Corps Transfers Donnelley WMA Land To SCDNR

The US Army Corps of Engineers recently deeded to South Carolina DNR almost 10,000 acres of mitigation lands and set up a $4.85 million trust fund, the interest of which will be used to manage the properties.

The property transfer includes 3408 acres at Donnelley WMA in the heart of the ACE Basin and the 6500-acre Palachucola WMA near the Webb Center in Hampton County.

The Corps bought the properties from private landowners and conservation organizations in the early 1990's as mitigation for wildlife habitat destroyed by the construction of the Richard B. Russell Dam on the Savannah River.

The transfer of the 3408 acres on the Donnelley WMA makes the management area wholly owned and managed by SCDNR. The establishment of the Donnelley WMA is one of the major success stories of the ACE Basin Project, and paved the way in showing how public and private organizations can work together to protect strategic tracts of wildlife habitat.

When the tract, known as Mary's Island Plantation, came up for sale in 1990, Ducks Unlimited purchased it to protect the conservation values of the property.


Ducks Unlimited obtained funding through federal and private grants to secure approximately 4,000 acres of the property. In 1992, The National Wild Turkey Federation purchased 332 acres from DU and immediately transferred title to SCDNR.

The Corps purchased 3408 acres at the same time as part of the Richard B. Russell mitigation plan and signed a management lease with SCDNR. DU also signed a management agreement with SCDNR, with the under-

Acres of increasingly rare longleaf pine represent one of the key habitats in the land transferred from the Corp of Engineers to DNR.
Col. Mark Held of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Savannah District chats with DNR Director John Frampton during the official transfer of Corps owned lands to DNR.

Standing that DU would transfer its interest to SCDNR within 10 years.

Donnelley and Paluchucola have been managed by the DNR for over a decade and in this recent transfer the public will not see a difference in access or management, according to DNR biologist Dean Harrigal.

But the deal gives the agency full ownership and funding for management at no cost to taxpayers, and eliminates the worries of having to deal with the annual federal budget cycle.

Donnelley WMA consists of a variety of habitats, including mixed pine-hardwood, managed wetlands, agricultural fields and hundreds of acres of increasingly rare longleaf pine.

Public access and recreational opportunities include hunting, bird watching, hiking and nature study. Thousands of visitors each year enjoy the area which is open every day except Sunday and during special hunts.

Deer's tongue, a fall bloomer, is one of the many diverse plants that grow in the understory of longleaf pine stands.

Savage Backwater, part of the historic inland rice culture system on Donnelley WMA, was included in the land transfer.
James P. Harrelson, Jr. has donated a conservation easement to The Nature Conservancy on the 200-acre Harrelson tract near Green Pond. Near the headwaters of Folly Creek which drains into the Combahee River, the property is comprised of coastal plain small stream swamp forest, loblolly pine plantations, mixed pine-hardwoods, agricultural fields and wildlife openings.

A recent addition to the ACE Basin NERR, Old Combahee Island, consists of 24 acres of highland and 177 acres of marsh.

Badge Humphries has been named as Director of Land Protection for Ducks Unlimited's South Atlantic Region. Stationed in Charleston, Humphries directs the land protection program for the multi-state region. He serves as a primary contact for state, federal, and non-profit conservation and land protection efforts. A native of Columbia, he was educated at Tulane University and the University of Texas School of Law.

A pair of canvasbacks with a shrimp boat in the background make up this year's 25th anniversary South Carolina duck stamp. Since 1981 the program has raised $3.6 million for in-state waterfowl conservation projects and land purchases. Additional duck stamp print revenues have gone to wetland restoration projects in Canada.
ACE Basin Holds First Disability Deer Hunt

Fourteen hunters with disabilities were chosen to hunt deer recently on six ACE Basin properties during the Safari Club International Lowcountry Chapter’s first Wheelchair Hunt.

The hunt presented opportunities to disabled adults who have not hunted for years and gave children with severe illnesses a chance to hunt with their fathers.

Participating properties included Nemours Plantation (a co-sponsor along with DNR), Cockfield Plantation, Brewton, Mackey Point, Rose Hill and Hall Island.

The hunters, all in wheel chairs harvested three bucks and a doe. Safari Club International hopes to make this an annual hunt.

DNR Conservation Officer Lynwood Kearse helps a hunter sight in his rifle.

This uniquely colored fox squirrel was photographed by DNR biologist Billy McCord on a marsh hammock in the Combahee River. This squirrel has an interesting color mix of dark and orange body with a black mask. Southern fox squirrels are typically gray with a black mask or jet black.

Graduate Student To Study Rails in ACE Basin

Rails, a group of birds so elusive and secretive that little data exists to manage their habitats, are the subject of University of Georgia graduate student Sean McGregor’s masters thesis.

For his study, McGregor has selected 12 wetlands on Nemours Plantation and the Ernest Hollings ACE Basin Wildlife Refuge. Six are managed impoundments and six unmanaged tidal marsh.

Both clapper and king rails inhabit marshes along the coast but their habitat requirements are poorly understood. The study will determine whether managed impoundments provide comparable habitats to natural tidal marsh.

In each habitat, McGregor and interns working with him will play tapes of rail calls and note the species, number and location of birds that respond. McGregor also plans to capture birds and attach radio transmitters to them to get information on habitats used throughout the year.

Although clapper rails prefer high salinity marsh and king rails freshwater marsh, the habitat of two species often overlaps and the two species interbreed on occasion.

Funding for the project comes from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the University of Georgia Warnell School of Forest Resources, and the Nemours Wildlife Foundation.

Georgia graduate student, Sean McGregor, uses a parabolic microphone to pick up the calls of king and clapper rails at Nemours Plantation.
Matt Smoak of Bear Island WMA with his outstanding crop of sunflowers to attract doves for this past fall's public hunts.

Ducks Unlimited and the DNR recently honored the late Hugh Lane, Sr. and his family at a luncheon held at Willtown Plantation. Pictured here are Jeff Nelson of DU, Cathy Lane Schenck, Hugh Lane, Jr., Mike McShane, chairman of the DNR board, and Charles Lane.
Estuaries Day 2005

In celebration of National Estuaries Day, staff of the ACE Basin NERR and friends hosted activities highlighting the importance of estuaries.

At the McKenzie Center at Bennett’s Point, Elizabeth Vernon, Al Segars and Charlie Zemp of the DNR led a morning bird watching trip at Bear Island and an afternoon educational cruise aboard the E/V Discovery. Both trips were full and everyone enjoyed these guided excursions.

On a bike tour sponsored by Coastal Cyclists down Bennett’s Point Road cyclists stopped at the McKenzie Center for snacks and a tour by Zemp highlighting research, conservation and education in the ACE Basin. Participants found the tour as enjoyable as the bike ride, and are planning to return again next year.

At the Edisto Interpretive Center, staff conducted a number of programs for adults as well as children throughout the day. Betty Wenner, Andy Jennings and Phil Maier held brief educational talks on blue crabs, horseshoe crabs, oysters, and sea turtles.

Elaine Freeman, an educator from the Edisto Beach State Park, conducted a children’s program on sea turtles and led a marsh talk and a crab pot demonstration.

Jimmy Jenkins taught cast netting techniques and fielded questions on shrimp and crab lifecycles. This is the first year that events were held at both the Edisto Interpretive Center and McKenzie Field Station.

Land Trust Celebrates 20th Anniversary

The Lowcountry Open Land Trust recently celebrated its 20th anniversary having protected during that time more than 40,000 acres from development.

Started originally to protect Ashley River properties in Charleston County, the Land Trust soon greatly expanded its horizons and now holds conservation easements on properties in Colleton, Jasper, Hampton, Clarendon and Orangeburg counties.

By securing easements on mostly small parcels it now protects 10 percent of Wadmalaw Island, but also has protected properties as large as the 6,400-acre Mackay Point Plantation in Jasper County.

The Land Trust, while concentrating on properties with conservation value, has also protected historic areas in places such as Roseland Plantation in Jasper County and Middleburg Plantation in Berkeley County.

LOLT has worked to preserve lands in the ACE Basin and in the Santee River delta. It is currently working with the National Audubon Society and Beidler Forest to protect property adjacent to Four Hole Swamp.

A recent editorial in the Charleston Post and Courier included these comments:

“Michael McShane, a trustee for the Land Trust and chairman of the state board for the Department of Natural Resources, says the work of the Land Trust reflects the conservation ethic of property owners in South Carolina, in the face of relentless development.

‘With the pressures we see today there is a central role for the Land Trust to work with private property owners,’ McShane says. ‘They are the unsung heroes of the conservation movement in South Carolina.’

Their generosity is evident in the growth of protected property under Land Trust easements. Each represents a contribution to conservation that will benefit generations of South Carolinians to come.”
Public Lands in the ACE Basin

**Bear Island WMA**
Hunting - Archery and gun hunts for deer; waterfowl hunting by drawing; dove and small game hunts also scheduled.*
Fishing - Fish and blue crabs can be harvested from impoundments from April 1 to Sept. 30.
Camping - Primitive facilities available for deer hunters and conservation groups by appointment.

**Donnelley WMA**
Hunting - Archery and gun hunts (drawing only) for deer; waterfowl and turkey hunts by drawing; dove and small game hunts scheduled.*
General Public Use - Designated trails; Mon.-Sat. 8 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., closed on Sunday and during special hunts.
For more information on Bear Island WMA and Donnelley WMA call (843) 844-8957.

**ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve**
Research - Support and facilities are provided for qualified scientists to study estuaries and coastal ecosystems.
Education - Education cruises, marsh classroom adventures, workshops and training sessions provided to organized groups.
General Public Use - Accessible by boat; primitive camping in specified areas; some restrictions.
For more Information call (843) 762-5400.

**ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge**
Hunting - Archery, primitive weapons hunts for deer. Waterfowl hunts in designated areas.
General Public Use - Open for public use except during scheduled hunts.
For more information call (843) 889-3084.
Office hours - 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
(* See SCDNR current Hunting and Fishing Rules and Regulations)

Caw Caw Interpretive Center Opens
Unique ACE Basin Exhibit

Charleston County's Caw Caw Interpretive Center in Ravenel has added an ACE Basin exhibit to their comprehensive collection of rice culture and environmental displays.

Because of the park's proximity to the ACE Basin and the staff's creative approach to interpretation, the ACE Basin Task Force asked Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission to produce an exhibit to highlight the similarities between the basin and the center.

The exhibit educates visitors on the geography of the ACE Basin, its international importance as a natural resource, the balance of uses and the necessity for conservation. The exhibit also highlights the value of former rice fields at the park and in the ACE Basin in the region's ecology and economy.

The exhibit includes an interactive water table that demonstrates both an inland rice field system and a tidal system. Push buttons allow visitors to flood or drain miniature canals and fields to learn how water is held or released to grow various crops.

With a group of school students, scouts or graduate students gathered around the table, park staff can illustrate field "anatomy," tidal advantage, impact of rainfall and other factors for which few members of the public have a frame of reference.

With this introduction, park visitors can better understand how these complex systems function while the walk the parks many trails or enjoy a program on the natural and cultural history of former rice fields.
## Conservation Sites

### Public Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bear Island Wildlife Management Area (est. 1953)</td>
<td>12,055</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donnelley Wildlife Management Area (1992)</td>
<td>8,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donnelley Drive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge</td>
<td>11,762</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve</td>
<td>17,184</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edisto Beach State Park (est. 1936)</td>
<td>1,255</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunting Island State Park (est. 1938)</td>
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<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>55,304</td>
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### Private Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
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<td>Conservation Easements (69)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deed Restrictions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hammitzian Tract (1993)</td>
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<td>Organization Ownership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management Agreements</td>
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<td>MeadWestvaco (1991)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5,892</td>
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<tr>
<td>Botany Bay Plantation, Slann Island (1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>108,696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## S.C. Department of Natural Resources

John E. Frampton, Executive Director

## ACE Basin Committee

Mike McKenzie, Committee Chairman
Dean Harrigal, Project Coordinator, Wildlife Management
David Allen - Freshwater Fisheries
Michelle Crosby - Land Resources
Salty Murphy - Wildlife Diversity

## Graphic Design

Karen Swanton - Marine Resources Division
Editors
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## Funding provided by the

Harry R.E. Hampton
Memorial Wildlife Fund, Inc.

## Printed On Recycled Paper

Total Cost - $986.85
Cost per Copy - $.33

## South Carolina Current Events

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