

Preserving the natural and scenic character of our island



Land Trust

FALL 2008 News



Cyclists Bob Swinehart, editor of Coastal Illustrated, and Chris Beaufait, owner of Monkeywrench Bicycles anticipate the opening of the new trail.

The 4.9-mile Hampton Spur rose to the top of the list of planned trail expansions last March when an anonymous Atlanta donor and part-time island resident contributed \$500,000 to jump-start the project.

Some people like to ride to Hampton Point on bicycles, said County Commissioner Tony Thaw, whose district includes Lawrence Road. I live there, and I've sometimes seen 20 cyclists at a time – even after dark. This will give people a long, safe stretch under beautiful oak trees.



Island's north end joins trail system

A new, scenic trail is in the works just north of the Lawrence Road roundabout – the first new stretch of trail to be added to the island's trail system in many years.

Construction began earlier this month on what's known as the Hampton Spur – a regulation design eight-foot-wide trail for hiking, biking, and jogging along Lawrence Road.

Ed McBrayer, executive director of the PATH Foundation, which

is in charge of the project, observed that the eight-foot width makes all the difference in the world. The six-foot width on most of the island makes you feel uncomfortable talking and taking your eyes off the road. For a cyclist, this is a big deal. McBrayer noted that the Hampton Spur will be safer as there are virtually no driveways to cross and no cars backing out. The trail will also feature special trail signage, including mile markers and rest stops along the way.



With funds now in hand, PATH will be able to complete the trail almost halfway to Hampton. The Land Trust is currently raising the additional funds so that the trail can be completed all the way to the Hampton Point entrance.

Continued on page 2

Message from Jack Hartman, Chairman of the Board

As part of our summer newsletter, we sent a poll question asking our members' opinions about a public method for funding land conservation. The proposal was to create a special tax district for land conservation on St. Simons and Sea islands, and to levy a 1/1000 -mill property tax to fund a conservation program on St. Simons Island.

More than 300 of you responded out of a possible 1,500 members (about 20 percent). Of the respondents, 64 percent of you favored such a proposal. However, we are concerned that the level of support for the proposal among our members was not much higher than that shown in an island-wide public opinion poll taken last May.

Based on your response and your many constructive comments, your Board of Directors has decided not to proceed with the necessary steps to place this public finance measure on the ballot in November. We do believe we should continue, with your help, to explore the consideration of public financing.

In making this decision, the Land Trust is keenly aware that our ability to make a positive impact on preserving the natural and

scenic character of our island will continue to be severely limited. While support from members allows us to undertake some initiatives, it does not allow us to undertake important projects that will have a dramatic impact. Almost daily, the Land Trust is presented opportunities to purchase land or conservation easements that would have significant public benefit. In most cases, sellers are willing to negotiate favorable terms if we are able to complete the purchase quickly. Without an additional source of funding, we cannot take advantage of most of these opportunities.

Clearly, if we are to have an impact on the future of our island through land conservation, we must find a way to raise additional funds. Private contributions are not enough.

Thank you again for your support of your Land Trust. We appreciate those of you who responded to our poll and especially those of you who took the time to write comments. As always, we stand ready to hear your ideas on how we might accomplish our mutual goal to preserve the natural and scenic character of our island.

Jack Hartman

Reid Harris, former state legislator who authored the Coastal Marshlands Act of 1970, signed his new book, "And the Coastlands Wait," in August at the Retreat Clubhouse on St. Simons Island. The successful event was sponsored by the St. Simons Land Trust, the Sea Island Company, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.



The Glynn County Commission in August presented certificates of appreciation to the St. Simons Land Trust, the Sea Island Company, and the Live Oaks Garden Club for their contributions toward landscaping the new roundabout at the intersection of Frederica and Demere roads. Accepting the certificates are, left to right, Live Oaks Garden Club members Peg Shorey and Jane Johnson, Commissioner Uli Keller, Land Trust Board Vice Chairman Lee Richards, and Jim Gilbert of the Sea Island Co.

Trail system

Continued from page 1



At the Aug. 21 trail groundbreaking are County Commissioners Jerome Clark, Tony Thaw, and Uli Keller; Merry Tipton of the Sea Island Co.; Ben Slade of the Land Trust; and Ed McBrayer and Jonathan McCaig of the PATH Foundation.

Those interested in contributing to the Lawrence Road Trail can call the Land Trust at 638-9109.

Kings Way trail

Meanwhile, Glynn County is moving forward on the official Phase One of the master trail system with a 2.21-mile trail from the heart of the Village to the F.J. Torras Causeway. Dick Newbern, Glynn County grants coordinator, explained that trail projects using federal funds take longer to design and build because of the extended approval process. All studies and plans must be submitted for review to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), which administers federal Transportation Enhancement funds that can be used for off-street transportation projects, including recreational trails that connect public parks.

Newbern said that a field study and basic drawings for Phase One are complete, and an environmental study is under way. Savannah-based EMC Engineering Services Inc. was recently hired to develop a detailed design, which should be completed and ready for public comment by December. Once all approvals are in, the county expects to go out for construction bids by March or April of 2009.

Both the Kings Way trail and the Lawrence Road Hampton Spur are part of a 16-mile Master Trail Plan, originally designed for the Land Trust by consultants (including the PATH Foundation) in 2005.

The Case for Public Funding of Land Conservation

Like most developing islands, St. Simons Island has seen our share of development in recent years. The push for more homes and hotels, plus the support facilities that go with them, will continue as long as people cherish the opportunity to live or visit along our coast. If we don't want to end up with a major imbalance between development and preserved open space, land conservation needs to become an integral part of island planning and development.

Today, less than 5 percent of the island's land is devoted to public open space. Half of that land is Fort Frederica. Most islands like ours strive to have at least 20 percent of land area in protected open space in order to preserve natural and scenic beauty and adequate public access to open spaces, shorelines and water that people who live and visit here want to see and experience.

With only 2,400 acres on St. Simons yet to be zoned or planned for development, there isn't much land left to preserve or time to preserve it.

The urgency of the situation was discussed with the public at several forums convened by the Land Trust earlier this year. And the subject of including everyone in the solution through a public funding initiative was at the center of the discussion.

Why do we need public funding? The Land Trust simply cannot raise enough funds through member and donor contributions to achieve a reasonable balance between open space and development. By having everyone participate through public funding, we can obtain the resources to pro-



Harrington Preserve

actively approach conservation opportunities. Additionally, we can attract federal and state grants that require local cost-sharing.

The options for public funding for land conservation, however, are limited and include:

1. A dedicated portion of the county-wide property tax for land conservation, an option used by several counties in Georgia to issue bonds for land conservation projects. Such programs are county-wide – not limited to specific incorporated or unincorporated areas.

2. All or a portion of a SPLOST, used by many Georgia counties. Such a measure would need to address land conservation on a county-wide basis and could not be restricted to St. Simons.

3. A 0.25 or 0.5 percent fee added to each real estate transfer to fund land conservation, used by many states (Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina, for example) and localities (Hilton Head Island) across the country. This dedicated tax is not permitted in Georgia.

4. A special tax district, not yet used by any municipality or county in Georgia for land conservation but used extensively for fire/police protection, infrastructure, or redevelopment projects.

It appears that the most likely source of public funding for land conservation on St. Simons Island would be the creation of a special tax district. Such an option could:

- Allow dedicated funds to be collected for land conservation within the district
- Prohibit the use of funds for any other purpose or in any other area than the special tax district
- Allow the creation of a land conservation program to accomplish specific objectives, with criteria for project approval
- Provide for citizen review of projects through a committee of island residents who would make recommendations for approval to the County Commission
- Provide for an annual public report on the program's progress

Although the Land Trust has decided not to pursue a special tax district for land conservation this fall, we do want to keep the conversation alive. If together we develop a better understanding of the issues and alternatives, we feel a public funding measure can win the support of the vast majority of island voters.

Russ Marane, President

Powerful together in protection



Land Trust membership: The power of working together

The Land Trust is proud to proclaim that most of our membership income goes directly to conservation projects. For every dollar contributed in 2007, about 85 cents went toward protection and preservation of island property. Over the years, membership dues and other contributions have enabled us to protect more than 145 acres of land, create beauty where a gas station once stood, provide a nature trail for you to enjoy and, now, expand the trail system on Lawrence Road.

If you are not yet a member or you have not renewed your membership lately, please join the more than 1,500 households that support our organization.

When the hopes of thousands align with the mission of an organization such as the Land Trust, to preserve the natural and scenic character of a place we love, that is powerful!

Shuckin' oysters St. Simons style

St. Simons Land Trust members and guests are invited to shuck oysters and savor low country boil a bit earlier this year. The 9th Annual Oyster Roast is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 24, at Fort Frederica National Monument.

"The Oyster Roast committee, under the direction of Kathy Brown, is already hard at work making sure everything goes smoothly," said Dana Pope, Land Trust director of development and membership. "It takes literally dozens of community volunteers coming together to stage what Elegant Island Living calls the 'best annual event on the island.' The Oyster Roast typifies what the Land Trust is all about: energetic volunteers and our caring community joining together to celebrate the Land Trust's continued successes and to recognize our membership and the power of their continued support."

Pope said that invitations to current members will be mailed on Sept. 25. She expects the 800+ tickets to sell out as they do every year.

Oysters donated by: Crabdaddy's, Bennie's Red Barn
Low Country Boil prepared by: Creative Printing Inc.

Major sponsors:
Rich Products / Bonefish
Grill / Sheffield Distributing

Oyster Roast Committee:

- Kathy Brown, chairman
- Sherri Jones
- Janet Brown
- Richard Adams
- Joan & Jack Ross
- Patti Laurens
- Ellen Moriarty
- Mike Malone
- Priscilla Hynes
- Lucy Thomas
- Georgia Kellogg

THE ST. SIMONS ISLAND LAND TRUST
9TH ANNUAL
OYSTER ROAST

Celebrate
The energy of volunteers
The strength of a community
Powerful together
In protecting the island

Fort Frederica National Monument
Friday, October 24
7 - 9 PM

\$45 for members
\$60 for non-members
912.638.1234
No rain, no problem!

Protecting the island we love



LAND TRUST
ANNUAL
OYSTER ROAST



Volunteering
and
caring community

Working
together
to protect the island we love

at the National Monument
on October 24, 2008
from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information
contact the members
office at 803.910.9109
or visit us online at
www.landtrust.org

For more information
contact the members
office at 803.910.9109
or visit us online at
www.landtrust.org

Oysters make the dinner. Shells make the reef.

Anyone can recycle aluminum, plastic and glass bottles and cans as the Oyster Roast will do this year. But the Land Trust goes one better and recycles the oyster shells, as well.

For the sixth straight year, the Land Trust is partnering with the Savannah-based University of Georgia Marine Extension Service to have the leftover shells trucked off to an Extension Service recycling center. From there they will be deposited at a new reef being created by the university's Generating Enhanced Oyster Reefs in Georgia's Inshore Areas (G.E.O.R.G.I.A.) project.

Casey Sanders, Research Technician III with the Marine Extension Service, heads up the Oyster Roast recycling effort, including the recycling of oyster shells. She notes that this year's shells may be formed into a new reef near Tybee Island. Two extensive reefs have been completed recently on Jekyll Island. The first was at Clam Creek on the north end of Jekyll, and the second, completed this spring, is at Beach Creek adjacent to St. Andrews beach.

The Beach Creek project was the largest in coastal Georgia, Sanders said. St. Andrews was

getting a lot of beach advisories. After bacteria source tracking, it turned out the problem came from animals in the marsh—deer, raccoons, and colonial nesting birds. Since oysters can filter and clean the water, we did this really large project in which we planted more than 10,000 bags of oyster shells over a mile-long stretch of beach. Sanders said it took 10 AmeriCorps volunteers

bushels of oyster shells to dispose of to call for free pick-up and recycling. For roasts with fewer shells, people can drop them off at our two shell recycling centers: at the Department of Natural Resources office next to the Sidney Lanier Bridge and at the Jekyll Island Recycling Center on South Riverview Drive, she says. Sanders' number in Brunswick is 264-7323.



six weeks, working full-time, to complete the task. The new reefs will provide a lifelong home to the oysters that spawn in the area.

Sanders invites restaurants and private parties with at least two

**Planting oyster shells
at Clam Creek on
Jekyll Island**

I'll tell you a secret.

People don't come to St. Simons Island to buy real estate. First they come to get away from stress, job fatigue, and noise. They come to play golf, ride bikes, fish, take a walk and breathe. They come to get married, celebrate birthdays, honor anniversaries, and have family reunions. They fall in love with the island and the trees and the bike paths, a walking trail or the canopy of oaks in the park. They explore our rivers and admire the marshes. They find out about the turtles being born or how rich our water is and the huge ecosystem it supports.

It's after all those experiences that real estate becomes the goal, and along with that comes the desire to maintain the beauty of the island that called to them in the first place. It's been proven

that parks, biking and walking trails, and natural areas like the John Gilbert Nature Trail actually help keep real estate values stable and over the long run, play a role in increasing property values.

Those of us in real estate on St. Simons know that the work of our Land Trust has been so important in maintaining the character of the island that we sell to our clients. Successes include saving properties like the old Chevron station, the land adjacent

to Fort Frederica National Monument, and the Harrington Preserve with its historic Harrington School, as well as turning the property donated several years ago by the Gilbert family into a nature trail that islanders and visitors enjoy daily.

Most recently, the Land Trust spearheaded gifts from garden clubs to add attractive landscaping to the new roundabout at Frederica and Demere roads. What a wonderful result for all of us to enjoy.

Land conservation, the creation of parks, and the continued improvement and expansion of our trail system are so important if we are to achieve a balance between developed land, open space and long-term quality of life. For developers, real estate professionals, and our residents, preserving the reason we are here and the reason others would like to be here is always a sound business decision. If that's not enough, someone told me that walking past a beautiful green space lowers your cholesterol level by at least 10 points. Don't hold me to that, but I'm pretty sure that's what I heard.

*Keep up the good work,
St. Simons Land Trust!*



**By Klickie Aiken,
Realtor**



JOIN NOW

All gifts to the Land Trust are tax deductible

Please sign me up at the membership level checked below.

Membership

- \$50 - 99 Sand Dollar
 \$100 - 249 Starfish
 \$250 - 499 Sandpiper
 \$500 - 999 Great Blue Heron

Live Oak Society

- \$1,000 - 4,999 Live Oak Supporter
 \$5,000 - 9,999 Live Oak Sponsor
 \$10,000 - 24,999 Live Oak Patron
 \$25,000+ Live Oak Benefactor

Name _____

Please print name as you would like it to appear in our newsletter:

John Jones and Mary Smith, Mrs. Ralph Brown, Mr. and Mrs. John Jones.

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please charge my VISA MASTERCARD AMERICAN EXPRESS

Name on card _____

Signature _____

Card number _____

Expiration date _____

**Please make checks
payable to:
St. Simons Land Trust
P.O. Box 24615
St. Simons Island, GA
31522**

The Village Master Plan

Q&A with Uli Keller:

In 2005, as a result of its recently completed Greenprint, the St. Simons Land Trust launched an effort to create a master plan for upgrading and beautifying the Village. Through the cooperative efforts of the Land Trust, Glynn County, Coastal Georgia Historical Society, Village Merchants Association, Sea Palms, and Sea Island Company, an outside consultant working with a local citizens' committee drafted a master plan in 2006. Implementation funding was later included in the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). Now that Phase One of the Village Master Plan is being implemented, the Land Trust News interviewed Commissioner Uli Keller, who headed up the master plan committee.

Q What does Phase One include?

A Phase One is what we call the family zone. Between the Casino and the lighthouse, this zone will become the major focal point of the revitalized Neptune Park. It includes a new swimming pool, bath house, miniature golf course, and playground.

Q What new features will the swimming pool include?

A The key to the pool is that it's multifunctional. You can have swimming lessons, swim laps, or do water aerobics, and kids can be in the water park all at the same time. We'll have beautiful landscaping and shade structures



around the pool. The bath house will blend with the Casino. It will include restrooms and showers, a concession stand, and a lifeguard station. It will also be the entrance for the pool and miniature golf.

Q How will the playground change?

A The new playground equipment will be coated metal in a sand color that blends with the area. The ground cover will be cypress mulch used on most of our island playgrounds or sand, both acceptable to OSHA. Also, the whale sculpture stays.

Q What about the walkways?

A The walkway on the east side of the Casino will be improved and will lead to a new crossover over the Johnson rocks to the beach. Standardized benches will be installed on both sides of the walkways. They will look like cedar, but will be made of high-longevity, low-maintenance composite materials. We will have some covered seating that will be similar in style to the lighthouse gazebo. For families who would like a memorial, we will offer the standardized benches for purchase.

The mission of the St. Simons Land Trust is to preserve the island's natural and scenic character and to enhance the quality of life of our island community for present and future generations.

Board of Directors

Jack Hartman, *Chairman*
 Bob Atwood, *Assistant Secretary*
 Chuck Cansler
 Ted Davis, *Assistant Treasurer*
 Bill Edenfield
 Fred Freyer
 Duane Harris
 Sherri Jones
 John Ludwig
 Jim Manning, *Treasurer*
 Russ Marane
 Frances McCrary
 Ed Ralston
 Lee Richards, *Vice Chairman*
 John Rogers, *Secretary*
 Joey Strength
 Lucy Thomas

Advisory Council

Frances McCrary, *Chairman*
 Lovick P. Corn
 A.D. Pete Correll
 Nancy Coverdell
 Martha Ellis
 Brad Foster
 Bill Jones III
 George Lane III
 Buff Leavy
 Davis Love III
 Robin Love
 Leslie D. Mattingly
 James T. Mills Jr.
 Colleen Nunn
 Senator Sam Nunn
 Roy Richards
 Ben Slade

Staff

912-638-9109

Russ Marane
 President
 rmarane@sslit.org

Dana Pope
 Director of Development &
 Membership
 dpope@sslit.org

Susan Crowley
 Business Manager
 scrowley@sslit.org

Newsletter publishing

Lamkin & Lamkin
 Communications Inc.



Q What is the project's timetable?

A We have solicited bids, and once we have made our selection of a contractor, it will go before the county Finance Department and the Board of Commissioners for approval. We hope the notice to proceed will be issued in early October. The family zone should be open by Memorial Day. Phase Two improving the pier entrance, adding walkways, lighting and benches will be started after Labor Day 2009.

Once it's done, this whole area will become one beautiful park from the pier to the lighthouse more for family enjoyment and fun and less commercial. The Village Master Plan is part of our overall plan to upgrade and expand green space on the island. I give credit to the Land Trust, this Commission, and the public for recognizing how important parks are. Special thanks must be given to the members of the master plan committee who put a vision into reality.



St. Simons Land Trust
P.O. Box 24615
St. Simons Island, GA 31522
912-638-9109
www.sslt.org

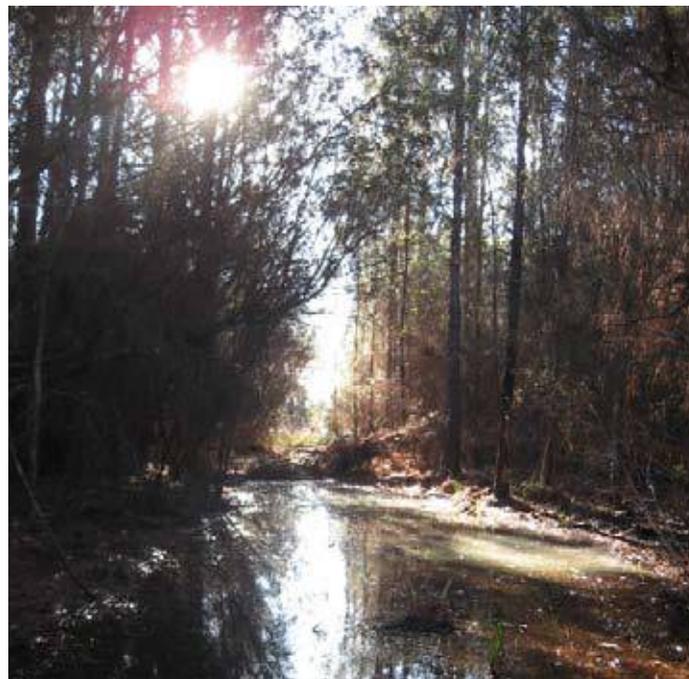
NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BRUNSWICK, GA
PERMIT NO. 917

Poll results inside (see page 2)

Three threatened or endangered species – the red-cockaded woodpecker, the indigo snake, and the Flatwoods salamander – are a bit safer today on property adjacent to Fort Stewart, thanks to the cooperative effort of the Georgia Land Trust and the St. Simons Land Trust.

As part of the U.S. Army's buffer program, the Georgia Land Trust recently acquired the 200 acres of pristine pine forest and wetlands, with the provision that it could never be developed. This will allow the fort - which trains about 85 percent of the Army's soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan – to conduct military training without disturbing residential neighbors.

How did the St. Simons Land Trust get involved? The Georgia Land Trust



Preservation in Liberty County

asked the St. Simons Land Trust to accept a conservation easement on the property along with the requirement of monitoring stewardship activities of the owner. While it's not the mission of the Land Trust to preserve land other than on St. Simons Island, we saw this as an opportunity to cooperate with the Georgia Land Trust in preserving a unique and wildlife-rich property," said President Russ Marane. The Board of Directors agreed with the plan to assist the Georgia group, which has often been of help to the St. Simons Land Trust.

With the easement came a \$40,000 gift for the local Land Trust's stewardship fund. Marane explained that, when invested, that sum will cover all of the expenses the Land Trust will incur in monitoring the property in the years to come.