



Current Events



DNR

Newsletter of the **A**shepoo, **C**ombahee, **E**disto Basin

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Brosnan Forest Easement Largest in State History

In August 2008, Norfolk Southern donated a conservation easement on 12,488 acres of the Brosnan Forest to the Lowcountry Open Land Trust, perhaps the largest single easement in state history. Part of the Four Hole Swamp watershed in Dorchester County, the property includes 6,000 acres of longleaf pine and 79 colonies of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers.

Lewis Hay, director of land protection for the land trust, said the easement protects the environment as well as the ACE Basin watershed in a rapidly developing area.

Norfolk Southern, formerly Southern Railway, bought the property in about 1830 along with the surrounding 100,000 acres when railroads had a huge demand for wood to fire the boilers on steam locomotives. The easement does not include an additional tract of 1,900 acres dedicated to a conference center and future wetlands restoration.

The easement covers a tract almost as large as nearby Francis Beidler Forest, which is owned and operated by the National Audubon Society. Together, the two



Norfolk Southern's 1900-acre corporate conference center, including a man-made lake, was not part of the conservation easement.

properties permanently protect a vital section of the Lowcountry that has significant impacts on water quality in the Edisto River.

Traditional land uses such as recreation and timber harvest will continue under the easement agreement.

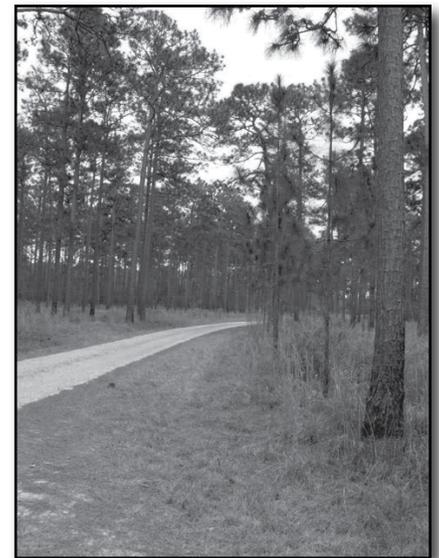
Two years ago the company harvested 250 acres of 22-year old loblolly pine and planted longleaf pine, the historic tree of the area which is better suited to survive in the region's sandy soil. Longleaf pine stands on the property average 110 years old.

Forest general manager Josh Raglin said he hopes several nearby landowners will use Norfolk Southern's

easement as a catalyst for future conservation. He knows of other nearby landowners who plan to place easements on their land, but would not do so if the railroad had sold part of Brosnan Forest to developers.

Not included in the easement are about 1,900 acres dedicated to conference center facilities and an area set aside for future wetlands restoration.

Will Haynie, executive director of the land trust, called the easement "one of the finest acts of corporate citizenship in the history of our state." 



The Brosnan Forest includes 6,000 acres of increasingly rare longleaf pine, with most of the trees about 110 years old.

Edisto Island Open Land Trust Joins ACE Basin Task Force

The Edisto Island Open Land Trust, credited with helping conserve 15,000 acres of Edisto Island in more than 100 tracts since 1998, recently was invited to join the ACE Basin Task Force as a full partner.

“To be a partner in the ACE Basin Project is a dream come true, not only because it will increase the credibility it lends our organization, but also because it will increase the pace of conservation on Edisto Island,” said Marian Brailsford, the trust’s executive director.

Conservation efforts on the island now have protected 42 percent of the existing undeveloped acreage, and the trust hopes to preserve another 3,000 acres in the next two years.

Brailsford added, “Fifteen years ago the EIOLT was formed to protect rural farms, natural woodlands and scenic, unpolluted wetlands – habitats rapidly disappearing from South Carolina’s coast. Edisto’s future now looks secure in the capable hands of the ACE Basin Task Force.” 

Protection Update

Edisto Island Open Land Trust Easements

Paradise Shrimp Farm (505 acres) includes a tremendous diversity of habitat: upland agricultural fields and open space, natural wooded uplands, intertidal salt marsh and freshwater wetlands. This property is a critical link connecting the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge with other preserved lands in the northwest quadrant of Edisto Island. The preservation of the Paradise Shrimp Farms tract completed a large encircling and continuous network of several thousand acres of conserved land on Edisto, creating in the process a continuous protected corridor lying within the boundaries of the globally-recognized ACE Basin.

Polk Farm (74 acres) is a portion of the historic Thomas Seabrook Plantation and another important link with already-preserved lands on Edisto. It adjoins preserved Gun Bluff Plantation lands and lies directly across Highway 174 from preserved Indigo Farms and Creek Farm. It is a working farm with fields and pastures surrounded by wooded uplands on two sides and on one side by 1,470 feet of marsh frontage along Milton Creek.

Keefe Farm (70 acres) adjoins the Polk tract and also is part of the historic Thomas Seabrook Plantation. The property has been owned and farmed by the same family for 300 years. Today it is a sustainable working farm with

a “Certified SC Roadside Market” selling produce grown in these fields. With 250 feet of frontage along Scenic Highway 174 on the north end, the property’s south end has a heavily-wooded creek-front portion with many grand live oaks and more than 1,500 feet of frontage along Milton Creek.

Lowcountry Open Land Trust Easements

Cassina Point Plantation, 119 acres on Edisto Island and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, contains a variety of habitats on a tributary on Westbank Creek. The large antebellum Hopkinson House was built in 1847-1848 for James Hopkinson, grandson of Francis Hopkinson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Cedar Hall on Edisto Island has 60 acres of diverse coastal habitats with frontage on Brick House Road and Cedar Hall Road. The property is managed for sustainable forest resources, wildlife habitat and traditional uses. The protection of this land was supported by public funding from the Charleston County Greenbelt Bank.

Gun Bluff Plantation II, a 157-acre conservation easement on Edisto Island just off Hwy. 174, borders Shingle Creek. The plantation includes the homesite of former governor Whitemarsh Benjamin Seabrook.

Ravenwood Plantation II, 374 acres on Hwy. 64 near Walterboro, adds to the original 2001 easement of 392 acres. The easement seeks to ensure long-term preservation and propagation of animals including waterfowl, upland game bird species and song birds.

Other Easements

Ducks Unlimited has added another 25 acres to **Tanglewood** for a new total of 140 acres. This addition, which includes mostly palustrine forested wetlands (gum, tupelo and water oaks) with some scattered pine, lies between the Ashepoo and Combahee rivers near Green Pond. The landowner manages for waterfowl and other wildlife. 



Tom Murphy received 2008 Recovery Champion award for his long career with endangered species. Story on pg. 3.

Fish and Wildlife Service Honors Local Biologist with Recovery Champion Award

Tom Murphy, a retired non-game biologist with SCDNR, received a 2008 Recovery Champion award from USFWS for his long career with endangered species. Murphy's recovery efforts have increased South Carolina populations of many rare species including alligators, bald eagles, sea turtles, wood storks and brown pelicans.

Murphy also invented techniques to capture or survey animals, such as the "trip snare" for alligators and float shoes to use in swamps while surveying bird rookeries. He was instrumental in convincing the Corps of Engineers to spend \$8 million to build a five-acre seabird nesting island in Caliboque Sound, which annually attracts 5,000 pairs of terns, gulls and pelicans. Murphy retired from SCDNR in January of 2009 after 30 years of service. 

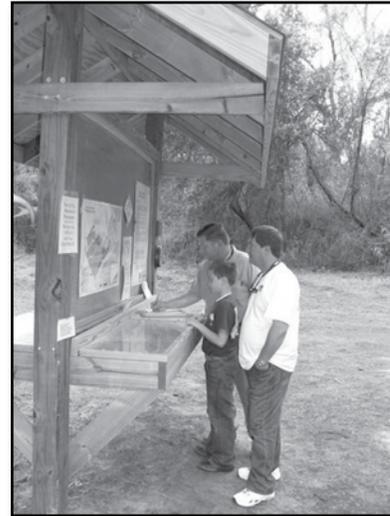
Public Flocks To Botany Bay

Since opening to the public just a year ago, Botany Bay Heritage Preserve Wildlife Management Area near Edisto Beach has become a popular place, attracting more than 50,000 visitors since last July. According to Bess Kellett, Volunteer Coordinator for the property, "Our number one attraction is our beautiful

beach. Most people, even locals, have never seen an undeveloped beach."

This past March, 4,240 visitors signed in at the gate to visit the 4,630-acre property that SCDNR keeps open every day except Tuesday and during special hunts. Deer hunters harvested 80 deer last year, and dove shoots drew as many as 75 hunters per day.

"We have had very few problems since we opened to the public last July," said manager Bruce Rawl. "People are just blown away by the beauty of this place."



More than 50,000 individuals have signed in to visit Botany Bay WMA since it opened in July of last year.

property's historical sites, picked up litter, trimmed trees and helped maintain the roads. Many volunteers are local residents but some are out-of-staters who visit Edisto Beach regularly and volunteer while they are here.

Recently the property was declared a South Carolina Heritage Preserve, giving it another layer of protection.

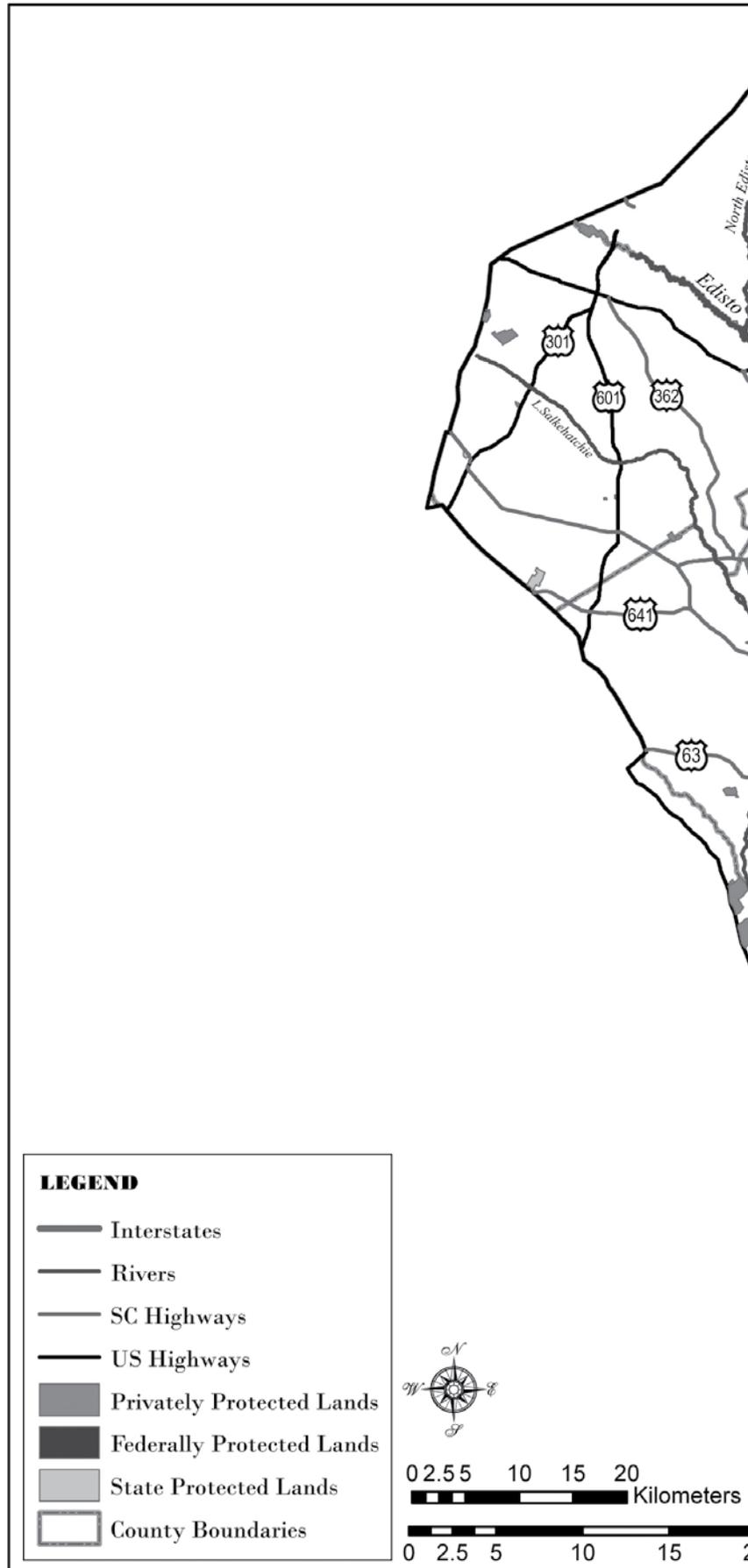
In addition, the Edisto Historical Society has adopted the Sea Cloud Plantation remains and society members removed vines from the brick foundation and fenced in the historic ruins.

According to Phil Maier, manager of the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve, "Visitors need to remember that this is a wildlife management area, not a state park. Our focus is primarily on wildlife, and not as much on people. To that end, Botany Bay provides a nice contrast with neighboring Edisto Beach St. Park, and serves as a great asset to this whole area." For more information on Botany Bay Plantation, visit www.dnr.sc.gov and click on Managed Lands. 

New fencing protects the Sea Cloud Plantation ruins and other historic sites at Botany Bay.

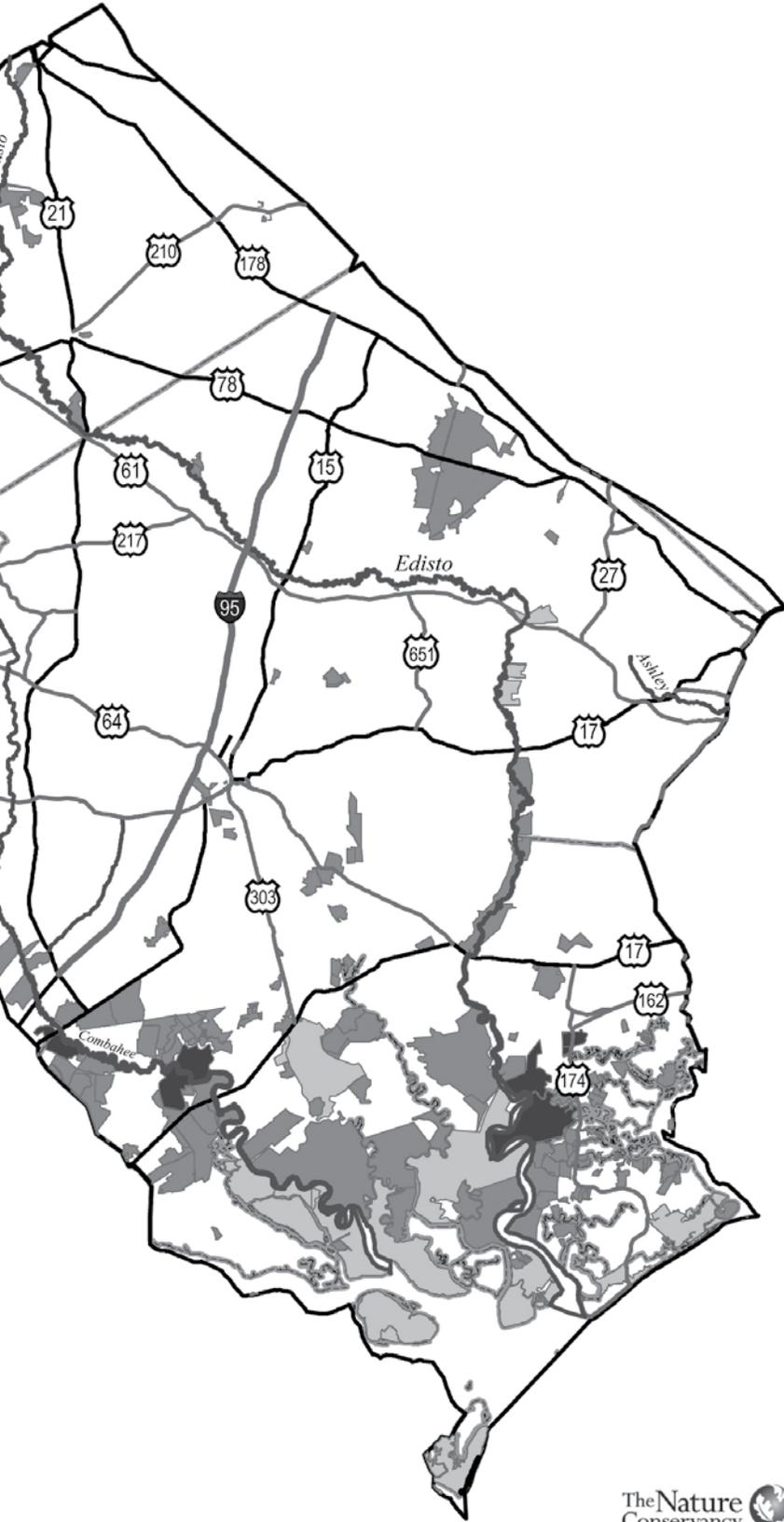


More than 195,000 acres have been protected from commercial development in the ACE Basin's 20 year history.



ACE BASIN

Federal, State, and Private Protected Lands



The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



Map compiled by J. Boynton at the South Carolina
DNR June 2009. Protected lands files from The Nature
Conservancy. Private Protected Lands layer updated June 2009.

■ Miles
20

Wounded Warriors/Mobility Impaired Deer Hunt Great Success

This event started three years ago as the ACE Basin Mobility Impaired Deer Hunt and was designed to provide special hunting opportunities to men and women who are wheel-chair dependent. It has since expanded to include Wounded Warriors who are dealing with severe injuries received in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The goals of the hunts are to allow these individuals the opportunity to participate in a recreation they enjoy, to temporarily allow them and their families to escape from their overwhelming medical issues and to enhance their rehabilitation.

The lead host for this event is the Lowcountry Chapter of Safari Club International. Scores of their members volunteer to guide hunters and clean and process harvested deer. Other groups involved include the S.C. Department of Natural Resources Take One Make One program, The Nemours Wildlife Foundation, local businesses and other volunteers. However, there would not be a hunt if ACE Basin landowners did not open their gates and properties to these hunters.

This past fall, 20 different properties were involved in this program, with typically two hunters assigned to each property. Prior to the hunt, volunteers or the landowners established ground blinds with plywood flooring at selected spots.

The plywood floors allowed the hunters to easily move their wheel chairs into the blind and maneuver them. Each hunter was assigned a guide who assisted as needed during the hunt.

The story of one young Marine exemplifies what this event is about. Eric Edmundson's encounter with a road mine in Iraq left him with little control of his arms and legs. Eric was an avid outdoorsman before his injuries but the explosion took away all memories he had of those days afield. His Dad mentioned to

the volunteers that Eric believed this was his first deer hunt, although he had successfully hunted deer many times in his youth.

The first evening out Eric took a nice buck, and you could see the excitement on his face as he returned to camp. His parents took him to the cleaning shed where volunteers were busy cleaning his deer. Upon learning that to Eric this was his first deer, his fellow hunters proceeded to paint his face with blood from his deer as is the custom for someone's first successful hunt. This thrilled Eric even more and to everyone's amazement he stood on shaky legs to hug his hunting guide.

"Eric went out the next morning and bagged an even more impressive buck," said Ernie Wiggers, manager of Nemours Plantation. "For Eric and the rest of us, it could not get any better. To suggest this event is just for the benefit of the hunters would not be a complete truth. While the hunters and their families unquestionably enjoy these two days away from hospitals and medical issues, the real beneficiaries may be the scores of volunteers."

"Being around these hunters, seeing how excited and appreciative they are for the opportunity to hunt on the beautiful plantations of the Lowcountry is a lift to everyone's spirit and therapeutic for all," according to Wiggers. "A Oo-rah goes out to all participating landowners, volunteers, and sponsors who make this special event possible, and a very big Oo-rah goes out to all of our service men and women everywhere." 



Nemours Wildlife Foundation and SCDNR Partner on Rail Study

Wildlife biologists from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the Nemours Wildlife Foundation are working together to study king and clapper rails in the ACE Basin. Very little is known about the life history of these birds and they have traditionally received little research attention. The study, funded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Webless Migratory Game Bird Research Program, will serve as an MS thesis project for graduate student Cathy Ricketts from the University of Georgia.

The team has had great success capturing clapper rails using an airboat, thermal imaging camera, spotlights and dip nets. Forty-two birds have been banded and outfitted with radio-transmitters in the marsh south of U.S. 17 along the Combahee River and Wimbee Creek. King rails have not been captured successfully with the airboat, so live traps are used instead for them. Two king rails were caught in mid-April and outfitted with radio-transmitters. The birds are tracked 5 days per week by homing in on each individual's radio frequency. A GPS unit is used to mark the location for each bird and these data points are used to identify an individual's home range. Currently, enough data points (approximately 800 total) have been collected to create home ranges for 28 rails (26 clappers, 2 kings). Preliminary analysis shows that some clapper rails exhibit large movements across the marsh landscape (one traveled

over 4 miles), while others remain in a relatively small area (5-7 acres). One king rail has remained in a small area (<10 acres) while the other has roamed over an area spanning 300 acres. Plans are to continue capturing and tracking rails throughout the remainder of the year to learn more about their seasonal movements.

In order to learn more about the reproductive biology of rails, nest searches were conducted during the spring. A total of 18 clapper rail nests have been found since early April. Of these, 4 have successfully hatched. Rail chicks are quite mobile upon hatching and can leave the nest within a few hours, so nests are visited every day near the hatch date to determine the fate of the eggs. Some eggs have been washed away by high tides and some have become meals for other marsh dwellers.

Later this summer, biologists will collect information about the vegetation within each bird's home range to help clarify why rails choose one part of the marsh over another. Vegetation data will also be collected at the site of each nest-- which may provide clues as to why some nests are successful and some are not. In the fall, DNA analysis of feathers collected from each bird will be used to determine sex. It is not possible to determine whether a rail is male or female by appearance alone. This information may help to explain the differences observed in the birds' movements. 🌊

Eric Horan



Eric Horan



Most rails are caught at night from an airboat by using a thermal imaging device to locate them and then scooping them up with a dip net. Over 40 clapper and king rails have been caught and instrumented since the study began in January 2009.

The Nemours Wildlife Foundation and SCDNR are cooperating on a telemetry project researching clapper and king rails (marsh hens) to learn more about habitat use, home range, and nesting success. Here University of Georgia graduate student Cathy Ricketts removes a clapper rail from the net.



Conservation Sites

	Acres
Public Sites	
Bear Island Wildlife Management Area (est. 1953)	12,055
Springfield Marsh (1987), Sampson Island (1988), Cut Marsh (1989)	
Donnelley Wildlife Management Area (1992)	8,048
Botany Bay Plantation Wildlife Management Area	4,687
ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge	11,762
Bonny Hall Club (1990), Grove Plantation (1991), Bonny Hall Plantation (1992), Combahee Fields (1993), Jehossee Island (1991, 1999), Auldbrass Tract (1995), Adams Run Tract (2002)	
ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve	25,724
Warren Island (1988), Big Island (1988), Ashe Island (1989), Beet Island (1989), Otter Island (1993), South Williman Island (1994), Morgan Island (2002), Pine Island (2002), Old Combahee Island (2005), North Williman (2005), Buzzard Island (2005)	
Edisto Beach State Park (est. 1936)	1,255
Hunting Island State Park (est. 1938)	5,000
Sub-total	68,531
Private Sites	
Conservation Easements (111)	102,122
Botany Bay Island (1987), Hope Plantation (1988), Willtown Bluff Plantation (1990), Church Tract (1990), Cheeha-Combahee Plantation (1991), Richardson Tract (1992), Godfrey Tract (1991), McMillian Tract (1991), Pon Pon Plantation (1992), Ashepoo Plantation (1993), Fenwick Island (1993), Combahee Plantation (1994), Musselboro Island (1994), Oak Island (1994), Little Palmetto Island (1994), Prospect Hill (1995), Rose Hill (1995), Plum Hill (1995), Auldbrass Plantation (1995), Parker's Ferry Plantation (1995), Tomotley Plantation (1995), Auldbrass Club (1995), Ivanhoe (1996), Shell Point (1996), Lavington Plantation (1996), Raccoon Island (1996), South Fenwick (1996), Bolders Island (1997), Paul and Dalton (1997), Great Swamp (1998), Prescott Plantation (1998), Jehossee Farms (1998), Airy Hall Plantation (1998), Slann Island Plantation (1998), Tilt Tract (1998), McCollum Tract (1998), Chapel Hill LLC (1999), Prospect Hill LLC (1999), Old Dominion LLC (1999), Rose Hill (1999), Charleston County PRC (2000), William Seabrook Plantation (2000), Creek House Plantation (2000), St. Margaret's Island (2000), Rose Hill (1999), Laurel Hill Plantation (2000), Temple of Sport (2000), My Place (2000), Bonnie Doone Plantation (2000), Brewton Plantation (2001), Double O Plantation (2001), Oak Lawn Plantation (2001), Ravenwood Plantation (2001), Windsor House Plantation (2001), Big Neck Creek (2001), Bear Island Club (2001), Cockfield Plantation (2001), MeadWestvaco (2002), MeadWestvaco (2002), Great Swamp Sanctuary (2002), Wimbee Creek Farm (2002), Prospect Hill Farm (2002), Dawhoo Farm (2002), Malphrus Tract (2002), Rainey Acres Farm (2002), Anonymous (2003), Dove Field Swamp (2003), Copper Station Plantation (2003), Belfair Farms (2003), Green Tree (2004), Truesdale Tract (2004), Wilson Tract (2004), Salt Creek (2004), Dodds Property (2004), Orange Grove Plantation (2004), Remley Point Plantation (2004), Orange Grove Plantation (2004), Holly Bluff (2004), Crosby Tract (2004), Fogle Tract (2004) Rhodes East (2004), Rhodes West (2004), Harrelson Tract (2005), Hickory Bluff (2006), Indigo Oaks (2006), Guns Bluff (2006), Tanglewood (2006), Bluff Plantation (2006), Windsor House Plantation II (2007), Salkehatchie Tract (2007), Old Combahee Plantation (2007), White House Plantation (2007), Payne Tract (2007), Greedy Children Tract (2007), Bonnie Doone (2007), Vineyard Plantation (2007), Pynes Plantation (2007), Salt Landing (2007), Sand Creek Farm (2007), Tanglewood II (2007), Indigo Farms (2007), Creek Farm (2007), San-Russ Point (2007), Old Schoolhouse (2007), Little Britton Farm (2007), Melchers Property (2007), Russell Creek Rd. Tract (2007), Brack Property I (2007), Brack Property II (2007), Brookland Plantation (2007), Edelhof (2007), Round O Farm (2007), Old House Plantation (2007), Belle Vista Bluff (2007), Chisolm Island Plantation (2008), Brosnan Forest (2008), Paradise Shrimp Farm (2008), Polk Farm (2008), Keefe Farm (2008), Cassina Point (2008), Cedar Hall (2008), Gun Bluff II (2008), Raven Wood II (2008), Tanglewood (2008), Trask (2008)	
Deed Restrictions	33
Hannah Tract (1993)	
Organization Ownership	10,548
Nemours Plantation Wildlife Foundation (1995), Bailey Island (1997), Edisto Packers (2006)	
Management Agreements	13,076
MeadWestvaco (1991)	
Other	1,262
Slann Island (1996)	
Sub-total	101,486
TOTAL	195,572



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Ducks Unlimited

MeadWestvaco



SOUTH CAROLINA
CHAPTER
Saving the Last Great Places



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