

PEE DEE LAND TRUST

# Group's protected acreage increases

Trust has more than 7,880 acres in six Pee Dee counties

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FLORENCE — The Pee Dee Land Trust accepted easements on more than 6,500 acres in 2007, quadrupling the acreage it protected in 2006, executive director Jennie Williamson said.

This brings the trust's total protected land to more than 7,880 acres in six of the eight counties in its region.

"Land protection crosses county lines and follows a more natural path of animal and plant habitat, human communities and watersheds," Williamson said. "It benefits more than just the people who live on or near the protected property."

The trust's mission is to protect the significant natural, agricultural and historical resources that define the Pee Dee, using voluntary land protection and education and outreach.

Williamson said the two — voluntary land protection and education — are "inextricably linked" in the organization's effort to promote and protect the Pee Dee.

Protected land includes:

■ Thousands of acres of bottomland hardwood forests, including habitat for black bear and the threatened bird known as "nature's hang-glider," the Swallow-Tailed Kite.

■ Several thousand acres of high quality farmland, much of which is clustered together near the Clemson Research Station in Darlington and Florence counties.

■ Scenic views on a designated "Scenic Byway" in Darlington and on the Cotton Trail in Marlboro County.

■ Miles of river frontage on state-designated "Scenic Rivers," as well as on another stretch of river that is being considered for "scenic" designation in Florence County.

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## LAND TRUST

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"These projects often protected culturally significant areas and places that complement existing public recreation facilities," Williamson said.

As an example, she pointed to Galivants Ferry, where the Holiday family has protected the riverfronts along the Little Pee Dee between Heritage Trust properties.

"This has an important effect because it ensures that the wildlife corridors will be connected and intact for generations to come, rather than fragmenting habitats with wildly different land management practices," Williamson said.

The Pee Dee Land Trust is nine years old, but only in its third year with paid staff. It continues to grow in membership and in its successes in land protection.

And, in line with this growth, the trust is in a new office and has hired additional staff to keep up with the growing workload.

The trust works with county planning staff and provides information to state legislators.

It's a publicly supported nonprofit group. Membership or annual contributions demonstrate a person's or a business' support for the organization's mission. Its more than 400 members come from 20 of the state's 46 counties and from 16 states and Washington, D.C.