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Our Mission: To preserve the rural quality of life on Edisto by protecting lands, waterways, scenic vistas, and heritage through conservation and education.

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## For Land's Sake 2022 VOLUME III

### LEGACY LIVE OAK MEMORIAL PARK: BIGGER & BETTER

It's been nearly eighteen years in the making, but EIOILT is finally entering the home stretch in our plans for the Legacy Live Oak Memorial Park! The Edisto Island Open Land Trust purchased the parcel that was to become Legacy Live Oak Memorial Park all the way back on March 23, 2004. The thirteen-acre parcel, including three acres of high ground, was purchased to enhance and preserve the scenic views of Sand Creek from Highway-174 and to protect the sensitive maritime fringe forest along the creek edge.

Shortly thereafter, EIOILT began its Legacy Live Oak program, aimed at beautifying Highway 174 and restoring the live oak tree canopy which once towered over the old King's Highway, much of which is buried beneath today's road. Soon this parcel on Highway 174 and along Sand Creek was christened as Legacy Live Oak Memorial Park and became the home of the program's memorial sign, where all names dedicated by those who donated to the Legacy Live Oak program are displayed. On October 16, 2009, Highway 174 was officially designated as the Edisto Island National Scenic Byway and Legacy Live Oak Memorial Park became our flagship project along the Scenic Byway.

In 2014, we were successful in applying to the Charleston County Greenbelt Program for funds to acquire an adjacent lot. That parcel was purchased on October 29, 2014, and it added an additional nine acres of high ground to the Park. This application also included some funding for trail work and a parking area, and the goal of tying it in with the fishing pier proposed by SCDOT beside the new Sand Creek bridge. Many years came and went before the new Sand Creek bridge was completed and the plans for a public

fishing pier evaporated along the way. Since that project was no longer viable, EIOILT needed to modify and expand our plans for the Park. On April 26, 2022, Charleston County Council approved a Greenbelt Grant for the acquisition of three additional one-acre parcels surrounding Legacy Live Oak Memorial Park. On November 3, 2022, we closed on the acquisition of the final piece of that puzzle, effectively buffering the Park from adjacent residential development. With the most recent Greenbelt Grant, we were also able to fold the original parcel into the conservation protections of the Greenbelt Program and secure funding to finish infrastructure improvements across the Park.

EIOILT is now beginning the process of creating a landscape plan for the property and we will hopefully be securing the necessary permits for the construction of a pervious parking area next year. A rudimentary trail system is already in place and we hope to upgrade the accessibility and aesthetics of the trails by improving their grade and drainage and also by constructing a short, elevated boardwalk. Our end goal is to create a peaceful, passive nature park surrounding the Legacy Live Oak Memorial with interpretive signage placed along the nature trails, which will teach visitors about the ecosystems and natural history of the Sea Islands.

*We are grateful for any new, renewed or additional gifts to the land trust by using the enclosed envelope!*



## OYSTER ROAST 2022

Best Ever! Thank you Jamie Westendorff!

# UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Time always flies by quickly, but it has never seemed to be as elusive as it has over the last couple of years. “What day is it?” has become rather common to hear among colleagues and friends. Even though the pause button was hit several times in the last couple of years, somehow it was still hard to keep up with the days of the week, but we all did our best. So, as we come to the close of another year that seems to have passed so quickly, I thought it would be a good time to share some updates and details on the work that has been keeping your land trust staff’s heads down, but our feet moving faster than Fred Flintstone at quitting time!

We have all witnessed the dramatic increase in home sales and land transactions that took place over the last 2 years, as well as the large scale developments that are going up just miles outside of our cherished Edisto sanctuary. Our board, staff and volunteers all rang the alarm bell during this time, and came together to work on strategies that could help us speed up our land conservation efforts and successes. Donors stepped in and we saw some of the largest single contributions to our Acquisition fund that we have ever received, which has been applied to

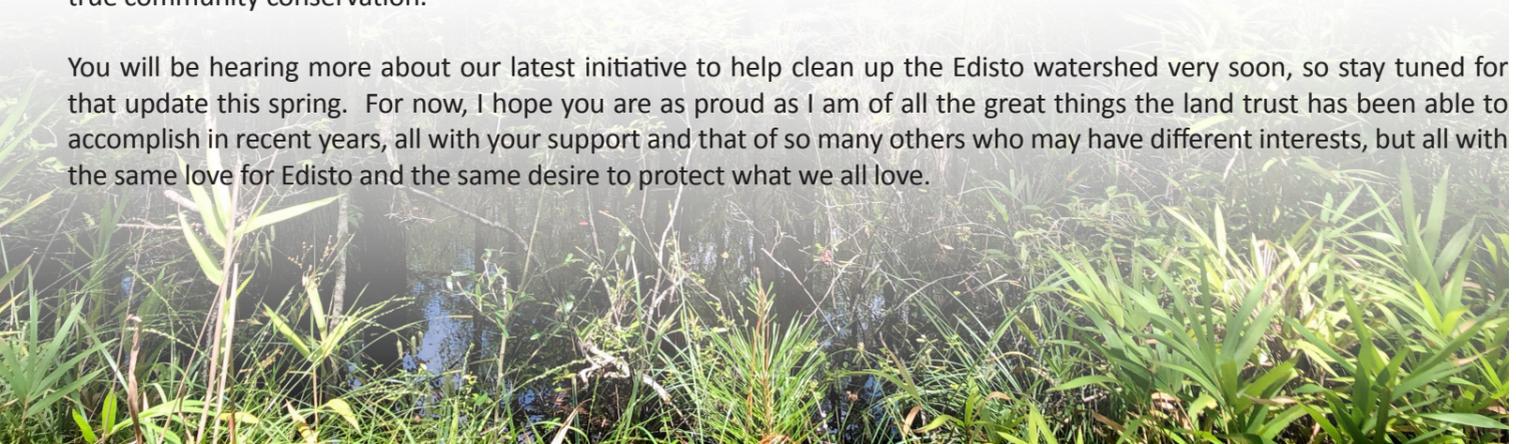
these new strategies. These combined efforts have worked, and we are currently celebrating the addition of a number of critically important scenic gateways to Edisto, as you can see from Tom’s article in this newsletter. Every parcel counts, and each land conservation success that we have had this year will make a difference as more pressure and growth stretches toward Edisto.

Our number one priority has always been, and continues to be, to protect Edisto from becoming just like so many nearby sea islands that suffered the loss of their natural character forever. We are committed to this core mission strategy, and we will stay the course to ensure we do all we can to keep Edisto. . . Edisto.

With this said, I hope you will also appreciate and understand that the land trust must embrace a variety of programs and additional priorities, in order for this organization to remain vital to this entire community, and to grow our membership and our support base, so that we will be able to operate in perpetuity. The land trust is almost 30 years old, and if we are not here in 30 more years, there is no guarantee that all our conservation work achieved with your help will be defended and maintained. A diverse portfolio of activities is one way we can achieve this, which is why we also spend our time and energy on education outreach efforts with adults and children. Making lasting connections with nature is vital for our local youth, in order for them to respect and appreciate the island beauty that surrounds them, in the hope that they too, will want to fight to maintain it.

Our newest project that has already strengthened this community and EIOILT in a number of ways is the restoration of the historic Hutchinson House, and the conservation of the nearly 20 acres that surround it. This island heritage site is not only going to be an important place to share African American history on Edisto, but also the history of land ownership and agriculture that shaped our past and still impacts our island residents. The Hutchinson House will be a shining example of true community conservation.

You will be hearing more about our latest initiative to help clean up the Edisto watershed very soon, so stay tuned for that update this spring. For now, I hope you are as proud as I am of all the great things the land trust has been able to accomplish in recent years, all with your support and that of so many others who may have different interests, but all with the same love for Edisto and the same desire to protect what we all love.



# WE’RE BACK! YOUNG NATURALISTS RETURN

It was a fantastic day in early August when Krystal Parsons agreed to join the land trust and help bring back our Young Naturalist program. It was an even better day on Edisto in September when she took the local kids who signed up for the program out on their first adventure! The Young Naturalist program had become one of our proudest achievements in the last 10 years, and it was one of the hardest programs to have to table during the height of Covid. Thankfully, we were all ready to start it again, and we were lucky enough to have another amazing person on Edisto who was excited to share her joy and knowledge of nature with some of our most precious resources, Edisto elementary students!

Let us introduce Krystal Parsons to you in her own words; “I’ve been lucky enough to call Edisto my home for the last 10 years. I received my Bachelor’s degree of Biology from Southeastern University in Lakeland, FL, and what started as a summer internship 10 years ago being the Sea Turtle Specialist for the Edisto Beach State Park has turned into a lifelong love for Edisto. I recall going down 174 surrounded by all the massive trees and instantly falling in love with the simplicity Edisto offers. Being a homeschool Mama of a first grader and a one year old, keeping life simple seems to get more and more challenging!

In my role as Young Naturalist Coordinator, I am excited to share not only my love for Sea Turtles with the students, but my enjoyment for all things outdoors! Already this year, our Young Naturalists have made discoveries on the beach, and at the State Park, and most recently, we had an awesome trip that took us by boat on the beautiful Edisto waters across to Bennett’s Point to meet with Lowcountry Oyster Farm and learn how oysters grow from a spat to full size! It’s been a joy to watch the kid’s faces light up with each discovery or trying something out of their comfort zone. We have many more activities lined up including painting a purple Martin house for the land trust auction in 2023.”



Above: Krystal Parsons, front right, having fun with the kids on the first outing of the year to the Edisto Beach State Park Interpretive Center.

Below: Young Naturalists on the dock before heading to Bennett’s Point by boat.

