



Annual Report 2018

To: Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program Board
and Beaufort County Council

January 10, 2019

Presented by: Beaufort County Open Land Trust
*Administrator, Rural & Critical Land Preservation
Program*

Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program (RCLPP) opened strong in 2018 with its January 22, 2018 presentation and publication of "The Economic Benefits of Parks, Trails and Conserved Open Spaces in Beaufort County, SC" report by the Trust for Public Land and ended the year with its fifth successful bond referendum as Beaufort County voters convincingly approved \$25 million in continued funding for this long-running and successful program.

Program goals for 2018 included acquiring continued funding for the program, protecting high priority targets as identified by the 2014 Greenprint Map and building significant conservation areas by purchasing land adjacent to or in close proximity to previously protected land. The work accomplished throughout 2018 furthered these goals.

The RCLPP Board welcomed two new members in 2018: Beekman Webb (District 2) and Douglas Koop (District 5). Currently the District 1 and District 8 Board positions are vacant.

Cumulative Program Statistics (1998-2018)

TOTAL PROTECTED ACREAGE:

Fee Simple	11,510 acres
Conservation Easement	<u>12,416 acres</u>
Total	<u>23,926 acres</u>

TOTAL DOLLARS SPENT ON LAND PURCHASES:

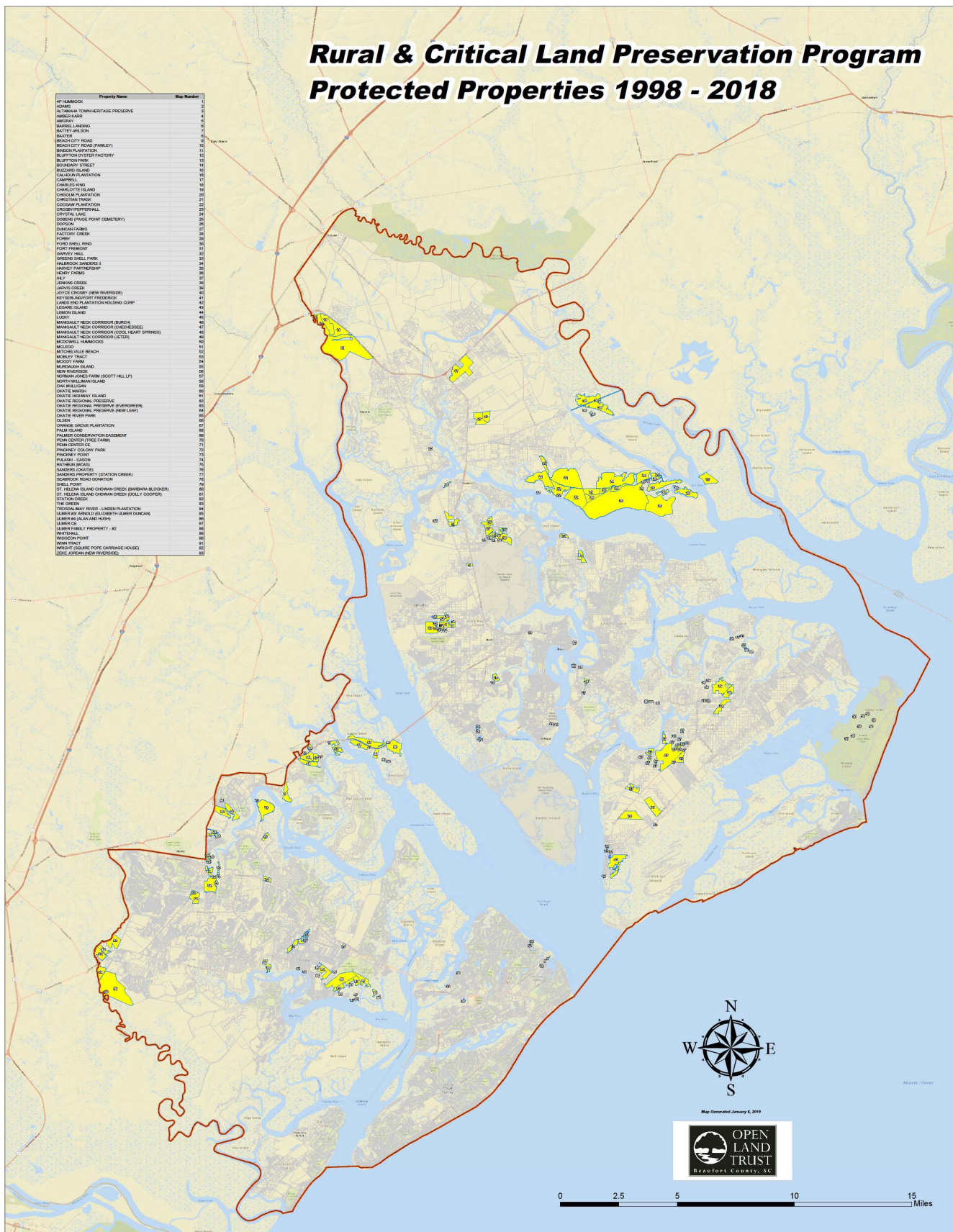
\$ 134,882,127 (includes ~\$8.4 million spent prior to first referendum)

TOTAL PARTNER FUNDS used to leverage County purchases:

\$ 40,399,248

Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program Protected Properties 1998 - 2018

Property Name	Map Number
SP HAMMOCK	1
ALAN	2
ANTHONY TOWNHERITAGE PRESERVE	3
ARNEY HARR	4
ARROYO	5
BIGGS LANDING	6
BATTEWILSON	7
BATES	8
BEACHCITY ROAD	9
BEACHCITY ROAD (PABLEY)	10
BIRCH PLANTATION	11
BLUFFTON CREEK FACTORY	12
BLUFFTON FARM	13
BOULEVARD STREET	14
BULLOCK ISLAND	15
CALHOUN PLANTATION	16
CAMPBELL	17
CHARLES KING	18
CHARLOTTE ISLAND	19
CHERRY PLANTATION	20
CHRISTIAN TRACT	21
COCKERMARSHTON	22
CROSBY/WYPPERWALL	23
CRYSTAL LAKE	24
DORRAN (PAGE POINT CEMETERY)	25
DORRAN	26
DUNCAN FARM	27
FACTORY CREEK	28
FERRY	29
FORD SHELL RING	30
FORT FRENCH	31
GARNEY FARM	32
GREENING HILL FARM	33
HARRISON	34
HARRISON CREEK'S	35
HARVEY PARTNERSHIP	36
HEFF FARM	37
HILY	38
JENNINGS CREEK	39
JARVIS CREEK	40
JAY CREEK	41
JAY CREEK (NEW RIVERIDE)	42
JAY CREEK PRESERVE	43
LANE END PLANTATION HOLDING CORP	44
LEWIS ISLAND	45
LIBBY ISLAND	46
MARSHALL NECK CORRIDOR (BIRDS)	47
MARSHALL NECK CORRIDOR (CHEECHES)	48
MARSHALL NECK CORRIDOR (COCK HEAT SPRINGS)	49
MARSHALL NECK CORRIDOR (LATER)	50
MCCORMICK LAMPROCK	51
MELROD	52
MITCHELL BEACH	53
MORNING ISLAND	54
MOODY FARM	55
MORNING ISLAND	56
NEW RIVERIDE	57
NORMAN CREEK FARM (SCOTT HILLS)	58
NORTH WILLIAM ISLAND	59
OM MALLOAN	60
OWENS BEACH	61
OWENS BEACH ISLAND	62
OWENS REGIONAL PRESERVE	63
OWENS REGIONAL PRESERVE (SUNFLOWERS)	64
OWENS REGIONAL PRESERVE (SUN LAKE)	65
OWENS RIVER PARK	66
OWENS	67
OWENS CREEK PLANTATION	68
PALM ISLAND	69
PALMER CONSERVATION EASEMENT	70
PEN CENTER (TREE FARM)	71
PEN CENTER	72
PINEHURST COLONY FARM	73
PINEHURST POINT	74
PINEHURST COMMON	75
PATRAN DOGS	76
PATRAN DOGS	77
PATRAN PROPERTY (STATION CREEK)	78
SAUNDERS ROAD DONATION	79
SHELL POINT	80
ST. HELENA ISLAND-CHICKAN CREEK (BARBARA BLOOMER)	81
ST. HELENA ISLAND-CHICKAN CREEK (DOLLY COOPER)	82
STATION CREEK	83
THE CREEKS	84
TROGLODYTE RIVER - LINDEN PLANTATION	85
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	86
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	87
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	88
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	89
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	90
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	91
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	92
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	93
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	94
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	95
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	96
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	97
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	98
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	99
UMBER HILL (LINDEN PLANTATION)	100



Map Generated January 6, 2019

2018 Land Protection Summary

The Beaufort County Open Land Trust (BCOLT) staff considered forty-seven (47) properties (some inquiries, some proactively pursued) in 2018. Thirty-two (32) of those properties did not meet the criteria for the program or the landowners were ultimately not interested in pursuing the funding offered for their property or development rights. Four (4) properties were brought forward for purchase consideration to the RCLPP Board and three (3) of those projects were recommended for purchase to the Natural Resources Committee of Beaufort County Council. One project (Whitehall Park) was brought forward by the Natural Resources Committee without a recommendation from the RCLPP Board. All four projects were ultimately approved for purchase by County Council, two closed in 2018 and two projects are currently set to close in early 2019.

Projects

Two relatively small but strategically important parcels were purchased and closed through the program in 2018, one in the mid-County greenway corridor and one in northern Beaufort County.



Okatie Highway Island:

This 4.16-acre marsh island is located in the mid-County greenway corridor of Beaufort County and adds to the mosaic of other properties in the Rural Critical Land Program inventory, including the Jeter Tract (25 acres), Manigault's Neck (72 acres), Cool Heart Springs (82 acres), the Chechessee Tract (44 acres) and Okatie Marsh (98 acres). The Island is unimproved land with the characteristics of an isolated hummock of high ground surrounded by salt marsh and is bounded by the marshes of the Chechessee River on the north and west and by southbound SC Highway 170 (an SC Scenic Byway) on the southeast. Long-term conservation efforts by conservation groups and Beaufort County through the Rural & Critical Land Program have invested in the protection of these highly visible roadway buffers and ecologically sensitive lands in order to protect the important character of this transition zone between the northern and southern parts of the County.

The purchase of this property in a \$44,000 bargain sale transaction protects the water quality on the Chechessee River, a high profile economically important waterway and outstanding resource water (ORW) and preserves this small but important hummock island maritime forest habitat and salt marsh for wildlife.



Whitehall:

The 20-acre Whitehall parcel, located in the City of Beaufort on Lady’s Island with its majestic live oaks and high visibility from US Highway 21, the City of Beaufort and the Intracoastal Waterway on the Beaufort River, was a highly sought-after development target for decades. Several Rural & Critical land protection projects had been proposed over the years with no success. In February 2018 over community opposition, a conceptual masterplan for Whitehall was approved by the City of Beaufort, allowing residential, commercial and mixed-use development on the property. In July 2018, the Program Administrator initiated a final effort to purchase a portion of the property for public use. An agreement was negotiated to purchase 9.72 acres of the waterfront portion of the property for \$5,450,000, with cost-share funds of \$1,000,000 from the Felburn Foundation, \$50,000 from the Open Land Trust, and \$29,000 in public donations. The seller of the property offered valuable in-kind services toward the planning and development of a passive park at Whitehall. The public strongly voiced support for the purchase of Whitehall, and Beaufort County Council unanimously approved the project. In October 2018, the Whitehall purchased closed and a conservation easement was granted to BCOLT, ensuring that Whitehall will remain in its natural condition in perpetuity.

Totals for 2018:

TOTAL PROTECTED ACREAGE:

Fee Simple 13.88 acres

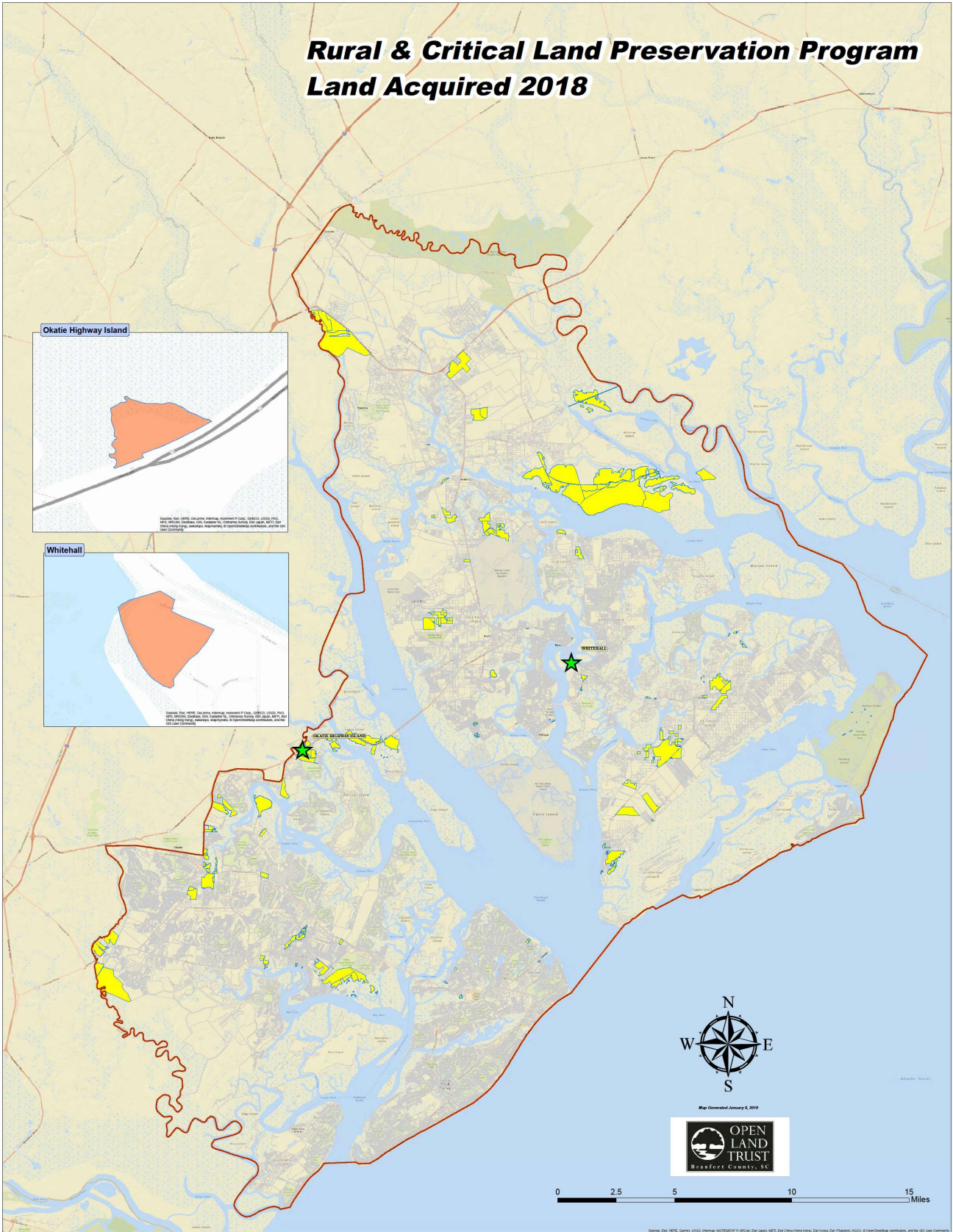
TOTAL DOLLARS SPENT ON LAND PURCHASES:

\$ 4,415,000

TOTAL PARTNER FUNDS used to leverage County purchases:

\$ 1,079,000

Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program Land Acquired 2018



Additional Program Highlights – 2018 Bond Referendum

- January 22, 2018: Beaufort County Economic Benefits Analysis & Report Released

In 2017, BCOLT staff and several key members of the RCLPP Board collaborated with The Trust for Public Land's Conservation Economics team on the development and highly anticipated publication of the "Economic Benefits of Parks, Trails and Conserved Open Spaces in Beaufort County, South Carolina" report which was released on January 22, 2018.

- The Report documented that Beaufort County's parks, trails, and conserved open spaces generate millions of dollars in economic benefits per year. TPL's team identified eight major attributes of these assets that provide economic value and were measured: *property value, clean water, clean air, tourism, recreational use, health cost savings, recreation spending agricultural support and military defense support.*
- The Report's property value, clean water and clean air analyses also documented the specific economic benefits attributable to Rural & Critical Lands, quantifying their financial benefits to the citizens of Beaufort County.
- Report results were presented to Beaufort County Council on January 22, 2018 and were distributed by website and other social media platforms. The full report and the factsheet can be found at: www.tpl.org/beaufort-county-south-carolina#sm.0001xhsfb015add4vqtkusld7450q

- February 2018: Conservation Finance Feasibility Study

The Trust for Public Land's Conservation Finance team published the "*Conservation Finance Feasibility Study*" in February 2018 outlining the options and viability for raising additional land conservation funds for the Rural & Critical Program in 2018.

- March 27-29, 2018: Telephone Poll Conducted

A telephone poll was commissioned by The Trust for Public Land to survey Beaufort County voters regarding their support for a bond referendum to fund land conservation through the RCLPP. A random sample of 400 likely voters were interviewed, and more than two-thirds of likely voters indicated that they would vote "Yes" if the election were held the day of the interview for a ballot measure that would fund land preservation through a \$50 million general obligation bond.

- April 12, 2018: \$50,000,000 Bond Referendum Referred to Natural Resources Committee

Will Abberger from TPL presented the results of the feasibility report and the telephone poll to the RCLP Board at the April 12 meeting. The RCLP approved a recommendation to the Natural Resources Committee of County Council to pursue a bond referendum of \$50 million with an amount not to exceed 15% going towards park infrastructure.

- April-May: \$25,000,000 Bond Referendum Referred to Ballot

The bond referendum was amended by the Natural Resources Committee to allow that up to 20% of the funds could be used toward park infrastructure and was approved at the April 23, 2018 Council meeting. At the second reading on May 14, the bond amount was reduced to \$25 million and the referendum was approved to move forward.

At the third reading of the bond referendum ordinance on May 29, County Council unanimously recommended authorizing the placement of a question on the official ballot for the November 6, 2018 election authorizing Beaufort County to issue General Obligation Bonds in an amount not to exceed \$25 million to acquire lands for preservation with an amount not to exceed 20% going towards park infrastructure.

- September-November 2018: Fall Bond Referendum Campaign

- TPL designed and distributed three educational mailers to Beaufort County households with funding from the Donnelly Foundation
- The organization “Citizens for VOTE YES WATER AND LAND” published flyers and newspaper advertisements advocating for the Rural & Critical bond referendum using the tagline “Vote Yes, Save Water & Land”.
- BCOLT published and distributed four short videos supporting the bond referendum featuring Councilman York Glover, Bluffton Oyster Company’s Larry Toomer, Coosaw Farms’ Brad O’Neal from St. Helena, and former Councilmember Dot Gnann.
- Advocacy partners the Coastal Conservation League, Audubon SC and BCOLT staff conducted 31 speaking engagements to educate the public on the RCLPP and the November bond referendum.

- October 12, 2018: At national Land Trust Alliance conference in Pittsburgh, PA, Program Administrator Barbara G. Holmes presented Beaufort County case study during the “Red, Blue and Green: How to Get Billions for Conservation” workshop encouraging land trusts to participate in local ballot measures to fund land conservation with Rural & Critical Land Program used as example of a long-running program with strong voter support.

- November 6, 2018: Beaufort County voters pass bond referendum measure with 70% approval margin.

The Beaufort County Open Land Trust looks forward to its continued partnership with Beaufort County protecting the natural resources and open space that make this County a desired place to live and work. For additional information regarding the information in this report, please contact Barbara G. Holmes, Program Administrator at (843) 521-2175 or barbara@openlandtrust.com.