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Dear Friend,

We are excited to announce the protection of the Slater Tract, a keystone property in Jasper County, South Carolina. As you will read in [this excellent front-page feature](#) from the *Hilton Head Island Packet*, the 3,800-acre tract just north of Ridgeland possesses every characteristic a great conservation property could have – it expands public access in an area where public lands are relatively scarce; it protects water quality and fisheries in the Port Royal Sound estuary and the Broad River; it secures habitat that is essential for hundreds of varieties of plants and animals, including more than a dozen threatened, endangered and “at risk” species, and it helps mitigate climate change by storing hundreds of thousands of tons of carbon in the forests and soil on the tract. And just as significant, it is strategically positioned to help advance additional land conservation in the area. ([Map](#))

Jasper County, at the southern tip of South Carolina, is incomparably beautiful – a biological mixing bowl where the southernmost ranges of many plants and animals collide with other species whose habitats barely reach into South Carolina from across the Georgia border.

Flanked by fast-growing Beaufort County to the northeast, Jasper is also under intense development pressure. Although the county is currently lightly populated, with a population density ranking 40th out of South Carolina’s 46 counties, it is the 7th fastest-growing county in the state.

Just across the border in southern Beaufort County, Hilton Head and Bluffton are experiencing explosive growth. Over the past twenty years, Bluffton’s population has expanded by 2,000%. This growth, which has now reached Hardeeville in southeastern Jasper County, threatens to overwhelm the area’s natural landscape. And development has already closed off important recreational and natural areas that were traditionally available to local residents. For these reasons, the Slater acquisition is one of the most important projects we’ve worked on in years.

In the coming months we will work closely with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources to secure public and private grants to add this property to the state’s Heritage Trust and Wildlife Management Area lands.

Our effort to protect this property would not have been possible without unqualified support from The Knobloch Family Foundation, The CWD3 Fund at the Coastal Community Foundation of SC, The Nature Conservancy, Jasper County and our partners in the Port Royal Sound Watershed Initiative. We look forward to working with county leaders and residents over the coming years as conservation of this critical region continues.

Finally, and most importantly, we want to thank those of you who have supported the Open Space Institute in South Carolina, including the donors who have helped make the Slater acquisition a reality. We would not be here without you.

Sincerely,

Nate

photo: Dana Beach



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