch and "Last Shot" bar
- ▷ Ammo and golf cart
- ▷ Bring your own gun or borrow ours
Borrowed guns are limited; please indicate on your registration form if you need to borrow a gun.

*All proceeds benefit Aiken Land Conservancy.
A portion of your ticket price is tax deductible.*



Please visit ALC's website (www.ConserveAiken.org) to register online or use the registration form on this page.



Cut out form below and mail with your check

CLAYS FOR CONSERVATION
Saturday, November 25, 2023
Proceeds benefit Aiken Land Conservancy

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Number of Tickets:

_____ **Gun Beginner** (\$150 each)
 Beginners receive professional instruction. Guns and ammo included.

_____ **Clays Beginner** (\$150 each)
 Beginners receive a quick overview from a professional instructor and supervised practice before heading out on the course.

_____ **Experienced** (\$150 each)
 50 rounds of sporting clays, ammo and golf cart included. Bring your gun or borrow ours.

_____ **Junior** (18 years and under) (\$75 each)
 100 rounds of sporting clays, ammo and golf cart included.

_____ **Spectator** (\$75 each)
 Golf cart tours of the sporting clays course, Southern-style catered lunch and "Last Shot" bar.

I need to borrow a gun (supply is limited)

A portion of your ticket price is tax-deductible.

Enclosed is my check.

*Make checks payable to Aiken Land Conservancy and mail to
 P.O. Box 3096, Aiken, SC 29802 along with this form.*

I cannot attend, but would like to make a donation.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Please visit www.conserveaiken.org

Presented by



Thank You to Our Sponsors





2022-2023 Aiken Land Conservancy Donors

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

If you would like an updated membership list, please visit our website at www.conserveaiken.org

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

When you finish reading your newsletter, please pass it along to a friend.

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Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Herbruck
Ms. Holly Houghton

AIKEN CITY TREE INITIATIVE SPONSOR

Mr. and Mrs. Rob Johnston

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ANNIVERSARY FUND (\$50,000)

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Ms. Holly Houghton

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Mr. and Mrs. James Hambrick
Ms. Angela Winthrop
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