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Sign up for our eNews at edisto.org

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

### STAFF

- John Girault  
*Executive Director*
- Sarah Stroud Clarke  
*Hutchinson House Director*
- Tom Austin  
*Land Protection Specialist*
- Krystal Parsons  
*Young Naturalist Coordinator & Finance Administrator*
- Denzel Wright  
*Outreach Coordinator*
- Deborah Hargis  
*Donor Database Manager*

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## THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

We love our volunteers! In 2024, over 100 people volunteered for countless hours, at events, at the Hutchinson House, with Young Naturalists, and picking up trash on the roadside. You make Edisto a beautiful place!

For Land's Sake  
2024 VOLUME III



# A PROMISE TO THE FUTURE

## Thirty Years of Preserving and Protecting Edisto Island

### HELP US CELEBRATE

Over the past thirty years, the Edisto Island Open Land Trust has accomplished more than many could have imagined possible. In honor of this success, we published our first book, to tell the story from our earliest days up until today. You can purchase your copy of this inspirational story at the Edisto Bookstore. See if you recognize the above image on the cover in the store! They make the perfect holiday gift for any fan of Edisto Island and all proceeds benefit EIOLT.

Because of you, we are celebrating our 30th Anniversary of protecting Edisto Island from the type of development that would have ruined this island that so many of us cherish. There is much to be thankful for: our volunteers who carry out herculean tasks, our business sponsors that make our fundraising events so successful, our donors who have been with us from the beginning and those who are just finding out about our important work, and our board and staff for turning your inspirational gifts into wonderful achievements. I truly like to think everyone reading this is proud of the role you have played to help us achieve all the things you are about to see on the next two pages of this newsletter, each one highlighting a different aspect of our mission:

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



As we close in on the end of this calendar year, and begin planning a year of celebrations in 2025, I hope the following pages inspire you to become a member of the land trust if you are not already one, or to consider an additional year end gift to help us elevate all the great progress and programs we have underway. The enclosed envelope provides you with the opportunity to designate your gift to one of our specific mission driven areas. On behalf of our amazing team, I would like to thank you for inspiring us with your generosity.

With gratitude,

John Girault, Executive Director

# HUTCHINSON HOUSE

Protecting the heritage of Edisto Island is a long-standing tenet of the EIOLT mission and the purchase of the historic c.1885 Hutchinson House in 2016 was a commitment to that mission. Over the past eight years, countless volunteers and donors have made the preservation and restoration of the Hutchinson House and the surrounding 19 acres possible. We are making great strides towards the construction phase finish line, during the past year we recreated the original ¾ wrap around porches, reconstructed the original rear room, structurally stabilized the interior staircase and second floor, installed a historically accurate roof, and added a brand-new ADA ramp; it was a busy year!



This fall we held our first Clark Community Cookout for current and historic owners and tenants of properties within the historic Black settlement community where the Hutchinson House is located. It was a wonderful day of fellowship among neighbors learning, laughing, and even dancing! Every day we are getting closer to completing this phase of the project with the help of your generous donations. Right now, we are working to meet a **\$50,000 matching gift** a generous donor made in honor of his wife's love of Edisto; we think preserving the history of Edisto is the perfect gift! Please help us finish the year strong with your own donation to preserving this important historical landmark on Edisto Island.



# YOUNG NATURALIST PROGRAM

The Young Naturalist Program is breaking records this year! During the summer of 2023 we sent seven students to camp and this school year we have 24 Edisto Island students participating in our program! All Young Naturalists live and attend school on the island, and we conduct this program to provide an outlet for these students to learn more about the amazing nature and history of their home. This year we have already taken a boat ride to discover the Indian Shell Midden, made a journey to Botany Bay to learn more about Hammock Islands and shells, and visited a local family with a mission to educate and teach our next generation about plants and the impact they play in our lives. We have raised up Mentors in our group and they have practiced public speaking several times while lobbying funds to support our program. Our young naturalists are inquisitive, respectful, and excited about learning. They are the next generation of Edisto caretakers and we are fulfilling our mission of education by facilitating a love for learning and preservation. Thank you so very much for the outpouring of love and support for the youth of our island we all call "home." We are excited to continue our journey this year and send more young naturalists to camp this summer.



# ACQUISITION FUND

2024 was a productive year for EIOLT in the land conservation arena and we've set ourselves up for a fantastic start in 2025. We conserved three new properties in 2024, and all three were possible because of our **Land Acquisition Fund**.

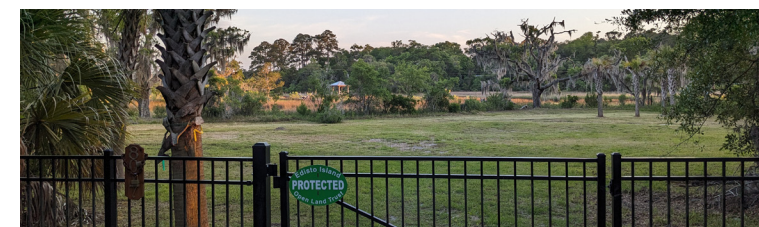
Today, tremendous public funding opportunities exist for protecting land on Edisto Island. Yet, those funds aren't guaranteed and can take over half a year to reach our bank account. That's a lifetime in today's hot real estate market. This is what makes our Acquisition Fund instrumental in our strategy for protecting Edisto Island. It gives EIOLT the means to buy land and protect it now, and get a grant refund later. A revolving fund for buying at-risk land.

That's how we were able to protect **two lots along historic Point of Pines Road** in 2024. We purchased both lots using the Acquisition Fund, protected them from development, and have now received over \$380,000 in grants to reimburse our costs and open the land for public use.

These grants refund EIOLT's costs but never quite all the way. The Acquisition Fund absorbs these extra expenses. This lets us keep momentum when unforeseen costs arise and gives EIOLT the flexibility to work with landowners to protect their land, even if they can't afford the legal fees. For example, the Acquisition Fund covered the costs for the conservation easement on Liz Smylie's planned gift of land in 2024.

Looking back at our past 30 years, and forward to our next 30, the Acquisition Fund was irreplaceable in our past successes, and is still a cornerstone in our mission to protect Edisto Island, forever. The need to increase the Acquisition Fund's capacity is blatantly clear to EIOLT. As development pressure claws west down Savannah Highway, the number of lands changing hands is increasing quickly, and large parcels are coming up for sale more frequently. Each new property listed for sale is a new risk for adverse development, but also a new opportunity for us to make conservation win.

*If you want EIOLT to protect more land, faster, please designate a year-end gift to the Acquisition Fund.*



## HEADING INTO THE NEW YEAR WITH CLEAN WATER

We launched our renewed **Edisto Island Septic Improvement Program** at the start of 2024 and, thanks to our committed staff, we've achieved three years of work in just one year! In 2024, the Septic Program...

- Used funds from **5** grants,
- In partnership with **9** organizations,

Processed **81** Applications,  
Inspected **50** Septic Systems,  
Repaired **21** Septic Systems,  
Replaced **24** full systems,

And taught **hundreds of homeowners** about proper septic system maintenance and the value of clean water quality!