

Beaufort County

Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program

Passive Parks Public Use

Work Plan

2018

**Prepared by:
Stefanie M. Nagid
Passive Parks Manager
Community Development Department
Beaufort County**



Table of Contents

SECTION	PAGE
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Roles and Responsibilities	6
Monitoring and Security	9
Branding and Marketing	11
Management and Public Use	12
Conservation Easements	33
Maintenance and Operations	34
Strategic Goals	35
Passive Park Location Maps	36
Passive Park Priorities Table	39

Executive Summary

Beaufort County has been a frontrunner among local governments in land preservation since 1999 with the creation of the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program (RCLPP or Program), which is nationally known for preserving the landscape that makes the Lowcountry special.

In 2016, the Beaufort County Open Land Trust produced a report, *Stewardship and Public Use of Rural and Critical Lands*, which outlined how Beaufort County could allow public access and develop the passive parks while properly managing and maintaining all RCLPP lands. This report, *Passive Parks Public Use Comprehensive Plan*, presents a framework for how Beaufort County is going to prioritize and implement management, improvements, and public use on RCLPP fee-simple properties.

Improvements may vary dependent upon the nature of any given property, however basic elements may include parking and restrooms, nature trails, boardwalks, open-air pavilions, camping facilities, water access, land management practices, and revenue generating activities compatible with the RCLPP mission. Natural and cultural resources, development and improvements, operations and maintenance, and fiscal resource needs are all discussed in this report.

The opportunities on RCLPP properties are abundant and varied. Unique opportunities such as regional recreation area(s); private-public partnerships; partnerships with volunteer groups, local municipalities, and State and Federal agencies; eco-tourism concessionaires; and others exist.

In 2018, Beaufort County hired a Passive Parks Manager to oversee and initiate the evolution of the Program through well-informed stewardship goals and a continued focused on the Program's mission. During the implementation process for each property, the Passive Parks Manager will collaborate with Beaufort County stakeholders in order to provide lifetimes of public use and enjoyment of RCLPP properties.

The goals of this report are to:

- Define the roles and responsibilities for County staff, volunteers, and Boards to develop and manage the public use of the parks and management of RCLPP properties,
- Designate appropriate monitoring and security measures needed,
- Describe RCLPP branding and marketing standards needed,
- Outline natural resource management needs, public use opportunities, and revenue generation for RCLPP properties,
- Describe maintenance and operations resources and needs for RCLPP properties; and
- Provide a framework for long-term strategic goals for the Program.

Introduction

Community Profile

Beaufort County has some of the most scenic and ecologically sensitive land in the United States. The ecological treasure that is the Lowcountry features unique habitats, scenic views and recreational destinations, all of which contribute to the quality of life in Beaufort County. Since this lifestyle is a fundamental part of the attraction to Beaufort, protecting this environment is an economic imperative.

The scenic and sensitive resources are varied and numerous. Plant communities bring beauty and definition to the landscape. Lying in the coastal zone, Beaufort County forests include bottomland hardwoods, pine woodlands, oak-hickory forests, cypress-tupelo wetlands, and maritime forests. Beaufort County has eight plant and animal species federally or State listed as threatened or endangered, with an additional forty-seven identified as imperiled on a global or state scale. Loss of habitat is the primary cause of species imperilment.

The almost forty linear miles of beaches are an important mainstay of the tourism economy, with the dune systems forming the first line of defense against astronomical tides and sea level rise, and provide important wildlife habitat. Water, however, is the resource that truly defines Beaufort County. Rivers, estuaries, wetlands, and the Atlantic Ocean forms the scenic backdrop that makes Beaufort County such a special place. The County consists of 468,000 acres and 51 percent are tidally influenced rivers, creeks or marshes. The quality of these waters has been at the forefront of the Beaufort County conservation efforts, and the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program (RCLPP or Program) has focused much of its efforts on buffering the May, Okatie, Broad and other rivers and their watersheds.

Beaufort County of the 1950's featured rural farming communities and fishing villages. The City of Beaufort was a commercial center, and Hilton Head had not yet become an incorporated town. Today, resort development is predominant on the Sea Islands, large swaths of land have residential development, and Beaufort and Port Royal have grown and attract creative, enviable clientele. The communities south of the Broad River have experienced even more growth and change. Bluffton has grown into a major presence in the Lowcountry and much of its growth now occurs in and around its city limits. Hilton Head is well recognized for its attractions and its own efforts at resource conservation.

The 1980 census placed Beaufort County's population at 65,364. In 2008, the population had grown to 146,743. By 2015, the population had grown to 179,589. By 2030, the population of Beaufort County is expected to be 261,017. In 2015 the area comprising Beaufort and Jasper counties had the fourth-fastest growing population along the East Coast.

Program Profile

A sensitive environment coupled with rapid growth presented a delicate balance for the development of Beaufort County. Economic growth is critical to the economic quality of life of residents, but little tolerance exists for environmental degradation by county citizens. Maintaining this balance is a key reason for the establishment of the RCLPP and why it continues to be an essential element in managing Beaufort County's growth, now and into the future. The County was experiencing unprecedented and widespread growth in the 1990's, and the anticipated effect was a sharp decline in the quality of life for the citizens of

Beaufort County. The environmental impact of rapid growth was perceived as a major detriment to the quality of life.

With its genesis rising out of the first County Comprehensive Plan, the RCLPP became a partial answer to the growth pressure, and in 2000 the first bond referendum for \$40 million to fund land purchases was put before the citizens of Beaufort County. It passed with 73% of voter approval. Three additional referenda followed in the next 14 years. These were the 2006 referendum for \$50 million to fund land purchases (76% approval); the 2012 referendum for \$25 million to fund land purchases and park improvements (62% approval); and the 2014 referendum for \$20 million to fund land purchases and park improvements (73% approval). As a result, more than 23,500 acres of land either in fee simple purchase or conservation easements have been protected through the Program. Additionally, the 2016 Public Opinion Survey conducted by Clemson University's Strom Thurmond Institute for the Beaufort County Community Development Department confirmed the public's commitment and support of conservation areas (97%) and the desire for the ability to access those areas (86%).

The benefits of open space and parks are well documented. Research shows that parks overwhelmingly enhance the quality of life of citizens, contribute to community health and vibrancy, and promote economic development, tourism, and education. Property values are generally higher when they are next to or near open space and the typical return for every dollar invested in conservation is between \$1 and \$4. Many of the RCLPP properties have abundant potential for public passive recreation and use. Enhanced land management will continue the voters' environmental mandate to protect the natural resources and quality of life of Beaufort County, and increased improvements for public use furthers the taxpayers return on their investment in the Program.

RCLPP lands have been deemed special by the community and acquired properties have scenic views, water access, or historic significance. Proper stewardship of these natural resources is fundamental to land management and the protection of the conservation values of these properties. Providing more opportunities for the public to enjoy these lands, without harming the intrinsic conservation value, is the natural progressive evolution of the Program.

This report presents a framework for how Beaufort County is going to prioritize and implement improvements and public access opportunities on RCLPP properties. Individual park planning and design is not part of this report. Park specific management and improvement plans will be created inclusively with appropriate stakeholders, and as funding becomes available, in order to include community needs assessments and to better understand the population individual parks will be serving.

Roles and Responsibilities

Public ownership of real property is a detailed part of governance. According to Article XII of the South Carolina State Constitution, under Section 1 of the Function of Government, the “health, welfare, and safety of the lives and property of the people of this State and the conservation of its natural resources are matters of public concern”. Properly managed public lands are an asset to the community. Failure to manage them threatens resources, creates problems with the continuity of the landscape, and liabilities become costly issues for the taxpayer. This basic government function is even more important when RCLPP properties are involved. These lands have unique qualities and conservation values, which have been determined to be important to the livability of Beaufort County by its citizens through their votes for the four bond referendums. Taxpayer money has been used to preserve these lands and they require special management to ensure the resources are conserved while still being available for public access.

Beaufort County

Stewardship is a broader and more comprehensive type of property management than basic maintenance and involves managing property resources with three achievable goals: sustainability, multi-use, and revenue generation. The first stewardship goal is to promote sustainability and safeguard the conservation values and natural resources from being compromised. The second stewardship goal is to promote multi-use of RCLPP properties while protecting conservation values. Public lands develop constituencies across a broad spectrum of users. Each user group will have its own vision for use of the land. An important consideration is to ensure that users have adequate access and the County adequately meets user needs to the extent practicable. The recent opinion survey has been the first step to determine general user needs and vision for RCLPP properties. As funding is available to implement park improvements, additional stakeholder meetings will be conducted to determine the specific user needs for an individual property. The third goal is to generate revenue from the land in an ecologically sustainable manner to assist with the maintenance and operations of the RCLPP properties. As long as a revenue generating activity is consistent with the RCLPP mission, it warrants evaluation for revenue potential. Proceeds from these activities will be placed in a dedicated RCLPP fund for use in operations, maintenance, improvements, to build staff capacity, and/or match grants.

Upon the establishment of the Program, the County Council created the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Board (RCLPB or Board). The Board is comprised of one member from each of the 11 County Districts, who are nominated by the council member in their district and approved by the full County Council. Each Board member serves a four year term and can seek reappointment. The RCLPB was assigned specific duties, which include:

- 1) Developing and recommending to County Council, for adoption by resolution, a set of Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program Policies and Guidelines to guide the identification, prioritization, and management of parcels to be acquired through the county rural and critical preservation program. The Board may make recommendations to County Council for amendments to the Policies and Guidelines as the need arises;
- 2) Identify, prioritize and recommend to County Council rural and critical lands to be acquired through purchase of development rights, the option to purchase development rights, the fee simple purchase of property, or the exchange and transfer of title to parcels, as provided for in the County Council’s adopted Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program Policies and Guidelines;

- 3) Promote, educate and encourage landowners to participate in the County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program; and
- 4) Perform such other duties as may be assigned by County Council.

Additionally, Resolution 2014/1 allows for the creation of a 5-member Passive Park Advisory Body, which should have specific expertise in park planning, land management, and conservation practices. This body may be established through ordinance and their specific duties and a set of by-laws may be created, which may include providing recommendations for use and management of RCLPP properties, review of park specific management and improvement plans, and promotion and support of the Program within the community.

At the time of this report, the Beaufort County Open Land Trust (BCOLT) is under contractual agreement with the County, and works on behalf of the County, to identify and investigate candidate properties for conservation, negotiate the purchase of the properties, and bring potential acquisitions to the RCLPB for consideration and approval. Additionally, of the properties that are in conservation easements, BCOLT holds most of those and has the legal responsibility to monitor them at least once annually and to ensure the easement terms are being upheld. So long as a County-initiated conservation acquisition program remains in effect, the County will contract with an accredited Land Trust to continue these duties.

The Beaufort County Community Development Department has been the housing center for the Program. In 2018, a Passive Parks Manager was hired and will spear-head the Program as it evolves. County staff will continue to coordinate/collaborate with the Land Trust on acquisitions. The Passive Parks Manager will collaborate with partners and stakeholders in creating park specific management, use, and development plans. Other duties of the Passive Parks Manager may include ordinance and policy development, contracting, grant writing and submittal, coordination with local municipalities, state/federal entities, and other County departments, and relationship building with partners. Although the planning process for park development will require input and feedback from advisory boards, partners, and stakeholders, the County will maintain approval rights for any plans and expenditures related to RCLPP properties at the County Council's behest.

The Beaufort County Engineering, Infrastructure, Land Development, and Transportation Division, Facility Management Department has been identified as the best source for immediate and basic maintenance needs on RCLPP properties, such as bush-hogging, fine mowing, building maintenance and repairs, janitorial services, and trash pickup. Some maintenance functions have been assumed by Friends groups, non-profit partners, or local municipalities. This cost effective approach works well on certain properties, but would not be able to be applied County-wide. Maintenance needs for each RCLPP property will be discussed and determined on a case-by-case basis and as assigned by the County Administrator. Long-term goals may include hiring dedicated passive park maintenance staff and/or maintenance contractors. Duties may include janitorial services, trash pickup, parking area and trail cleaning, gate opening and closing (if applicable), and structural maintenance and repairs. Additionally, items of larger maintenance need, or special projects, also fall under the guidance of the Division's Engineering, Public Works, and Stormwater Departments, such as constructing or repairing a road, building stormwater ponds, and oversight of capital improvement projects.

Local Municipalities

Some of the most successful partnerships to maintain County lands have been through local partnerships between the County and a local municipality. Municipalities located in Beaufort County include the Town

of Hilton Head, the Town of Bluffton, the City of Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal, and the Town of Yemassee. These partnerships have tremendous benefit to both the municipality and County and will be pursued where needed and appropriate. Through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements, the County and a local municipality can agree on the terms of responsibility for maintenance and operations on a case-by-case basis.

Friends Groups/Volunteers

Several Friends groups have formed in recent years with a focus on a particular park. These groups “adopt” a property and collaborate with the County by bringing their aptitudes forward and providing input on the adjacent community’s use needs and assisting the County with operations and maintenance, where feasible. Friends groups are particularly helpful with low-impact, but high maintenance, situations such as trail maintenance, litter pickup, and monitoring/reporting. The County and Friends mutually benefit by having more eyes on the park to ensure proper use as well as having a well-maintained and enjoyable park experience for the public. The County will continue to coordinate with citizens, volunteers, and Friends groups as need and opportunity arises during the on-boarding of individual parks. The County will enter into an MOU with each group, which will detail duties and responsibilities, as needed.

Public-Private Partnerships

A resolution was adopted in 2012 outlining Beaufort County’s policy in regards to public-private ventures for use on RCLPP properties which allows for the use of private enterprise to fully utilize parkland. This resolution set the stage for alternative partnership opportunities that restricts uses on sensitive lands and brings awareness to the unique resources of the County. Public-private partnerships also benefit the County through operations and maintenance opportunities as well as revenue generation. Revenue may be generated through rent/lease agreements, ecotourism services, and other possibilities. The County will continue to pursue these partnerships, and establish formal agreements that detail duties and responsibilities of each party, where feasible and so long as the partnership is compatible with the RCLPP mission.

Monitoring and Security

At a minimum, RCLPP properties require proper monitoring and security measures to ensure properties are not a liability and there is no damage to the conservation values. Monitoring and security measures will be in the form of the following:

Passive Park Ordinance: The first step to ensure proper security and enforcement of unwanted and unlawful activities on RCLPP properties is the adoption of a Passive Parks Ordinance, which will detail hours of operation, allowable and unallowable activities, and more. This ordinance will be drafted by the Passive Parks Manager, with stakeholder review/input, and presented to County Council for codification.

Gates and Keys: The most basic security measure is fencing and/or gating property to control access. Regulating access allows the County a measure of control over inappropriate uses of property. Properties may have gates that restrict vehicular access but not necessarily pedestrian or equestrian access. Proper gating brings the need for a controlled and organized system of keying. The Passive Parks Manager will maintain a master key lockbox for all gates and facilities on RCLPP properties. Any requests for events or use that would require the use of a key will be provided in writing to the Manager for approval and scheduling.

Boundary Posting and Signage: Posting the boundaries and clearly identifying property as belonging to Beaufort County and part of the RCLPP is imperative. There are existing signs on some properties, but many of those signs are large and difficult to maintain. RCLPP property boundaries may be fenced or painted, depending on the nature of the property, and small boundary signs will be placed every 150 feet with painted trees or posts every 50 feet. Standard entrance signs will be installed at the designated public access points to ensure clear and proper ingress and egress for the public. Emergency access locations may be located on a case-by-case basis dependent upon 911 service needs. All signage will comply with County ordinances and RCLPP Marketing and Branding standards, as well as City or Town ordinances if applicable.

Inspections and Enforcement: Proper management requires regular inspection. Dumping, poaching, and trespassing harm conservation values and prevents safe public use. Currently, the Beaufort County Sheriff's office Environmental Crimes Unit inspects RCLPP properties and investigates environmental crimes on a routine basis. In the future, the Passive Park Manager would like to have at least 2 dedicated staff to assist in daily park inspections, trash pickup, basic maintenance, and reporting for all RCLPP properties. However, the Community Development Department will continue to closely coordinate with the Sheriff's office to ensure timely enforcement of rules and regulations, should problems occur. County staff will also coordinate with the state Department of Natural Resources on various properties where hunting or special resources are of State interest. Additionally, conservation easements require annual monitoring. The majority of conservation easements are currently held by BCOLT, which does annual inspections and monitoring on those properties. Some conservation easements are held by the County and staff will continue to inspect and monitor those properties, as listed in the Conservation Easement section of this report.

Record Keeping: When a RCLPP property is purchased, the contracted Land Trust maintains files for the property through the time of closing; and the Attorney-at-Large keeps copies of all the closing documents.

After a property closes, the Beaufort County Community Development Department maintains a master document of the property details and provides an update to the County GIS Department to ensure accurate representation on the RCLPP GIS layer. Additionally, the property will be evaluated by County staff for natural resource and public use components and this report will be a supporting implementation tool of the Natural Resources Element of the County Comprehensive Plan, which will be reviewed and updated on a 5-year basis. Each property will also have its own Management Plan, which will be drafted after the stakeholder vetted conceptual planning phase and approved by County Council. The individual management plans may include items such as natural and cultural resource inventories; current property description; any known legal restrictions; land management goals, objectives, and schedule; maintenance and monitoring needs; a business plan (if appropriate); and identification of any resource threats and potential solutions.

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Branding and Marketing

Marketing and branding of the RCLPP is a key part of the overall recognition of these properties. Recognizable branding with a compelling vision, and marketing of that vision, will be a concept that needs to be fully developed.

The RCLPP has done a notable job of branding and using recognizable themes. This includes common phrases like “Protecting Working Farms”, “Keeping Jets in the Air”, and “Maintaining Clean Water”. These are relatable catch phrases and the public understands the message. Specific branding will be developed for the RCLPP properties as a whole, including standards in signage and building design, as well as the language used to discuss the Program.

Marketing promotes visibility and ultimately usability, thereby integrating economics into the Program. Land management and park development is an important part of increasing real estate values, promoting tourism, creating a healthier community, attracting businesses and creating a better labor pool, promoting and growing the aquaculture industry, and other types of economic development. It also is a critical way to address some of the needs of the community and leverage the monetary contribution of the taxpayers through the referendums beyond natural resource conservation.

The development of a branding and marketing strategy may be completed by County staff or through the contracting of a media firm. However, any strategy will maintain flexibility for compliance with County and local municipality ordinances, rules, and regulations. Additionally, a branding and marketing strategy will also incorporate standards on how co-owner, partner, and other contributing third-party logos may or may not be used on County property. For instance, parties that hold title to a piece of land may have their logos displayed on entrance signs and access points, however, in-kind partnerships may have their logos displayed in areas and on items that were contributed to the park or facility.

Management and Public Use

Public Opinion Survey

To obtain community input on the potential uses of RCLPP properties, in 2016 the Community Development Department contracted Clemson University's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management and Strom Thurmond Institute to conduct a community survey of Beaufort County residents, non-resident property owners, and workers, regarding their views. Of the survey participants, 96.14% were residents, 3.40% were non-resident property owners, and 0.46% were non-resident workers.

Some of the most significant results were:

- 97% identified a positive impact on their overall quality of life from conserved lands, confirming the public's commitment to the preservation of important natural and conservation areas.
- 86% believe conservation lands should be more publically accessible and 93% believe continued protection of those lands is important if they are made accessible.
- 65% believe that conservation lands contribute a great deal to the County's economic prosperity.
- Top passive use activities include nature-based activities, with a focus on enjoying view sheds, wildlife, and hiking. Activities such as fishing, running, kayaking, and biking were also preferred.
- Over 83% of respondents are willing to travel over 3 miles to visit a passive park and over 57% would travel 6 miles or more to visit one of the County's passive parks.
- The survey showed the desire to emphasize the basic needs of users, including access to bathroom facilities, hiking trails, and trash cans.
- Over 50% of respondents said they would pay between \$1 and \$4 in user fees per passive park visit.

This survey provided key information about relationships between the community and preferred activities and amenities on the RCLPP lands. The survey also indicated a strong directive to uphold the natural and/or cultural values of conservation lands, while still leaving ample opportunity for complimentary activities that do not diminish the property's conservation values or the mission and purpose of the Program. This opinion survey is an important tool for outreach and engagement with County residents. Ongoing citizen engagement, education, and transparency as projects come on-line will be implemented through the planning, design, and construction phases of each passive park.

Development and Permitting

As RCLPP properties come on-line for providing public access opportunities, the County must work through the development and permitting process. Development, for the purposes of the passive park properties, is defined as any public access and use improvements which may include, but are not limited to, pedestrian or equestrian earthen trails, paved trails, boardwalks, pervious parking, paved parking, signage, gates, fencing, kiosks, kayak launches, piers, docks, playgrounds, restrooms, wildlife viewing blinds, observation decks, interpretive centers, event buildings, and other associated infrastructure to support such.

Once an initial vision has been formed, the first step in the development phase is to create a Conceptual Master Plan. This plan will bring the vision to life and will be able to be shared with stakeholders and partners for feedback and input. When a concept is finalized, the next step is to draft the detailed Architectural and Engineering Plans, which will be used throughout the permitting process. Due to the

expertise and time required to create these plans and work through the permitting process, but dependent upon funding and the type of improvements needed, a lead engineering firm may be hired to be the point contact for coordination with the Passive Parks Manager.

If an RCLPP property is solely within unincorporated County limits, the permitting and construction contracting steps that will need to be followed include:

- 1) Submit a conceptual plan application (and stormwater application if needed) to the Staff Review Team (SRT) for approval.
- 2) If a variance is needed, then submit a Zoning Board of Appeals application for approval.
- 3) Submit a Design Review Board application, if required, for approval.
- 4) Submit the final plan application (including stormwater, if needed) to SRT for approval.
- 5) Submit the building permit application to Building and Codes for approval.
- 6) Coordinate with the Purchasing Department on creating and advertising a Request for Proposals.
- 7) Review and select a successful bidder.
- 8) Submit the successful bidder to the Natural Resources Committee for approval and recommendation to the County Council for approval.
- 9) Coordinate with the Purchasing Department on the contracting phase and enter into a contract with the successful bidder.
- 10) Once a contract is signed, enter into the construction phase with the successful bidder.

If county owned property is located within a local municipality's jurisdiction, then the first five steps are done through the local municipality's permitting process instead of the County's. However, the County will apply either the County's or the local municipality's stormwater standards, whichever is the higher standard, to all projects.

RCLPP Property Classifications

Each RCLPP property the County owns has unique ecological, historical, and/or cultural values important to the County. By 2016, the Program protected more than 23,500 acres, with more than 11,000 acres protected through fee-simple purchase, and 12,400 acres protected via conservation easements. A resource inventory to gather information about the properties was also completed and provided a starting point for management decisions and opportunities for public use. The RCLPP properties were inspected on the ground and then evaluated using GIS data layers, existing baseline documentation, and surveys to better assess location, physical characteristics, existing restrictions, security issues, resources, and possible opportunities.

The RCLPP properties are highly variable in size and character and include vistas, islands, maritime forests, planted/naturally regenerated pine, freshwater wetlands, river buffers, agricultural fields, and hardwood forests. Most fee-simple properties are solely owned by the County, but several are jointly owned with another entity, such as a local municipality, BCOLT, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR), or with a restrictive easement overlay with the Department of the Navy-Marine Corps Air Station. Joint ownership is an asset to the County, often bringing resources to bear to manage and maintain the property. In some cases, the partnership agreement or MOU dictates how and when the property can be utilized.

One of the first steps to any land management program is having a firm understanding of the property owned, its assets, and resource definitions. In 2011, County staff and the RCLP Board produced a land

classification system for this purpose. The classification system listed below is a snapshot of the fee-simple RCLPP properties, categorizing property into four types. This system is not intended to be a recommendation for a specific property use or intensity of use, but rather provides an initial indicator of what the property could accommodate as far as use.

Table 1. RCLPP Fee-Simple Property Classifications

Classification	Association	Intended Use	Extent of Development
<i>Passive Park</i> (E.g.: Crystal Lake)	Passive outdoor recreation, parkland	Conserve the natural resources while providing passive outdoor experiences. Conservation values shape the type and intensity of use.	Properties can accept a moderate level of park development for public use. These may not all be developed into parks, but the opportunity exists if conservation values are protected.
<i>Recreational/ Special Use</i> (E.g.: Green Shell Park)	Active park	Opportunities for more frequent and varied use including daily public access to the water, group use, bike trails, agriculture, forestry, etc.	Property can withstand frequent use and more intense forms of infrastructure including boat docks and buildings.
<i>Special Resource Site</i> (E.g.: Altamaha)	Archaeological sites, rare habitats or species, forestry/agriculture	Resources of high significance. Low tolerance for development. Visitor traffic on these properties limited or available to be managed for a specific natural resource.	Natural and/or cultural resources are the primary focus of management activities with a high level of sustainability and sensitivity to the fragile environments.
<i>Open Space</i> (E.g.: The Green)	Green space, vista, islands, buffers, forestry agriculture	Protect scenic character. Most too small for infrastructure or not properly located to be developed into a park.	Low intensity or no management required on these sites. Many of these properties have limited or no access.

Additionally, the Beaufort County Community Development Code defines the following:

- **Passive Recreation:** Recreation requiring little or no physical exertion focusing on the enjoyment of one's natural surroundings. In determining appropriate recreational uses of passive parks, the promotion and development of resource-based activities such as fishing, camping, hunting, boating, gardening, bicycling, nature studies, horse-back riding, visiting historic sites, hiking, etc., shall be the predominate measure for passive park utilization.

- Regional Park: An open space of at least 75 acres available for structured and unstructured recreation.
- Pocket Park: A small open space available for informal activities in close proximity to neighborhood residences.

RCLPP Properties

The following property narratives will generally describe each fee-simple RCLPP property, its classification and code type, its natural and/or cultural significance, any known deed restrictions, land management needs, public use potential, and potential revenue generating activities. The properties are listed in alphabetical order, however a priorities table, as well as relative location maps, can be found at the end of this report.

Adams

Acreage: 57.17

Classifications: Special Resource Site, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The Adams property is upland forest with planted pines and is adjacent to several other protected conservation easement properties. Two wetland drains traverse the property. The planted pines are substantial in size and are currently harvestable. Access to the property is along an unimproved dirt road and there is no existing infrastructure on the property. Additionally, Beaufort County granted a restrictive easement to the Department of Defense on this property. These conditions make it an ideal property for managing timber to retain the ecological health of the property while also generating revenue for the Program to assist improvements on other RCLPP properties.

Land management activities will focus on long-term forestry operations. A silviculture plan will be created and implemented for the long-term management of the Adams property, which will be a consistent source of revenue to the County for maintenance of RCLPP properties.

Altamaha Town Heritage Preserve

Acreage: 100.07

Classifications: Special Resource Site, Passive Recreation

Status: Open to the Public

Altamaha is a site of significant archeological and historical Native American artifacts dating back to the early 16th Century. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this site was the home of the Yemassee tribe chief and contains two burial mounds and other artifacts, as well as a Civil War gravesite.

The property can be accessed from Old Bailey's Road and the current improvements include an interpretive sign, picnic tables, and a small dirt parking lot. A single road, open only to hikers on foot, traverses the property emerging from an oak hickory forest to a scenic vista overlooking the Okatie and Colleton Rivers. Along with Fort Fremont, this is probably the best representation of historic preservation by the Program and could be the highlight of a Native American Heritage Trail in Beaufort County.

Altamaha is jointly owned by the County and DNR. A document associated with the deed restricts the activities and uses of the property and a management plan has been completed by DNR. Due to the

importance of the artifacts, public access to the property will be restricted to passive use only and land management activities will be restricted to those that cause no soil disturbance, but may include prescribed burning, invasive exotic plant control, and mechanical and/or hand control of vegetation. Improvements to the existing boundary fence and parking area, an earthen trail, and picnic tables at the vista point are possibilities. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Amber Karr

Acreage: 12.55

Classifications: Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

This property was acquired to preserve wildlife habitat and is located off of Broad River Drive in Shell Point. Access to the property is between two driveways, which makes this property unlikely for public access and recreation. There are currently some neighborhood owners with fence encroachments onto the County owned property. Due to the size, location, and nature of the property, land management activities will be minimal and limited to invasive exotic plant control. Immediate management needs include improved County staff access, signage, and enforcement of illegal activities. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Amgray

Acreage: 20.78

Classifications: Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

This property was donated to Beaufort County and consists of a combination of timbered forest and wetlands, with an elevated rail bed transecting a portion of the property. Access is directly off of Highway 17. The property will need to be evaluated to determine the best land management practices, however there is a possibility for a timber thinning depending on the extent and configuration of wetlands on the site. Prescribed burning and invasive exotic plant control are also possibilities. Due to the size and location of this property, public use will be limited, but could consist of a small parking area, trail head with picnic tables, and pedestrian trail that may be able to connect to the existing rail trail. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Barrell Landing

Acreage: 49.08

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

Barrell Landing was purchased as part of a larger effort to prevent the Okatie River from further decline. There currently is no adequate access or parking and water access is limited. The property is primarily comprised of planted pine and wetlands; and a recently constructed stormwater pond is also located on the property.

Some potential public use opportunities for this property may include pedestrian trails and an open-air pavilion with picnic tables. Until such time as a conceptual park plan can be developed, land management will be needed in the form of timber thinning, mechanical/hand vegetation control, prescribed burning,

and invasive exotic plant control. Continued timber management on the property can be conducted to provide consistent revenue to the Program for future maintenance of RCLPP properties.

Batley-Wilson

Acreage: 63.46

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The Batley-Wilson property is located on northern Lady's Island and contains mixed pine-hardwood, mostly naturally regenerated, that grades into maritime forest and eventually the marshes of Broomfield Creek. Access is from Eugene Drive, but currently there are no improved roads or trails onto the property. The property is in close proximity to Jack Island where bald eagle nests have been identified. Beaufort County granted a restrictive easement to the Department of Defense, but it does allow for management and some public access.

Due to the size, location, and accessibility of this property, there are a variety of public uses that could be provided, including a kayak launch near the road/bridge connection, equestrian and pedestrian trails, and an open-air pavilion with picnic tables. Until such time as a conceptual park plan can be developed, land management will be needed in the form of timber thinning and mechanical/hand vegetation control, so long as those activities coincide with the terms of the restrictive easement. Long-term timber management is a revenue generation possibility at this site.

Baxter

Acreage: 25.29

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The Baxter parcel, located along John Baxter Lane off of Okatie Highway, was purchased as part of the larger effort to prevent the Okatie River from further decline. There is currently no adequate access or parking to this parcel. It is comprised of mostly wetlands with some mix pine/hardwoods, with salt marsh and creek breaking up the uplands and wetlands along the linear parcel.

Due to the inaccessibility and nature of this property, land management is limited to hand control of vegetation and invasive exotic plant control. The public use possibilities of this parcel are limited, however there may be potential for future land acquisitions of adjacent properties which could increase access and passive public use. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Beach City Road

Acreage: 7.29

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Passive Recreation

Status: Initial Planning

The Beach City Road parcels were purchased jointly by the County and the Town of Hilton Head to provide a buffer for and protect the Town park. The combined property is located within the historic footprint of Mitchelville, the first Freedman village in the post-Civil War South. Adjacent to this property is the Mitchelville Freedom Park, which is solely owned and maintained by the Town of Hilton Head.

In 2018, the Mitchelville Preservation Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and education of the freedmen of Mitchelville, approached the County to partner with them and the Town of Hilton Head to complete a Master Plan for the park and adjacent County co-owned property. The County Council approved funding for the Master Plan, which would include, but not be limited to, the recreation of cabins, interpretive signage, and nature trails.

Beaufort County, the Town of Hilton Head, and the Mitchelville Preservation Project are currently collaborating on the timeline and deliverables for the Master Plan. Any land management activities, property maintenance needs, public use, and revenue opportunities will be discussed and included in the Master Plan. Eventually, an MOU between all parties will be executed that will outline specific duties and responsibilities as park improvements continue to be developed and implemented.

Bluffton Park

Acreage: 9.65

Classifications: Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

Bluffton Park is co-owned by the County and the Town of Bluffton. The property is almost entirely composed of wetlands and was purchased to address drainage issues that would have been created through development. The Town of Bluffton inspects the property and maintains the drainage flowing through the property to the north.

The property is adjacent to Red Cedar Elementary School and the Town has expressed a strong desire for boardwalks through the property. However, due to the extensive wetlands and expense of boardwalk construction, no plans have yet to be conceived. Further discussions about public access and use for this property are needed. Due to the size and nature of this property, land management activities are not needed or will be limited to invasive exotic plant control and hand vegetation control as necessary. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Boundary Street

Acreage: 1.70

Classifications: Open Space, Pocket Park

Status: Closed to the Public

Three parcels contribute to the Boundary Street property, located along the south side of Boundary Street in the City of Beaufort. These parcels have beautiful scenic views of salt marsh along a narrow corridor, which also connects to a boardwalk and sidewalk system connecting to the Spanish Moss Trail. Although County owned, the County and City are working together on additional acquisitions for the creation of a pocket park. Continued coordination between the County and City is necessary to ensure adequate stakeholder involvement in any future public use and improvements. Due to the size and nature of this property, land management activities are not needed or will be limited to invasive exotic plant control as necessary. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Brewer Memorial Park

Acreage: 1.00

Classifications: Open Space, Pocket Park
 Status: Open to the Public

Brewer Memorial Park is a small pocket park located at the base of the Woods Memorial Bridge on Lady's Island adjacent to a County-owned boat ramp along Factory Creek. The site offers a beautiful vista and green space in an urban area. Brewer Memorial Park contains a dock maintained by the County, a small parking area, and green space for dog walking, observing the water, and birdwatching.

Brewer Memorial Park is jointly owned by the County and BCOLT, who assumes responsibility for the maintenance of the property, with the exception of the fishing dock. A JOA is in place that defines the roles and responsibilities of each party.

Due to the size and location of this park, as well as the terms and conditions of the JOA, land management activities are not necessary. However, the park does exhibit shoreline erosion that will need to be addressed in the near future to prevent any further loss of land and to protect the adjacent roadway. The County will coordinate with BCOLT and the State Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management to discuss possible erosion abatement options. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Charlotte Island

Acreage: 34.69

Classifications: Open Space, Passive Recreation
 Status: Closed to the Public

Charlotte Island is located in the middle of the City of Beaufort, near Mink Point Boulevard. It was purchased prior to the first RCLPP referendum. This property is accessible only by boat and is currently used by locals to hunt and camp, even though the County has not opened these up for official public use. The location and uniqueness of this property provides the possibility for an ecotourism opportunity and revenue generator as fish camps, or a similar type of use.

Land management of this property would be minimal and limited to vegetation and invasive exotic plant control. Immediate management needs include improved access for County staff, signage, and enforcement of any illegal activities. Any future public use opportunities will need to be fully vetted through stakeholder engagement and the creation of a conceptual master plan. Revenue generation at this property may be possible depending on the type of public use.

Crystal Lake

Acreage: 24.79

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation
 Status: Open to the Public/Late Stage Planning

Located on Lady's Island, Crystal Lake provides a natural retreat from its urban surroundings with a forested trail, salt marsh, and scenic view of Crystal Lake. The property includes valuable wildlife habitat, especially bird foraging and roosting habitat in a highly urbanized area. Beaufort County is in partnership with volunteers, many of whom are master gardeners and master naturalists, who will maintain the on-site pollinator garden.

The initial phase of park improvements has been completed with the installation of a parking area, covered walkway, boardwalk, and the "green" renovation of the Butler marine building, which provides office space for local conservation groups, including the Soil and Water Conservation District and BCOLT. As of early 2018, the final phase of park improvements is in the planning stages and upon completion will provide a pollinator garden and a trail around the lake.

Due to the proximity to adjacent neighborhoods and roadways, land management activities will consist mainly of invasive exotic plant removal and mechanical and/or hand vegetation control, as needed. Office space rental agreements provide revenue to the County and will be used for continued maintenance of the park.

Duncan Farms

Acreage: 79.00

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Regional Park

Status: Closed to the Public

This property in northern Beaufort County has an agricultural history and is in an area of the County with abundant rural land, much of which is privately owned and is increasingly under the threat of sprawl. The property is mostly large open, fallow fields with a treed perimeter and low ditches traversing the grounds. Native ground cover is beginning to regrow.

Land management on this property is minimal and includes mowing and/or prescribed burning to maintain the open fields, at this time. There is a possibility for natural resource restoration efforts on the property, depending on the future use and access decisions, but those efforts would be at a great expense to the County and would provide little or no revenue.

Throughout the country, the local food movement has been increasing and Beaufort County has many active farms. Duncan Farms presents an opportunity to create an agricultural node in Beaufort County due to its long agricultural history. Development of this property into working farmland could be an excellent partnership with the USDA, NRCS, Clemson Extension, and local colleges; and provide a revenue generation that could be used elsewhere in the Program. In the recent past, Nemours Wildlife Foundation offered to be a partner in this effort and to form a local task force to explore opportunities. They have a keen interest in teaching local school children about the outdoors, forestry, and farming. The working farmland potential will be considered further with potential partners to maintain the open space of this property. Additionally, in spring 2018, the Dafuskie Marsh Tacky Society contacted the county to engage in a public/private partnership for increasing their capacity as a non-profit organization by utilizing a portion of the property. Any public/private partnership will be vetted through the County purchasing process.

Ford Shell Ring

Acreage: 6.89

Classifications: Special Resource Site, Pocket Park

Status: Closed to the Public

The Ford Shell Ring property is jointly owned by Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head. There is currently no parking and limited access to the property off of Squire Pope Road. The property consists of mostly upland forests with some frontage on Skull Creek. A shell midden occurs on the property and therefore makes this a unique and sensitive site for land management and public use.

Land management would be minimal at this site and would focus on hand control of invasive exotic vegetation as needed. The immediate need is for improved access for County staff, boundary posting, and signage. There is a possibility for cultural interpretation of the shell midden and a pedestrian trail through the property to a platform overlooking the creek, however any future public access plan would need to be vetted through the State archaeological process to ensure proper preservation of potential artifacts. Additionally, the Hilton Head Archaeological Society is interested in providing assistance and guidance in future public access planning. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Fort Fremont

Acreage: 16.98

Classifications: Special Resource Site, Passive Recreation

Status: Open to the Public/Late Stage Planning

Located on Penn Center Road on the southwestern end of St. Helena Island, Fort Fremont is perhaps the best example of use for historic tourism. In a 2013 tourism study conducted by Regional Transactions Concepts LLC that estimated the impact of tourism spending in Beaufort County, it was determined there were 174,535 visitors to Beaufort, Port Royal, and St. Helena, which does not include visits to Hunting Island. Therefore, there is an incredible opportunity for Fort Fremont to attract visitors.

The Fort was built in 1898 to defend the Port Royal Sound, during the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. The property was acquired by the Program with plans to restore the overgrown and rapidly deteriorating property. The County works in partnership with the Friends of Fort Fremont (FFF) to maintain the site, and together, have developed plans for the park that include a historic interpretive center and pavilion. The FFF currently lead historic tours at the park and have built a diorama of the Fort as it looked in the early 1900's, which is currently located at the St. Helena Branch County Library. To facilitate the historic tours and visiting public, the FFF will be housed at the interpretive center upon its completion, and an MOU detailing duties and responsibilities will be executed. Additional improvements to complete the park renovations include an improved entrance, parking and fencing, shoreline stabilization, and safety/security measures on the fort structure.

Due to the historic nature of the site, land management activities will consist mainly of invasive exotic plant removal and hand-control of vegetation, as needed. There is a possibility of generating revenue through a voluntary donation box within the interpretive center, user fees for large tour groups, or a general recreational user fee. These opportunities require continued discussion and coordination between the County and the FFF.

The Green

Acreage: 1.06

Classifications: Open Space, Pocket Park

Status: Open to the Public

A portion of this property was originally conserved in 2007 as open space and restricted from any improvements. In 2010, the property was jointly purchased by the County and BCOLT and a Tenancy in Common Agreement was executed, which outlines responsibilities and permitted uses. Additionally, the City of Beaufort helps to maintain the property.

Currently, the property is an open lawn with a mature oak canopy along the edges and is bordered on all four sides by residential roads and homes. Observed uses include canine activities, picnicking, Frisbee tossing, and other low-impact yard activities. There are a few benches scattered on the property. Other possible improvements that could be done and yet still retain the open space nature of the park include a couple of trash cans, dog waste stations, and picnic tables.

Due to the size and nature of the property, no land management activities are needed. Revenue generation through events coordinated by BCOLT is addressed in the Tenancy in Common Agreement and funds generated are used for the continued maintenance of the property.

Greens Shell Park

Acreage: 3.30

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Pocket Park

Status: Open to the Public

Located on Squire Pope Road, this property was jointly purchased by the Town of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County. Amenities currently on the property include an observation deck, playground, picnic pavilion with grills, restrooms, and small basketball court. It is one of the more intensely developed sites in the RCLPP inventory and was purchased with funds prior to the first referendum. The park is currently maintained by the Town of Hilton Head.

Due to the size and nature of this park, no land management activities are necessary. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Ihly

Acreage: 63.07

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The Ihly property is located in northern Beaufort County on deep water with 700 feet of frontage on McCalley's Creek. Maritime forest and salt marsh comprise the northern property boundary. The property also contains approximately 30 acres of open fields and a pecan grove centrally located within the interior of the tract. There are 8-acres of wetlands with two isolated freshwater wetland ponds. Forest types include both mesic and upland mixed hardwood-pine. Beaufort County granted a restrictive easement to the Department of Defense, but it does allow for management and some public access.

Land management and public use activities will need to be fully vetted through a stakeholder process to ensure appropriateness as it pertains to the restrictive easement. Possibilities to consider include mechanical and hand vegetation control, shoreline stabilization, boat/kayak dock, primitive camping, and pedestrian trails.

Jenkins Creek/Jenkins Islands

Acreage: 1.78 / 24.24

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Pocket Park / Special Resource Site, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public / Closed to the Public

Located on St. Helena Island, the Jenkins Creek property is adjacent to a widely used boat ramp, Eddings Point Boat Landing, along the Morgan River and Jenkins Creek. The property is a small linear strip of scrubby/sandy land under large pines and cedar trees. It is currently used by boaters as an overflow parking area, although it has not yet been improved for that purpose, nor is it officially open to the public. Due to the size and nature of the property, no land management activities are needed beyond mowing to maintain the open understory. Public use opportunities are very limited given the size and shape of the property. Overflow parking on this property would not be ideal, however a single modular restroom, a few picnic tables and grill, and signage would be well suited and likely highly used by the boat ramp visitors. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

The Jenkins Islands consist of three islands (Palm, Murdaugh, and Legare) located directly across the road from the Jenkins Creek property and the Eddings Point Boat Landing. These islands remain as a natural undeveloped landscape and are inaccessible at this time. Land management of the larger island could include prescribed burning, invasive exotic plant control, and hand vegetation control as needed. There is potential to provide public access to the larger island by connecting it via a boardwalk/pedestrian crossing to the Jenkins Creek property and Eddings Point Boat Landing and providing a pedestrian loop trail around the island. The smaller islands are too far from the road to feasibly construct a boardwalk through the high marsh and will remain as naturally occurring green space. Revenue generation is not anticipated on these islands.

Keyserling/Fort Frederick

Acreage: 2.58

Classifications: Special Resource Site, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The Beaufort County owned parcels about the DNR Heritage Preserve parcels at Fort Frederick on the Beaufort River in the Town of Port Royal. The Fort property is owned and managed by the DNR. The Fort is of historical importance and believed to be the oldest tabby structure in South Carolina and DNR arranges tours of the property upon request. The Program purchased land adjacent to Fort Frederick to help provide access to the heritage preserve.

Due to the size and historical significance of the County owned parcels, no land management activities are needed. Immediate management needs are to coordinate with DNR on public access and park development, as well as develop an MOU between DNR, the County, and the Town of Port Royal for maintenance needs. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Lucky

Acreage: 70.41

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The Lucky property is adjacent to the Ihly property and contains open fields and grand live oak trees. A 1.5 acre pond is also found in the interior. Some of the property is comprised of mesic forest associated with a wetland drain. Several stands of loblolly pine exist, which have been planted or naturally regenerated.

A significant management concern is the tenant living on the property. There has been a history of dumping and trash piled up around the house that created a nuisance. The tenant is paying rent to the County and should be adhering to specific maintenance guidelines as outlined in the lease agreement. County staff will continue to collaborate with the Sherriff's Office on enforcement of the lease terms.

Beaufort County granted a restrictive easement to the Department of Defense on this property, but the easement allows for a passive park with some limitations. Land management and public use activities will need to be fully vetted through a stakeholder process to ensure appropriateness as it pertains to the restrictive easement and limitations of the property due to the on-site tenant. Possibilities to consider include mechanical and hand vegetation control, pedestrian trails and boardwalks, connectivity to the Ihly property, and U-Pick berry fields, which could generate some revenue for the continued maintenance of the property.

Manigault Neck Corridor

Acreage: 347.44

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation/Regional Park

Status: Closed to the Public

This assemblage of properties includes the Manigault Neck, Chechessee, Cool Heart Springs, and Jeter acquisitions located along Callawassie Drive and Chechessee Creek. All of the RCLPP properties from Widgeon Point to Okatie Regional Preserve form a significant rural greenbelt between northern and southern Beaufort County, creating connectivity and wildlife habitat corridors as well as enabling the big picture approach to ecotourism. The Manigault Neck Corridor is a forested assemblage of properties that offers numerous land management and recreational possibilities. There is also a small church located on the property, which is paying rent to the County.

Due to the size, location, and accessibility of these properties, there are a variety of public uses that could be provided, including trails, open-air pavilion with picnic tables, boardwalks and overlooks along the marsh front, and water access to Chechessee Creek. Until such time as a conceptual park plan can be developed, land management will be needed in the form of timber thinning, mechanical/hand vegetation control, invasive exotic plant control, and prescribed burning. Long-term timber management is a revenue generation possibility at this site.

McDowell Hummocks

Acreage: 3.96

Classifications: Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

These very small hummocks are located off of Sea Island Parkway and Harbor Island Bridge. They are difficult to access, but are occasionally used as a fish camp, even though the County has not opened them for official public use. Due to the remoteness of these small islands, land management will be minimal and limited to invasive exotic plant control, as needed. At this time, public access and use will be minimal as well. In the future, these hummocks may be able to be incorporated into a future private-public ecotourism partnership opportunity. Immediate management needs include improved County staff access, signage, and enforcement of any illegal activities.

McLeod

Acreage: 98.12

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The McLeod property in northern Beaufort County contains maritime forests and salt marsh associated with the Whale Branch River. Although the property is currently unmanaged, views of the waterfront are picturesque. There is also a large open pasture in the middle of the property and two underground natural gas pipelines running through portions of the property. A portion of the property also connects to the Spanish Moss Trail, which begins in the Town of Port Royal and parallels Highway 21 through the northern part of Beaufort County. Access is currently through a gate along Detour Road, which is controlled by Santee Cooper. Additionally, Beaufort County granted a restrictive easement to the Department of Defense on this property, but the easement allows for a passive park with some limitations.

Land management and public use activities will need to be fully vetted through a stakeholder process to ensure appropriateness as it pertains to the restrictive easement. Possibilities to consider include mechanical and hand vegetation control, prescribed burning, a parking area, restroom facilities, pedestrian trails and boardwalks, picnic pavilions, grills, scenic vista overlooks, and a kayak launch.

Mitchelville Beach

Acreage: 20.00

Classifications: Special Resource Site, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

The Mitchelville Beach property is co-owned by the County and Town of Hilton Head. It consists of undeveloped beach front and unique habitat types ascending from the beach to the maritime forest uplands. It is also a refuge for wildlife species that have limited space in this highly urban environment. The property is subject to dumping and has had trash and litter scattered throughout. There is a small ungated pull-off along the road frontage and a bike path occurs throughout the adjacent neighborhood.

Land management of this property is minimal and would consist of hand control of invasive exotic plants. The immediate management need is security, signage, and monitoring to curb continued dumping and vehicular traffic. The adjacent bike path and nearby Fish Haul Beach and Mitchelville Freedom parks make this a unique opportunity to connect the parks through pedestrian/bicycle paths and increase visitor usage, which would allow more “eyes” on the property for reporting issues. Other improvements that could be done include boundary fencing and posting, a small parking area with trailhead and bike racks, providing

beach access via a trail and boardwalk, and a small loop trail through the section of property opposite the beach front. Due to the size and nature of the property, revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Mobley/4P Hummock

Acreage: 99.75

Classifications: Passive Park/Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

These properties consist of one large tract and several nearby hummocks. These lands are located along Hwy 170 on the south of the Chechessee River Bridge adjacent to a boat ramp and other conservation lands. The Mobley property is co-owned by the County and the Port Royal Sound Foundation (PRSF), who helps maintain the property and conducts environmental education programs as per a JOA. The PRSF also owns a 10-acre parcel within the Mobley property, which will be developed into an environmental education center. Various natural features include mixed pine uplands, freshwater wetlands, salt flats and marsh, and maritime forest. Land management activities could consist of longleaf pine restoration, prescribed burning, mechanical and/or hand vegetation control, and invasive exotic plant control. There are also a few small wooden structures built as Eagle Scout projects in coordination with the PRSF that allow the PRSF to implement their educational programs. Those structures include an outdoor classroom with a podium and seating, benches, and bird houses.

The PRSF has begun the master planning process, which the County is an active participant. Dumping and litter have been an ongoing problem on the Mobley property and will need to be addressed during the planning process. Although public access will be limited on the smaller hummocks, which will remain as open space, there is great potential for public environmental interpretation on the Mobley property. Park improvements may include pedestrian trails/boardwalks, picnic tables, benches, and wetland overlooks or wildlife viewing platforms. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

New Riverside Regional Park

Acreage: 846.48

Classifications: Passive Park, Regional Park

Status: Initial Discussions

In 2017, the County initiated the conceptual master planning process to envision how to incorporate the County-owned New River and Garvey Hall properties with other adjacent conservation and public use lands. The County Community Development Department has engaged in preliminary conversations about the park and the neighboring Palmetto Bluff residents have offered to play an active role in park development.

Most of the New River property is wet and consists of impounded rice fields and scattered hummock islands, making terrestrial access difficult. The Garvey Hall property is close to the New River property and, although not directly connected, the properties are close enough that they will be planned together as one Regional Park and explore options for connectivity through additional acquisitions or access/trail easements. Garvey Hall is an easily accessible property and could be the better location for public access to both properties. Land management activities will be evaluated during the Master Plan process.

The properties offer a variety of prospective uses including an interpretive/visitor's center, trails, kayaking, rental cabins, and camping. A comparable property that could be used as a reference is the CawCaw Interpretive Center in Ravenel, which is owned and operated by Charleston County PRC. The potential for revenue generation through an ecotourism-based recreational opportunity is great for these properties.

North Williman Island/Buzzard Island

Acreage: 5,000.00/120.00

Classifications: Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

North Williman Island and Buzzard Island, located in Bull River, were some of the first properties purchased shortly after the passing of the first RCLPP referendum. Beaufort County is a ¼ co-owner with DNR on both of these properties. The sheer size of North Williman Island presents a wonderful opportunity to manage this property as a Wildlife Management Area. The Passive Parks Manager will coordinate with DNR staff to determine the process of providing this type of opportunity to the public.

Land management on these properties will be determined in collaboration with DNR and be compatible with current activities being conducted in the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve. Additionally, other public use and access to these properties will be vetted through a stakeholder engagement process and a Management Plan will be created. Close coordination with DNR will be necessary to ensure appropriate land management and resource sharing opportunities, and an MOU will be developed between the County and DNR to outline duties, responsibilities, and any revenue generation allocations towards the continued maintenance and operations of the properties.

Okatie Marsh/Olsen

Acreage: 197.80

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

Okatie Marsh borders the Okatie River, contributing to the County's decade long efforts to protect the Okatie River from further degradation. The property is the northernmost tract of a series of three tracts that were designated to become Planned Unit Developments (PUD). The Program purchased this tract and its anticipated development on the property was stopped. A new animal control facility is being constructed between the acquired property and Highway 170. There is a PUD adjacent to the property, which owns a portion of the existing access road and is in initial stages of development. Several structures occur on the property, including a dilapidated house, an aluminum storage unit, a shed, and a modern house. There is also an out-parcel on the Olsen property.

The property includes maritime forest, which grades into planted loblolly pine as the property nears the river. An interesting and unusual feature is an eastern red cedar allée along Pritchard's Point Road and the large live oaks scattered throughout the property. Land management activities that could occur on the property would focus mainly around timber management and restoration, including prescribed burning and invasive exotic control. Restoration would benefit the ecological health of the property, improve aesthetics, reduce wildfire hazards, create an excellent environmental education opportunity, allow more efficient trail construction, and the timber could be a source of future revenue. Grant and cost-sharing opportunities exist for longleaf pine restoration and could be pursued prior to establishing public access.

Although a conceptual development idea for the property was considered upon its acquisition, there are numerous issues that need to be considered and planned for prior to opening the property to the public. Immediate needs include constructing a permanent access road or obtaining an easement on the road owned by the PUD, securing the modern house on the Olsen property, removing the dilapidated structures, and conducting a timber harvest. Following those activities, next steps could include creating public access points, a trail network, picnic areas, and land management activities. Any future public use and access plans will be vetted through stakeholder engagement and the creation of a conceptual master plan. Additionally, there is the potential for long-term revenue generation with proper timber management and the rental of the modern house.

Okatie Regional Preserve

Acreage: 186.62

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Regional Park

Status: Late Stage Planning

This property consists of maritime forest, wetlands, salt marsh, and mixed hardwood pine forests. It is located in the Town of Bluffton, off of Highway 278, and has extensive frontage along the Okatie River and encompasses much of the wetland headwaters. Passive recreation potential is great on this property and may include pedestrian and biking trails, boardwalks, overlooks, water access, and connectivity to other RCLP properties.

Two additional properties, Evergreen and New Leaf, are located off of Highway 170 and Davis Road to the southwest of the main Okatie Preserve property. These two properties were acquired jointly with County RCLPP and stormwater funding. Stormwater ponds will be constructed on each of these properties, however the potential to connect a system of trails north to south throughout the entire regional preserve of RCLPP properties is great, and dependent upon additional key acquisitions. County staff continue to coordinate with BCOLT on those acquisitions.

Due to the wetland nature of this property, land management activities will consist mainly of invasive exotic plant removal and mechanical or hand control of vegetation, as needed. There is a possibility of generating revenue through a recreational user fee, depending on the type of recreational activity.

Okatie River Park

Acreage: 18.00

Classifications: Passive Park, Passive Recreation

Status: Initial Discussions

The Okatie River Park property is a linear buffer of open pasture and tree-lined swales along the Okatie River north of Hwy 278. There are also a house, barn, and small pavilion located on the southern end of the property.

In 2018, the adjacent property owner approached the County with a private-public partnership proposal in which the landowner would build and maintain a passive park in exchange for use of a portion of the property towards future development greenspace requirements. In March 2018, the County Council sent the proposal to a subcommittee for further discussions. If the proposal should move forward, an MOU

will be executed between the County and the landowner that would outline duties and responsibilities of each party, land management and property maintenance needs, and public use opportunities, among others. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Oyster Factory Park

Acreage: 9.06

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Pocket Park

Status: Open to the Public

Because of its convenient location in the heart of Bluffton on the May River, Oyster Factory Park is well used by visitors and the local community to access the river and is a site for special events and functions. The park connects the community to Bluffton's historic oystering past and preserves a beautiful bluff providing a buffer from the residential and commercial development occurring in the surrounding community. The Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County have an agreement in place and the Town took over management of the park in 2004.

Existing improvements include a boat ramp, signage, wooden fences, a short nature trail through the wooded area, two designated parking lots, the Garvin House, an open air pavilion, restrooms, an oyster roast area with tables, and benches. BCOLT holds a conservation easement on two of the Oyster Factory Park parcels, which identifies the uses and permitted structures of those parts of the property. Due to the size and nature of this park, no land management activities are necessary. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Pinckney Colony Park

Acreage: 38.21

Classifications: Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Open to the Public

Pinckney Colony Park is at the corner of Pinckney Colony Road and Highway 278. Most of the property is freshwater wetlands and conserved for water quality purposes. The small upland area has a picnic space with tables and trash cans. A storm water pond has also been constructed on the property to accommodate stormwater runoff from Highway 278. The Beaufort County Parks and Leisure Services Department (PALS) is responsible for property maintenance.

Due to the wetland nature of the property, no land management activities are necessary. Additionally, any future trail development on this site would require extensive boardwalks. As of the production of this report, no additional public access on the property is being planned due to the extensive presence of wetlands and sensitivity of the habitat to development. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Pinckney Point

Acreage: 232.60

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Regional Park

Status: Closed to the Public

Two properties are included in this listing due to their proximity and connection to each other, Pinckney Point and the Gwann property, which are located between the Colleton and Okatie Rivers. The combined

property consists of open, fallow fields with some naturally regenerating pine, a semi-connected island, and an open vista overlooking high marsh. A house, barn, and tabby ruins occurs on the bluffs of the main property, however the house has been recently vacant and is in need of repairs and/or renovations. The barn and tabby ruins need to be evaluated for potential historic significance and, if so, secured for posterity.

Land management activities that could occur on the property would focus mainly around forestry and longleaf pine restoration efforts, including prescribed burning and invasive exotic plant control. Restoration would benefit the ecological health of the property, create an excellent environmental education opportunity, and the timber could be a source of future revenue. Grant and cost-sharing opportunities exist for longleaf pine restoration and could be pursued prior to establishing public access.

A conceptual park plan was drafted several years ago and could be revisited as a starting point in the creation of any new development plan. Additionally, the concept of a native species arboretum was brought forward as a way to balance the natural and cultivated landscapes and create a potential tourist destination, which could also be a revenue generating activity. This property lends itself to many public use and revenue generating possibilities, including picnic pavilions, trails, historic/environmental education, silviculture, eco-tourism, and event rentals. Any future public use and access plans will be vetted through stakeholder engagement and the creation of a conceptual master plan.

Shell Point

Acreage: 11.92

Classification: Open Space, Passive Recreation

Status: Closed to the Public

Shell Point was purchased to stop additional residential development in a highly developed area. The property contains both jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional wetlands and preservation prevents the exacerbation of stormwater issues. At this time, this property will remain open space for stormwater retention. Due to the size, location, and nature of the property, land management will be minimal and limited to invasive exotic plant control. Public access and revenue generation are not anticipated at this site.

Station Creek

Acreage: 4.56

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Pocket Park

Status: Closed to the Public

Located on St. Helena Island, this property is adjacent to a widely used boat ramp, Buddy and Zoo Boat Landing, along Station Creek. The property has an open field under large mature live oaks, and also has a modern house, which has been used by the County Sheriff's Office as a satellite location. The property is currently used by boaters as an overflow parking area, although it has not yet been improved for that purpose, nor is it officially open to the public.

Due to the size and nature of the property, no land management activities are needed beyond mowing to maintain the open field. Public use opportunities need to be discussed further, but may include improvements such as a modular restroom, pervious parking, picnic tables, grills, and signage. Additionally,

the fate of the existing house needs to be determined by the County. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Stoney Preserve

Acreage: 8.11

Classifications: Open Space, Pocket Park

Status: Closed to the Public

Stoney Preserve is jointly owned by Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head, who maintains the property. This property is located off of Spanish Wells Road just south of the bridge over Jarvis Creek. Spanish Wells Road has a bike lane as well as a parallel walking path, which is also maintained by the Town of Hilton Head. The property has a picturesque view of Jarvis Creek with an open area used occasionally for picnicking and fishing. There is a small trail, an existing driveway entrance, and some dumping/littering occurs on the property.

Land management of this property is minimal and will consist of mechanical and hand vegetation control and invasive exotic plant control. The immediate management need is security, signage, and monitoring to curb continued littering, as well as regular mowing of the open area to maintain the open space and view. The recent hurricanes have left large downed trees, which need to be cleared from the existing trail. Other improvements that could be done include a small open-air pavilion with picnic tables, a grill, and trash cans; a fishing/crabbing platform; a small earthen parking area; and split rail fencing. There may be a need to implement shoreline stabilization, however that will need to be further assessed and would be incorporated into the fishing/crabbing platform plans. Revenue generation is not anticipated at this site.

Widgeon Point Preserve

Acreage: 162.24

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Passive Recreation

Status: Late Stage Planning

Located on Lemon Island, Widgeon Point Preserve is ideally located, equidistant from southern and northern Beaufort County. The BCOLT are a 1/8th owner and active partner, and through a Joint Ownership Agreement (JOA) with the County, takes the lead for maintenance and operations of the property.

The property was once a family horse farm. BCOLT worked with volunteers to remove debris and old barbed wire fencing and, with a group of master naturalists, designed and built rudimentary trails and conducted a prescribed fire in 2016. BCOLT works with community groups such as the Port Royal Sound Foundation, Master Naturalists, and The Center for Birds of Prey to conduct bird and nature walks on the property. BCOLT also renovated the existing barn on the property, which can be used for the rental of events and weddings to offset the cost of property maintenance.

The County has a draft conceptual park improvement plan, which includes the construction of a parking area, restrooms, and other amenities. Permits for the conceptual plan have been obtained and final engineered plans will be completed in preparation to begin construction. The County will coordinate with BCOLT to determine if they wish to continue event and property maintenance. If they chose not to, the

County will conduct a Request for Proposals for an event concessionaire to manage events and property maintenance.

There is a possibility for generating revenue from the event rentals and reservations for use on this and other RCLPP properties. An agreement will be executed between the County, BCOLT, and any other private partner (if applicable) that will outline duties and responsibilities as well as the distribution of any funds generated from the property. Land management needs on this property are minimal and include prescribed burning and invasive exotic plant control as needed.

Wright Family Park

Acreage: 1.29

Classifications: Recreational/Special Use, Pocket Park

Status: Late Stage Planning

Located in the Town of Bluffton adjacent to the Calhoun Street Public Dock, this property contains an open understory beneath oaks with frontage on the May River. The Squire Pope Carriage House was built on the property around 1850 and was the village cottage of one of Bluffton's founders, Squire William Pope. The main dwelling was burned in 1863 and the two remaining buildings were joined after the family returned to Bluffton following the Civil War. The Squire Pope Carriage House is one of the most significant historic buildings in the Town of Bluffton's Historic District and on the National Register of Historic Places. The County and Town co-purchased the property in May 2017 to protect the historic building and provide passive public park/open space on the May River.

No land management is needed on this property. The Town of Bluffton has taken the lead on park planning and development and will maintain the site upon completion. Park improvements being considered include a bulkhead on the May River shoreline, walkways, parking, seating areas, restrooms, a catering kitchen, crabbing dock, a large open lawn area, benches and tables, and lighting. Additionally, the cottage will be restored. No revenue generation is anticipated at this site.

Conservation Easements

The RCLPP also protects land through the purchase of development rights via a conservation easement. Conservation easements are proactive tools used to protect rural land, thereby preserving natural resources and reducing incompatible development. The RCLPP goals are compatible with local, state, and federal partners and frequently those partners, including the Marine Corps Air Station, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service, and local municipalities participated in the purchase of conservation easements.

Many of these properties continue to be active farms or working lands contributing to the local economy and remain privately owned. Most of the conservation easements are held by BCOLT, which annually monitors these easements, however some easements are held by Beaufort County itself.

Annual monitoring is a very important part of an easement program. Landowners receive payment or accept tax benefits in exchange for the easement donation. The organization that holds the easement has a duty to ensure no abuses are occurring, and the landowners should be held to the agreements they have signed. Monitoring should be completed by a trained individual who understands the conservation easement document terms. The IRS guidelines for conservation easement compliance include:

- The organization must have the commitment to protect the conservation purposes of the donation and resources to enforce the restrictions of the conservation easement. Treas. Reg. § 1.170A-14(c)(1).
- Organizations that accept easement contributions and are committed to conservation will generally have an established monitoring program such as annual property inspections to ensure compliance with the conservation easement terms and to protect the easement in perpetuity.
- The organization must also have the resources to enforce the restrictions of the conservation easement. Resources do not necessarily mean cash. Resources may be in the form of volunteer services such as lawyers who provide legal services or people who inspect and prepare monitoring reports.

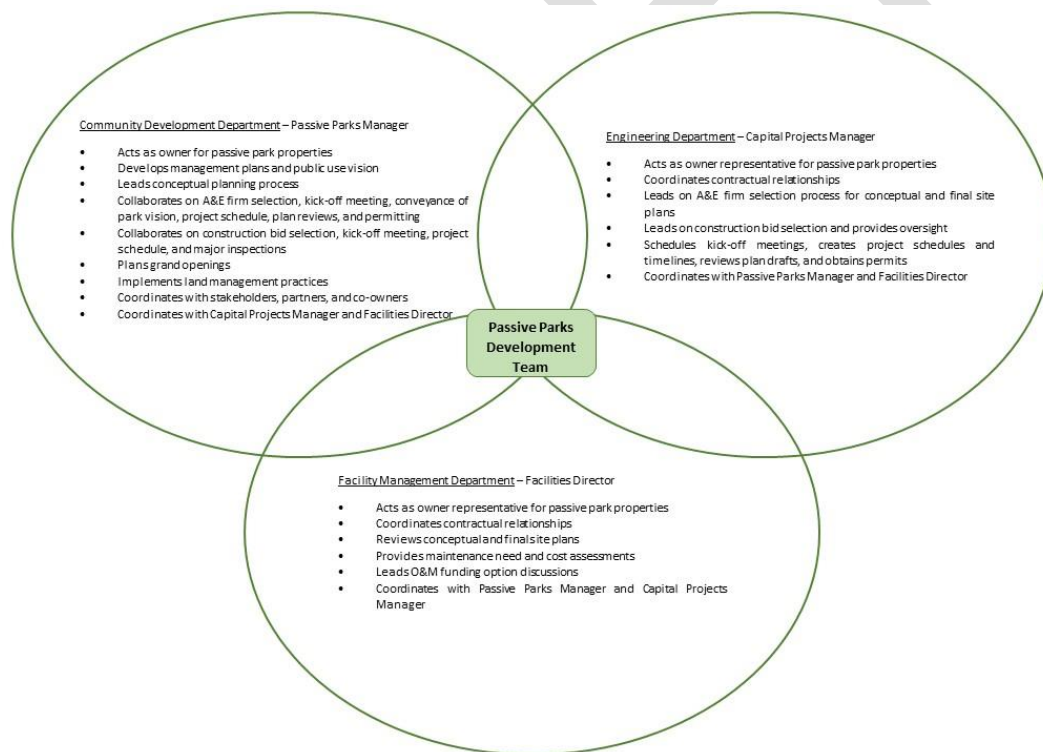
County staff currently monitor the properties listed below on an annual basis to ensure compliance with easement terms and conditions:

Property Name	Acreage	Grantee	Additional Grantee/Co-holder
Winn Tract	68.91	Beaufort County	USDOD
Penn Center (Tree Farm)	195.41	Beaufort County	USDA-NRCS
Rathbun	27.50	Beaufort County	USDOD
Seabrook Road Donation	14.88	Beaufort County	N/A

Maintenance and Operations

As with any land acquisition and passive park program, it is important to have designated responsibility for natural resource management and park amenity maintenance. At the time of this report, public use of RCLPP lands is infrequent to nonexistent, therefore maintenance needs are minimal. Once properties become improved for public access and use, maintenance needs are going to increase and coordination between the county departments will be crucial.

Various county departments were identified in the Roles and Responsibilities section. Those departments and the coordination between them for planning, development, and maintenance is shown in the figure below. Unless otherwise determined through agreements with Friends groups, volunteers, or other entities, the process illustrated below will be followed by county staff until such time as an integrated Parks and Recreation Division may be created.



Strategic Goals

The following strategic goals closely align with the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Natural Resources chapters and will be reviewed and updated, as needed, every five (5) years coinciding with the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan review period.

Develop Management and Regulatory Standards

The foundation for any public use program requires regulations and standards upon which to build an appropriate management system for sustainable long-term public enjoyment.

- Review and assess existing code and ordinances and, where needed, develop such that will ensure perpetual protection of passive park properties and public use thereof.
- Collaborate with the Finance Department on revenue income from passive park properties and the appropriate distribution of such funds towards long-term management of those properties.
- Collaborate with various County Departments on planning and mapping updates, purchasing and construction processes and standards, and maintenance and security requirements.
- Develop marketing and branding standards for the Beaufort County system of passive parks.

Implement Planning and Infrastructure Development

Implementing the appropriate planning processes will ensure proper infrastructure development on the passive park properties while maintaining the conservation value of the acquired lands.

- Assess each passive park property for fencing, gating, access, and boundary posting needs.
- Develop a priority list of passive park improvement possibilities.
- Develop individual management plans, which will incorporate land management resource needs, public use opportunities, and revenue generation possibilities.

Collaborate with Stakeholders

Collaboration with various stakeholder groups is crucial in the successful planning of public use projects in order to optimize needs of the community and protection of the natural resources.

- Continue to coordinate with the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program Board on acquisition of properties that enhance the existing system of lands and are consistent with the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan and Greenprint.
- Engage co-owners, funding partners, adjacent landowners, neighboring communities, and other stakeholders during the conceptual master planning process for passive park properties.

Create an integrated Parks and Recreation Division

The long-term success of a Passive Park Program will depend on the eventual creation of a Division dedicated to the continued development, maintenance, and operations of the system of county parks.

- Create a need assessment for a Parks and Recreation Division, which will include an organizational structure, park maintenance needs and costs, staffing and/or contractual requirements, and funding possibilities.
- Collaborate with County administrators and County Council towards the creation of the Division.

Passive Park Location Maps

The following maps illustrate the locations of the identified Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program Passive Park properties in the north and south parts of Beaufort County.

DRAFT

*Need to include updated map of RCLP North properties

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*Need to include updated map of RCLP South properties

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Passive Park Priorities Table

The following table provides a list of passive park properties and their public use and revenue generation possibilities. Properties are prioritized by Tiers according to existing plans, contracts, and funding availability in Tier 1; partners and available funding in Tier 2; and future intent based on location, accessibility, and revenue possibilities in Tier 3. Properties listed in Tier 4 have access limitations to be addressed, or are already developed and fully accessible to the public.

Definitions of the public use and revenue generation potential categories is as follows:

- Parking/Restrooms means there is either a hard or softscaped parking area and/or a restroom facility.
- Paved Trails means trails or pathways that are either paved, sidewalked, or otherwise hardscaped.
- Unpaved Trails means trails or pathways that are earthen, boardwalked, or otherwise softscaped.
- Picnic Areas means picnic tables or open-air roofed structures with picnic tables, benches, or seating and may or may not include grills.
- Camping means primitive, platform, or other types of camping and may or may not include fire rings.
- Canoe/Kayak means the possibility of providing water access to or from a creek, river, sound, or marsh system for non-motorized boats.
- Special Resource means there may be a historical or culturally significant feature (“H/C”) and/or some other specialty public use feature (“PUF”) such as, but not limited to, a wildlife viewing platform, fishing dock/pier, or interpretive facility.
- Beach Access means the possibility of providing access to the beach, a sandbar, or other sandy landscape feature.
- Timber means the possibility of short or long-term silviculture management of the forested ecosystem.
- User Fees means the potential to charge a mandatory or voluntary fee to visitors of the site either individually or as a group.
- Events means the potential to charge a fee for private events such as, but not limited to, weddings, family reunions, or other social functions.
- Concessions means the potential for a private company to run a concession which the County will monetarily benefit from, this category also includes leases and other facility rentals that may occur.

*Site is unsuitable for public use until such time as future land acquisitions improve public access.

^Site is already developed, open to the public, and being maintained.

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