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Dear Friend,

The events of this past year have brought two realities into sharp focus – nature is irreplaceably important for people and our planet, and public parks and preserves play essential roles in sustaining our communities. The pandemic, destructive storms, and the tragic conflagrations in the West have highlighted both the precious, restorative value of natural areas and the shortage of opportunities for the public to enjoy beautiful natural areas.

I am proud to report that over the summer OSI's stellar team, in collaboration with our conservation partners, advanced protection of incomparable properties in locations that have traditionally had minimal public access.

Here are just a few of the highlights including excellent press coverage:

- OSI secured the stunningly beautiful and biologically diverse 3,800-acre Slater Tract ([link](#)) in Jasper County for \$16 million. The property, supporting majestic upland longleaf pine forests and mature bottomland swamps, will be open to the public and incorporated into the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system. This part of the coast has traditionally had very limited public access opportunities.
- Also in Jasper County, we acquired the 116-acre Tillman Addition ([link](#)), a critical inholding that expands protection for endangered gopher tortoises and hundreds of other species. It will become part of South Carolina's Tillman Sand Ridge Heritage Preserve & WMA along the Savannah River.
- We secured an additional 840-acre keystone parcel for the future 75-mile Black River Park and Water Trail network in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. The Black River project is **the first new state park in more than two decades** and the first state park ever created in a region that, like Jasper County, is ecologically rich but deficient in public access opportunities. In addition to this exciting acquisition, this summer OSI's team continued to lead a diverse stakeholder group focused on community planning for the future park network.
- In the midlands, we transferred 385 acres to SCDNR to add to its Landsford Canal Forest Legacy WMA ([link](#)), a popular canoeing and kayaking spot on the Catawba River just upstream from Landsford Canal State Park. This stretch of river is renowned for its large colony of rare and endangered Rocky Shoals Spider Lilies. This is yet another part of South Carolina with limited opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about the natural environment.

- Together with partners in coastal Georgia, we celebrated the transfer of the 27,000-acre Ceylon and Cabin Bluff properties to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources ([link](#)) a project that protects pristine salt marsh, Atlantic maritime forest, and globally important longleaf pine habitat. Ceylon is also home to more than 2,000 gopher tortoises. **This collaborative acquisition represents one of the largest conservation accomplishments in Georgia's history.**

The more frequent storms and fires are catastrophic reminders of the urgency of securing "climate resilient" landscapes – places that will mitigate flooding, sequester carbon, and serve as refuges for plants, animals and people over the long term, in the face of global changes. As stated so well by OSI's Maria Whitehead and SC TNC Executive Director Dale Threatt-Taylor in a recent Post and Courier Op-ed ([link](#)), in the Southeast **the prescription for reducing future climate impacts is land conservation.**

We wish you a smooth and healthy transition to fall, and as always, please feel free to reach out. Thank you for your continued interest in and support for OSI.

Best,



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photo: Nancy Pierce



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