

CONSERVATION



The Newsletter of
The Upper Savannah Land Trust

IN THE LAKELANDS

COVERING ABBEVILLE, EDGEFIELD, GREENWOOD, LAURENS, McCORMICK, NEWBERRY & SALUDA COUNTIES ► SPRING 2006

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE USLT

On October 1, 2000, the Upper Savannah Land Trust was incorporated after a lengthy planning period by interested citizens of the region.

The group then began contacting land owners in our seven-county service area. Finding a widespread interest in our mission, we began to accept easements from landowners.

Creating a Land Trust Organization

Why would a group undertake the endeavor of forming a land trust entity, and more importantly, why have so many families become interested in this land management/conservation option?

First, we saw that there were many successful land trusts throughout South Carolina and the United States. These groups had seen a need to conserve some of the cultural and historical treasures as well as vital natural habitat areas in their regions.

We realized that when a land trust agency is created in an area, it immediately begins attracting conservation-minded landowners. Owners of properties meeting



Entrance to 201 Acre Burns Property

land trust specifications quickly become aware of the tax advantages and multiple options for conserving their land without having to give up their rights of ownership.

Growth in the USLT

The first USLT easement of 33 acres was granted by the **Tolbert** family of Ninety Six in January 2001. Today, the USLT proudly holds 16 easements representing 2,439 acres granted by 14 landowners. The easement sizes range from 7 to over 750 acres.

In June 2005, two outstanding easement were provided to the USLT:

James and Mundy Burns with 201 acres in Greenwood County and **Dr. Marie Bowie** with 753 acres in Anderson County (the first easement outside our normal service area). Currently, the USLT has several hundred additional acres pending closure.

The most impressive aspect of these easements is the quality of these very unique properties. They represent some of the finest hardwood, riparian, and old farmland habitat types in our state. Several property owners plan to continue their practice of providing areas for relaxation, hiking, picnicking, and multiple group use for environmental conferences and workshops. All are secure in the knowledge that their family heritages will be protected.

UPPER SAVANNAH LAND TRUST

The mission of the Upper Savannah Land Trust is to encourage and support conservation of natural and scenic lands, farms, forests, waterways, and open spaces in our seven-county area: **Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry, and Saluda** Counties.

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**Conservation
in the Lakelands**
Volume 2, Issue 1

UPPER SAVANNAH



Land Trust

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From the President's Desk . . .

We have reached a milestone in our organization and major growth is upon us! We currently have more than 75 members that support our trust and we need to increase our membership base in order to enhance our current growth rate.

If you are a former member of the Trust or you are hearing about us for the first time, please consider joining us in our endeavors. Our mission statement on Page 1 explains our philosophy, and we are finding that more and more people are interested in the Upper Savannah Land Trust. We have included an envelope in this newsletter for your convenience if you wish to join us in our efforts.

Our Fifth Annual Meeting was held at the Greenwood Coun-

try Club on August 2, 2005. **Carlton Owen**, Chairman and charter board member of Upstate Forever, one of our sister land trusts in upstate S. C., was our guest speaker. Carlton brought his great knowledge of land trusts to a wide-ranging discussion of issues facing such conservation organizations. Carlton's lovely wife **Brenda** accompanied him, making the occasion special inasmuch as it was also the week of their 35th wedding anniversary.

The bottom line of all of this is that time is growing short to save the wild, the scenic, and the historic from the inroads of development. We must all redouble our efforts for conservation.

Patrick

USLT Annual Meeting Set

The Upper Savannah Land Trust will hold its annual meeting on May 2, 2006, at the 1856 Adams house, located at 617 Lebanon Church Road, Greenwood.

From Greenwood, Lebanon Church Road is 3.2 miles east from the intersection of Hwy 34 and 25 South. From Ninety Six, Lebanon Church Road is 4.2 miles west on Hwy 34. Look for Mt. Lebanon United



Methodist Church on Hwy 34. The road is beside it. Go about a mile down Lebanon Church Road until you come to an open farm gate on the left.

THE VALUE OF THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT

When you say “easement” to most folks, they immediately conjure up images of giving away the use of their land. Nothing could be further from the truth with a conservation easement.

What is an Easement?

A conservation easement is a contract between a landowner and a land trust organization which is established to conserve properties of special value. The property owner gives up certain rights such as the right to develop the land in a manner different from current usage in exchange for protection of the property *in perpetuity*. The landowner and all of his or her heirs continue to use the property in their normal manner. The landowner may sell the property, assuming the new owner accepts the restrictions in the contract.

What are These Restrictions?

In order for a landowner to receive the benefits of a land trust, he or she must give up the right to alter the use of the land in a way that would be detrimental to the things that make that property special and worth protecting.

For example, the owner of a scenic, traditional farm might give up the right to turn it into a golf course or a condominium development. Typically,

in this part of the country, commercial development rights are relinquished.

Why Give Up These Rights?

A landowner can use the easement to reflect his or her future desires for the property, and thereby insure that the property is protected in a manner stated in the easement forever. As such, the easement becomes a valuable estate planning tool, particularly for families with large land holdings.

The tax consequences of giving an easement can be substantial:

- A federal tax deduction
- A reduction in estate tax
- A reduction in property tax
- A state tax credit

How Do I Decide If My Property Qualifies for a Conservation Easement?

Get in touch with a non-profit land trust organization like the Upper Savannah Land Trust. They will assign a representative to evaluate your property and discuss the potential for including it in an easement.

Review the easement potential with your family, including

those who might inherit a share of the property in the future. Come to a consensus on what it is about the property that you want to preserve for all time and what rights you might give up for all future generations.

Do I Have to Let the Public Use My Property if I Give an Easement?

Generally, no. Your property continues to be for your use. However, certain properties, like a historic site, might be considered worth conserving only if the public, or some members, like researchers, could have access.

All of these details are hammered out between the landowner and the trust organization before a contract is drawn up. Each easement is tailor-made to fit the special circumstances of the property.

The representative of the land trust organization will discuss the details of the benefits once a clear picture of the conservation potential is determined.



“A landowner can use the easement to reflect his or her future desires for the property, and thereby insure that the property is protected . . . forever.”

Conservation News Briefs

Drummond Receives Award

We were extremely proud that State Senator **John Drummond** of Greenwood was selected as the recipient of the 2004 BMW Conservation Award.

The Upper Savannah Land Trust nominated the senator for this recognition.

USLT Gets Grant

The Upper Savannah Land Trust has received a Michelin Grant for \$2,000 which is being used along with in-kind assistance from the U. S. Forest Service to construct a 30-mile hiking/biking trail called the Forks Trail. Forks Trail runs along the Savannah River in Edge-

field and McCormick counties. Our grant is designated to be used for a graveled trailhead area where parking, signs, restrooms, picnic tables, and fire rings for cooking will be located. Work began in the winter of 2005.

Contact **Glen Kansanback** at gkansanback@fs.fed.us for info.

We Need Your Support

Upper Savannah Land Trust is a 501 (c)(3) membership organization. It is dedicated to protecting the natural beauty and integrity of our area. **You can become a partner in this effort by joining the Upper Savannah in one of the following categories:**

\$25.00 – Individual \$50.00 – Family \$100.00 – Supporter
\$250.00 – Business \$500.00 – Founding Partner \$1,000.00 – Founding Sponsor

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