



SOUTH CAROLINA

2024 IMPACT REPORT



Dear Friends,

As I write this in the fall of 2024, it's difficult to think past the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene in late September. So many of our neighbors lost so much. For those of us who came through the storm safely—which I hope includes your friends and family—it's now time to extend a hand to help these communities recover.

We often refer to weather events such as Helene as coastal storms, but this one was made more destructive and deadly by the fact that it hit hard far inland. It is a stark reminder that we cannot think of "resilience" as a strategy that only applies to our shorelines. We must also work toward more resilient forests, rivers, mountains, oceans, landscapes and, of course, communities.

I have seen before how South Carolinians respond to challenges—with grit, grace and determination. I know we will approach this one the same way. And I'm so glad to have you by our side.

Warmly,

Dale Threatt-Taylor

Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina

VOICES



Silas Yamamoto

I am a multi-cultural (Japanese and Karuk-Native American) fire practitioner from Happy Camp, Ca. Fire has been part of my life since I was in diapers, ranging from wildfire evacuations when I was a kid to participating in cultural burning; in recent years, I have watched the rivers, creeks and mountains I call home get decimated from wildfires. TNC-SC has offered me an opportunity to not only grow my fire knowledge to help restore my people's aboriginal territory to pre-colonization, but also an opportunity to grow and develop as a human being through meaningful connections, relationships and memories that will last a lifetime.

COVER: Aerial view of Gregorie Neck, which TNC protected in February 2024 © Paul Nurnberg

THIS PAGE: Dale Threatt-Taylor © Paul Nurnberg;
Silas Yamamoto © Silas Yamamoto

OF CONSERVATION

Hear From Members of Our 2024 Prescribed Fire Crew



Kallan Banning

I am from Montana. I began my fire career in 2017 to pay for college. I worked for three seasons with the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's (DNRC) Helicopter fire crew, also known as a Helitack crew. I went back to the DNRC for another Helitack season in 2022. I was stoked to get on the TNC-SC coastal crew, with the goal to learn more about prescribed burning. Almost all my fire experience has been out West, where prescribed burning is typically done for fuel reduction and wildfire prevention. It has been neat to learn about the ecological restoration side of prescribed burning.



Nicole Chapleau

I'm originally from Rutland, Vt. I began pursuing firefighting as a career path in high school. At 19, I became the first female fulltime firefighter in Montpelier, Vt., and then in my hometown. In 2013, I moved to Charleston, S.C. In 2022, I was selected to attend the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Women in Wildfire bootcamp. I was completely hooked on wildland fire from that point forward. My summers are now occupied working for USFS Round Valley Helitack out of Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. I'm thrilled to be learning from the TNC-SC coastal crew and grateful for the opportunity to experience the good side of fire.



Grace Beischel

I am a Charleston native and a Clemson graduate ('21), where I earned a B.S. in Conservation Biology. While at Clemson, I was a member of the Fire Tigers and got bit by the fire bug. I love working in the outdoors, whether that's on trails, fires or volunteering with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources to survey sea turtle nests. I'm excited to learn more about prescribed fire throughout the Southeast in both longleaf pine ecosystems and the foothills of the Blue Ridge.



10,570

Acres contained in the new Coosawhatchie Wildlife Management Area in Jasper and Hampton counties, which opened to the public in September 2024. Protecting the land for the WMA was a joint effort among TNC, Open Space Institute, the S.C. Conservation Bank and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.



240

Percent increase in the size of the Poinsett Bridge Heritage Preserve in Landrum, S.C., after TNC transferred a 294-acre parcel to the S.C. Department of Natural Resources in June 2024. The preserve protects the state's oldest bridge.

YOUR IMPACT: Protecting Land and Water

YOU PREVENTED DENSE DEVELOPMENT IN JASPER COUNTY

When the 4,409-acre Gregorie Neck property went up for sale in 2023, the question was not just who the buyer would be—but what the future character of Jasper County would look like. Flanked by deep-water access on the Coosawhatchie and Tulifiny Rivers and bisected by Interstate 95, the property was ripe for development. The river frontage created the potential for waterfront lots, while easy highway access could support traffic in and out of a large, dense development.

But the impact of developing Gregorie Neck would have extended far outside the property's boundaries. New roads,

water, sewer and other infrastructure would have been needed to support the new homes, displacing native trees and wildlife. Water quality would have been impacted in the Port Royal Sound.

Thanks to your support, that severe scenario was avoided when The Nature Conservancy purchased the property in February 2024. With additional funding from the S.C. Conservation Bank, Beaufort County's Greenspace Program and the Lowcountry Sentinel Landscape (a Department of Defense program), the Open Land Trust placed a conservation easement on the property in July. Gregorie Neck is now protected forever.



YOUR IMPACT: Safeguarding Fresh Water

YOU LAUNCHED A NEW WAY TO CONSERVE FRESH WATER

When a construction project will disturb streams, rivers or wetlands, the builder is required by the Clean Water Act to balance (or “mitigate”) that disturbance by improving an aquatic resource elsewhere. Many builders prefer to fulfill this requirement by buying mitigation credits from a bank or in-lieu fee program.

Under this system, builders benefit by no longer being responsible for:

- Locating a feasible mitigation site
- Protecting it
- Drawing up a restoration plan
- Monitoring the site.

And conservation efforts benefit by:

- Being able to pool money from several sources into a larger project or projects within the landscape
- Achieving “no net loss” of aquatic resources from development
- Performing the work at a higher quality
- Increasing funding for more restoration projects.

In August of this year, The Nature Conservancy hired Freshwater Program Manager Clay Word to launch



South Carolina’s first statewide in-lieu fee mitigation program. Clay’s hire was the culmination of a process that began in March 2021 with a prospectus application from TNC to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Over the next two years, Clay will outline the program’s instrument, a guiding document that lays out where the program will perform work, how fees are collected and what kinds of work will be completed.

CLOCKWISE: Fire-adapted plants like yellow pitcher plant are a sign of a healthy wetland. © Tanya Ackerman; Hooded pitcher plant © Clay Word; Wild maid Marian © Clay Word; Clay Word © Clay Word



5

New culvert designs TNC has commissioned to address undersized culverts in the Enoree District of the Sumter National Forest, near Newberry, S.C. The streams of the Enoree are part of the Broad River basin. Undersized culverts prevent fish passage and are a hazard for roads and flooding.



2

Miles of river frontage protected by TNC’s transfer of the 180-acre High Bluffs property to S.C. Parks, Recreation and Tourism in July. The property was added to the Black River State Park and will offer visitors and residents increased water access for paddling and tubing in Georgetown County.



344,500

Acres of salt marsh along South Carolina’s coast, the most of any state on the East Coast. TNC conserves salt marsh through many of its land protection projects, as this vital habitat helps protect our coasts and serves as a nursery for gag grouper and other juvenile fish.



9.9 billion

Acres of ocean TNC aims to protect globally by 2030, through new and better-managed marine protected areas, global-scale sustainable fishing, innovative financing and positive policy changes to how the world governs the seas.

YOUR IMPACT: Supporting Healthy Oceans

YOU'RE PROTECTING VULNERABLE FISH POPULATIONS

Each January, large numbers of adult gag grouper travel to specific reefs along the edge of South Carolina’s continental shelf. Once conditions are right, the fish begin to spawn (reproduce). They’ll stay there for several days and will make the same spawning pilgrimage several more times before the end of April.

Predictable spawning patterns occur in many bottom-dwelling fish, including grouper, snapper and scamp. They make these species extraordinarily vulnerable to overfishing.

In 2017, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) established five Spawning Special Management Zones (SSMZs) off the South Atlantic coast. These areas were closed to fishing for 10 years to conserve significant spawning areas for deepwater fish. Although the council intended to collect more data on spawning activity during that time, only limited monitoring has occurred.

With the 10-year deadline looming, The Nature Conservancy funded a research trip to the Georgetown Hole SSMZ



(off the coast of South Carolina) in April 2023, followed by an additional trip in April 2024. The vessels sampled fish for evidence of spawning—such as enlarged ovaries—and used underwater cameras to record courtship behaviors. TNC hopes to secure funding for more research trips to secure the data needed by SAFMC to decide on future protections.

TOP TO BOTTOM: Yellowtail snapper © Andy Blackledge; A researcher drops a streaming video recorder on a line to record fish spawning behaviors at depth. © Will Heyman

YOUR IMPACT: Restoring Forests

YOU'RE RESTORING A SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE

Longleaf pine once dominated the U.S. coastal plain, blanketing more than 90 million acres across nine states. These pines grow slow and strong, maturing into a landscape of tall, widely spaced trees that tower above a blanket of rich red pine needles and green grasses. In their prime, longleaf forests are the most biodiverse ecosystem north of the tropics, hosting more than 900 plant species, 100 types of birds and 170 species of reptiles and amphibians.



By the early 2000s, habitat loss and fire suppression had shrunk the footprint of this vital ecosystem to just 3.2 million acres. Restoration efforts since have boosted that number to more than 5.2 million acres, but there's still much work to be done.

Through coordination of the Sewee Longleaf Conservation Cooperative, The Nature Conservancy is taking a lead role on a new mapping initiative that aims to identify the health and location of current longleaf forest acres, as well as areas where longleaf doesn't currently grow but conditions suggest it would thrive. By overlaying those findings onto the boundaries of publicly held properties, TNC is helping agency partners prioritize the management of high-quality longleaf stands and the restoration of longleaf on acres where it is most likely to succeed.



19,209

Acres of controlled burns that were led or assisted by TNC fire crews in the 2024 burn season. The number spans 54 burns on both TNC and partner lands in the mountains and across the coastal plain.



29

Number of private landowners who registered for a Learn to Burn workshop in Andrews, S.C., hosted by the South Carolina Forestry Commission and sponsored by TNC. This day-long workshop arms private landowners with the knowledge to implement controlled burns on their own lands.



2

Seasons now available to download of TNC’s “Conversing with Nature” podcast, hosted by TNC director of resilience and ocean conservation, Elizabeth Fly, PhD. Each episode includes an interview with a nature expert or enthusiast who offers a different perspective on nature and resilience.



257

Unique volunteers that have contributed to the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort living shoreline build over four work days. Collectively, they passed 298,165 pounds of concrete Oyster Castles™ down the shoreline and assembled them into a linear reef.

YOUR IMPACT: Creating Resilience

YOU'RE PROTECTING OUR SHORELINES

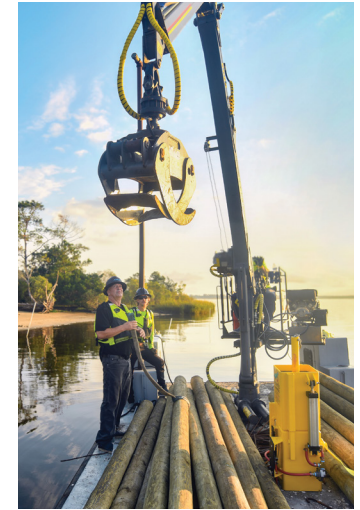
High tides, boat wakes and coastal storms are eroding South Carolina’s coasts. In many places, doing nothing isn’t an option. Roads, homes, businesses, parks and more are impacted by the loss of shoreline and coastal flooding. Nature also suffers: coastal habitats are vital for juvenile fish, shorebirds, shrimp and crabs.

The default solution for eroding shorelines is to build sea walls and bulkheads. While this can prevent sediment loss, sea walls don’t absorb wave energy; they reflect it. That means unprotected areas nearby can develop new or worse problems. Sea walls also break down over time, and their stark surfaces offer little in the way of habitat. By contrast, living shorelines (which include

- oyster reefs, marsh grasses and natural breakwaters) offer many benefits:
- They absorb wave energy as the water passes over and through them,
- They grow stronger as more oysters settle and marsh grasses take root,
- They offer attractive and healthy habitat for fish, birds and marine life.

The Nature Conservancy began construction on two large-scale living shorelines in 2024.

Unlike smaller, site-specific projects completed in past years, these show that living shorelines can be an effective solution for entire neighborhoods. Volunteers began building a 2,000-foot oyster reef at the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in April, and construction began on the one-acre Boyd Living Shoreline in Georgetown, S.C., in September.



TOP TO BOTTOM: A construction team installs wooden breakwater poles at the Boyd Living Shoreline. © Tanya Ackerman; Marine and civilian volunteers stack Oyster Castles™ to build a reef at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. © Paul Nurnberg

YOUR IMPACT: Tackling Climate Change



YOU'RE CREATING CARBON STORAGE

The effects of our changing climate are becoming impossible to ignore: more intense heatwaves, more frequent wildfires, more powerful coastal storms. We must start reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere if we are to avoid the worst effects of a warming

planet. Part of that equation is reducing use of fossil fuels and increasing use of renewable energy. But a landmark study led by The Nature Conservancy in 2017 shows that natural climate solutions—such as improving global forest management and restoring wetlands—also can provide up to one third of the mitigation needed by 2030.¹

This August, TNC was awarded \$200 million across South Carolina, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia by the Environmental Protection Agency to implement just those sorts of natural climate solutions. Projects across the states will focus on improved forest management, peatland restoration and tidal wetland enhancement. The projects collectively are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 28 million metric tons CO₂e

(carbon dioxide equivalent) by 2050. That's the same savings as taking more than 6.67 million gas-powered vehicles off the road each year.

South Carolina's portion of the grant (\$39 million) will go toward improving the management of 18,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest across the state's coastal plain.



3 gigatons

Amount of carbon dioxide that TNC aims to reduce or store globally each year to keep warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoid the worst effects of climate change.



100 million

People at severe risk of climate-related emergencies who will be helped by TNC protecting and restoring the health of natural habitats. These natural features—from reefs to floodplains to forests—help protect communities from storm surge, extreme rainfall, severe wildfires and sea-level rise.

TOP TO BOTTOM: A prothonotary warbler sings in a bottomland hardwood forest in South Carolina, one of the habitats benefiting from the EPA grant. © Joel Caldwell; Black bear © Cassidy Girvin/TNC

¹ Griscorn, Bronson W., et al. "Natural Climate Solutions." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 114, no. 44, Oct. 2017, pp. 11645–50. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1710465114>.



JOIN US

Help us continue your conservation legacy.

More than 50 years ago, a group of people like you—passionate about protecting South Carolina’s lands, waters and wildlife—united to protect the future of our state. Those early volunteers formed The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina.

Since then, you have been at the center of our story, helping to protect more than 414,000 acres of our state’s natural lands and waters, from the picturesque Blue Ridge mountains to the stunning marshes and dunes along our coast.

Learn more about ways you can help meet South Carolina’s most pressing conservation needs and be a part of continuing this proud legacy.

For more information, please contact Director of Philanthropy Elizabeth Foster at efoster@tnc.org or (843) 800-1274.

THIS PAGE: Mantis in the grass © Benjamin Salb/TNC Photo Contest 2023

OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE: Snowy cardinal © Andy Raupp/TNC Photo Contest 2023; Two black bear cubs in the fall © Adam Mowery/TNC Photo Contest 2023;

Pileated woodpecker feeding chick © John Walch/TNC Photo Contest 2023; Monarch butterfly on milkweed © Jordan McLeland/TNC Photo Contest 2023;

Aerial view of Gregorie Neck © Paul Nurnberg



Donate to Our Mission

There are many ways to give to The Nature Conservancy. TNC's giving options may offer tax savings, income for life and other potential benefits for you and our natural world.

Gifts of Cash

To support the South Carolina chapter's most pressing priorities, please use the envelope in this report or give online securely at <http://nature.org/donatesc>

Gifts of Stock

Gifts of appreciated stock, bonds or mutual funds are a smart and simple way to support TNC. These gifts allow you to give more with less because you may be able to take an income tax deduction and avoid capital gains taxes.

IRA Distribution

Direct distributions from your IRA to TNC can be made without incurring income tax on the withdrawal and are a great way to satisfy a Required Minimum Distribution in an impactful way.

Donor Advised Funds

Through TNC's Donor Advised Fund, you make a charitable gift when the time is best for you and then advise us about how you would like your donation to help us fulfill our conservation mission and meet your other philanthropic objectives. You can participate in the TNC's donor-advised fund with a minimum contribution of \$100,000.



The Legacy Club

The Legacy Club includes people of all means who have included TNC in their will or estate plans or established a life-

income gift with TNC. You can name TNC as the beneficiary of specific assets, a portion of your estate or your residual estate after payment of other bequests.

Bequests to TNC are free from federal estate tax and can therefore offer substantial tax savings. There is no limit to the amount you can leave to TNC—or other charitable organizations—through your will.

If you wish to name TNC in your will or estate plan, or designate us as a beneficiary of your retirement accounts or life insurance, please name us as:

The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the District of Columbia, and with principal business address of 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington, Virginia 22203-1616.

Our tax identification number is 53-0242652.

The Nature Conservancy does not render tax or legal advice. Please consult your professional financial or tax advisor before making a charitable gift. If you are interested in having a conversation about options for giving to TNC, please reach out to Elizabeth Foster, director of philanthropy, at efoster@tnc.org or (843) 800-1274.





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CLOCKWISE: Sunrise in Georgetown, S.C. © Tanya Ackerman; Fawn waiting for its mother © Paul Novorolsky; Bee on woolly mullein at Buckfield © Paul Nurnberg; Mallard ducklings © Christine Antoniuk/TNC Photo Contest 2023

NATURE
THANKS
YOU

