

JOINT NEWS RELEASE: U.S. Forest Service and Charleston County Government

Release Number: 3066

Date: December 9, 2009

U.S. Forest Service Honors Charleston County Greenbelt Program

MEDIA CONTACTS



U.S. Forest Service:

Name: Michelle Burnett, U.S. Forest Service Public Affairs Staff Officer
Phone: (803) 561-4091
E-mail: michelleburnett@fs.fed.us



Charleston County:

Name: Jennie Davis Flinn, Charleston County Public Information Officer
Phone: (843) 958-4012
E-mail: jflinn@charlestoncounty.org

See photo: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms/fmarion/news/2009images.php>

The Southern Region of the U.S. Forest Service in Atlanta honored members of [Charleston County Government's Greenbelt Program](#) and staff of [The Nature Conservancy of South Carolina](#) with a Partnership Award for innovation and leadership in partnering to acquire critical landholdings within the Francis Marion National Forest.

Forest Supervisor Paul Bradley, head of the [Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests in South Carolina](#), presented the award at a regular [Charleston County Council](#) meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 8.

"The granting of funds from a county government to the federal government is unprecedented," Bradley said. "The benefits to Charleston County are twofold: protecting greenspace as well as providing additional public access. Within the Southern Region, the Francis Marion has long been recognized as an invaluable public resource providing opportunities for hunting, fishing, birdwatching, nature study, academic research and environmental education. The Francis Marion also augments and buffers critical habitat on adjacent lands of Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and Santee Coastal Reserve, a landscape of extraordinary conservation value on a regional and national basis."

The Forest Service applied for and received grant funds of \$200,000 for the Murrell Tract, a 96-acre total in-holding between two wilderness areas. Closing on the property occurred on September 20, 2007. The Nature Conservancy applied for and received grant funds of \$623,700 for the Bulls Bay Tract, a 196-acre total in-holding threatened by development along the Highway 17 corridor. The Conservancy raised \$1.1 million in additional private funds to match the County's Greenbelt funds and subsequently donated this entire tract to the Forest Service on December 8, 2008. The Conservancy also applied for and received grant funds of \$4 million toward the acquisition of the 900-acre Tibwin 2 Tract, along with a \$500,000 grant from the SC Conservation Bank, to be matched with federal funds. This tract lies directly across from the Forest's Tibwin Plantation, providing connectivity to the main body of the forest. These undeveloped corridors are becoming increasingly important for wildlife and biological health. Additional projects are planned that will continue to leverage limited federal acquisition funds.

"These tracts represent the concerted efforts of all parties involved and achieved results that far exceeded anything the Forest Service could have accomplished alone," Bradley said.

Charleston County Greenbelt funds of over \$4.8 million have protected more than 1,100 acres for public access in the Francis Marion. The partnership created between The Nature Conservancy, the County's Greenbelt Program, and the Forest Service will continue to achieve positive outcomes for residents of Charleston and nearby counties, as well as the visiting public.

Named recipients of the award are: Edwin Cooper, Kurt Taylor, and Cathy Ruff from the Charleston County Greenbelt Program; Sarah Hartman, Michael Prevost, Ashley Demosthenes, and Daniel Guy from The Nature Conservancy; and Peggy Jo Nadler, Mark Danaher, John Byars, and Mark Stevens from the U.S. Forest Service.