



Nation Ford Land Trust *Spring 2023* Newsletter

Our Latest Easement—A Family’s Legacy: *Robert Carter Homestead*

The Robert Carter Homestead is a 46-acre site located in southeastern Rock Hill in York County near S. Anderson road owned by Penny Carter, a former resident of Rock Hill. Most of the acreage is full of late successional hardwoods, some of significant age (photo shown below). Nature has created a healthy vegetative buffer for Burgis Creek, the main creek within the property for about 2,200 ft. of frontage. Former agricultural grassland has become a home for a diverse range of flora and fauna as it has been allowed to grow tall and thick.

This land can be traced back to the early 1800’s where Penny Carter’s ancestors used the land for farming and as a homestead for a large family. The home just outside of the easement was built in 1954 after Penny Carter’s grandfather tore down the original and rebuilt the current home on the foundations. Penny Carter was born on the property and helped her father in farming.



Looking at the property for the first time, Nation Ford Land Trust personnel spooked the daylight out of a white-tail doe, who wasted no time in bounding off through the tall grass along S. Anderson Road! The team even spent some time with a chill black rat snake and caught a glimpse of a cottontail rabbit. While NFLT staff didn’t see any, they certainly heard the presence of several local frogs in the calm creek where they were most likely spawning for the season. It’s hard to miss them when they are so intent on

being heard! Without a doubt, the Robert Carter Homestead has an abundance of wildlife to observe and plenty of forestland to protect here in York County, SC. This project wouldn’t have been possible without the help of York County Forever and South Carolina Conservation Bank.

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Special points of interest

- NFLT announced a new conservation easement: Robert Carter Homestead.
- NFLT hosted its first fundraiser of the year where an “enslaved persons” cemetery was acknowledged and the buried individuals would put to rest.
- NFLT has several events in the coming months: appearances at Winthrop University and Woodend Farm, a bird walk at Catawba Bend Preserve, and plein air painting at our Smith Ford Farm easement.

2023 Spring Sponsors



Will Close, Cheryl & Michael Hill, Harry Dalton & Kathie Brabham, David G. Anderson, Joyce White, Patrick White, Elliot Close, Janice Chism & Bill Rogers, Anna Marriott, Eleanor Landstreet, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Williams Family Foundation, Robert & Susan Palmer

Mission

To preserve the open spaces, natural beauty, and scenic heritage of the York County, South Carolina area.

Board

Dr. Janice Chism – *Chair*
Patrick White – *Vice Chair*
Dan Love – *Treasurer*
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Bernard Ackerman
John Hiott
Allison Love
Will Close
Perry Johnston
James Smith
Eleanor Landstreet
Hope Matthews
Dawn Johnson
Laura Brewer

In Memoriam, Murry White, Jr.

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The Nation Ford Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1989. The board of directors is a dedicated group of volunteers who support the land trust's mission and seek opportunities to further its land conservation efforts.

Acres presently protected by NFLT: 15,512 acres

A Letter from Our Executive Director—Steve Hamilton



As I drive around York County on monitoring tours of our easement properties or looking at new prospect sites, I still feel awed by the beautiful panoramic views and vistas our county provides. It nourishes and sustains the soul.

Our Board of Directors have been very busy these past few months. We closed on our latest conservation easement, the Robert Carter Homestead. This beautiful 46-acre property is located off Catawba Church Road, just south of Rock Hill. Although it is not a large tract, it provides a much-needed green buffer in this fast-growing part of York County. We have added to our portfolio of properties with the acquisition of 1.5 acres near downtown City of York. This was a

wonderful gift from Lorraine Stewart and Patricia Ramsey. Our Conservation Committee has added several miles of new trails to our Murray White Preserve and to our Love Tract properties. Our Fundraising and Donor Development Committee has been hard at work and just completed the 144: Lost Ancestors' event which highlighted an "enslaved peoples" cemetery. The committee is now busy planning for upcoming events for the remainder of the year. Our board held a Winter Retreat and is working on a Strategic Action Plan that will provide guidance through 2027 and beyond.

Our accreditation process, with The Land Trust Alliance, is proceeding nicely. We are going through the rigorous application process and are targeting the Summer of 2023 for completion.

We continue to push our land preservation acreage total to over 15,500-acres with more projects in the works. One will be a park in the fast-growing area north of Fort Mill and another will preserve hundreds of acres along side of an existing conservation easement we presently have in the Sharon, SC area. More on those projects in the Fall 2023 newsletter.

As always, with the support from our partners and donors alike, we can protect the rich diversity of forests, wetlands, family farms and treasured views across the county.

Cleanup on Founders Trail by Pack 108

On March 19th, NFLT's Founders Trail was cleaned up by some amazing volunteers from the Cub Scouts of Pack 108 right here in Fort Mill, SC. A whole truck-full of trash was collected and picked up ranging from small to large debris. If you look closely, you can even see a whole tire!

The Founders Trail is a 2.3 mile trail that connects to the Masons Bend trail and passes under I-77 and Highway 21.

Photo: Pack 108 Cub Scouts with NFLT Executive Director, Steve Hamilton



Photo by Nation Ford Land Trust

What's Happening at NFLT

April 29th—Bird Walk with Dr. Bill Rogers @ Catawba Bend Preserve

Dr. William “Bill” Rogers, Winthrop University Biology Professor *Emeritus*, will be directing a small group (limit 18) along trails at Catawba Bend Preserve to spot any local species of birds for a couple hours (9:00-11:00AM). Members of NFLT can join this event for free! Non-members must pay \$25 to participate and can opt to be NFLT members for future member events within 2023. To sign up, please email us at events@nationfordlandtrust.org where you will also receive more information and updates! Birdwatchers are encouraged to bring their own equipment (binoculars are recommended).

May 20th—Plein Air Painting @ Smith Ford Farm

Join us for a day in the beautiful landscapes of western York County! Plein air painting takes artists out of the studio and into the outdoors. During the month of May, Nation Ford Land Trust will host area painters and artists at one of our properties, Smith Ford Farm. Located in Western York County with views of the Broad River, it's the perfect location for inspiring artists. Watch out for more updates on our website and social media or email us at events@nationfordlandtrust.org to subscribe for updates!

June 10th—NFLT @ Wooden Farm for the Ag + Art Tour

Local artisans and agricultural businesses around the Bethel-Lake Wylie area will be participating in the Ag+Art tour this year at Woodend Farm! NFLT staff and board members will be there most of the day, so there'll plenty of time to come and learn about the land trust and what we do for York County. While you're there, make sure to check out all the local vendors that will be present with local produce and products.

If you wish to participate in any events by Nation Ford Land Trust or have any questions, please be sure to RSVP by calling us at **(803)-547-8140** or emailing us at events@nationfordlandtrust.org.

The 144: Honoring the Lost Ancestors

On February 25th at 2:30 PM, Nation Ford Land Trust held a fundraising event at Fishing Creek Place where 144, previously unmarked, “enslaved persons” graves stand. Since purchasing the property, the landowners Andrew and Mary Lazenby have spent countless hours researching and caring for the site by looking into the genealogy of the site as well as improving the appearance of the cemetery. The cemetery now has 144 cut stones with number markers for each individual and a metal fence surrounding the area. With a conservation easement protecting the land itself, the property will never be developed.

On the day of the event, 110 individuals from all walks of life came to acknowledge and honor the individuals buried on the land. The audience heard from two of our board members: Dawn Johnson who was our Mistress of Ceremony and James Smith who was our keynote speaker. Ample time was also given for individuals to ask questions of the landowners and NFLT, moderated by Emiene Wright from Our State magazine.

Once the tone and historical foundation had been set, everyone was directed to the cemetery where Pastor John McCullough led a last rites ceremony and a rendition of ‘Amazing Grace’ before participants were allowed to explore the cemetery for themselves and reflect on their thoughts and feelings. NFLT is extremely grateful with the



Photo by Visit York County

success of the event and we look forward to presenting more opportunities where the local community can become involved in supporting our small land trust and the land we all wish to protect.

Chairwoman Address—Janice Chism

As I write this, a colorful swirl of azaleas is blooming in my front garden. Like many of you, I suspect, in spring I want to be outside nearly every minute of the day (pollen and thunderstorms permitting, of course), gardening, hiking, birdwatching or walking Tess, our border collie.

This year started off with a huge undertaking for NFLT, our first major fundraiser in some time, **The 144: Honoring the Lost Ancestors**. I hope you saw some of the great coverage of this event in the local media. If not, you can read all about it on our website. We are so proud of the hard work of our new fundraising committee, led by one of our newest board members Hope Matthews, who along with her committee members and NFLT staff member, Megan Mahoney, worked tirelessly to make this event succeed. We are grateful to Andy and Mary Lazenby for their generous permission to hold the event on their beautiful property, and to our sponsors, including board members Dawn Johnson and John Hiott, the Mercantile and one who preferred anonymity. I especially want to thank those of you, our members, who ventured out on a stormy February day, to take part in this memorable occasion. This was the first of several events we'll hold this year. We hope to see you at many more of these as well.

In planning the February fundraiser, we were shocked to learn how few people in this area know about NFLT, how we contribute to the protection of important natural areas, and, most surprisingly, even what a land trust is. We hope the great publicity The 144 event received in local media will “put us on the map” but there is still a long way to go. We ask you, our loyal and supportive members, to help us with this. Please talk about land trusts, Nation Ford Land Trust, and what we do with your friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Encourage them to attend some of our upcoming events and to become members themselves. Nature needs all the help and friends she can get right now.

I wish you all a spring and summer filled with opportunities to get outdoors and enjoy some of the beautiful natural spaces NFLT is helping to protect right here in York County.



Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act

Some great news came out of Washington, DC last December. The U.S. Congress passed the Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act as part of the year-end “omnibus” spending bill, and it was signed into law on December 29, 2022. This bipartisan legislation effectively shuts down a tax avoidance scheme that took advantage of the federal conservation easement tax incentive.

Conservation easements protect habitat and wildlife on approximately 40 million acres of privately held lands in the United States. Easements are effective tools that allow landowners to protect their land on their terms, while still retaining the ability to own, use and control their land, sell or pass it on to their heirs. Since 1979, donations of qualified conservation easements have been eligible for federal tax deductions.

Unfortunately, a small number of bad actors, through abusive syndicated conservation easement transactions, had taken advantage of both this important private land conservation program and the U.S. taxpayer by claiming billions of dollars each year on hundreds of abusive or fraudulent transactions in pursuit of quick and often staggeringly outsized profits.

During the past decade, so-called abusive syndicated conservation easement transactions have cost U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars. According to IRS data, these investors claimed nearly \$36 billion in unwarranted deductions between 2010 and 2018.

To put that into perspective, approximately 2,000 to 2,500 conservation donations are made annually for truly charitable purposes, resulting in about \$1 billion in claimed tax deductions per year. Meanwhile, between 2016 and 2018, the IRS found \$22 billion in unwarranted tax deductions were claimed on fewer than 300 syndicated transactions.

Part of what gives the Integrity Act teeth is how it cracks down on sky high appraisals. The act limits investors’ deductions to no more 2.5 times their initial investment over a three year period. This greatly curtails the enormous tax savings that investors had claimed in the past.

The forward-looking Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act prevents future abuses by reasonably limiting conservation easement deductions. With this limit, the new law preserves this deduction for people with charitable intent and conservation in mind. Now we can move forward unimpeded in our efforts to conserve more land and protect the places people need and love including forests, wetlands, family farms and ranches.



Photo by DJ Glisson, II/Firefly Imageworks

Highlighting One of Our Conservation Easements

Smith Ford Farm

Smith Ford Farm is one of the most historic, cultural and ecological sites in the South Carolina Piedmont. This 465-acre historic site is the centerpiece of the SCDNR Scenic Broad River Plan and is a part of the foundation of NFLT's Broad River focus area. The land, inhabited and owned by Annie-Laura and Joseph Hamrick, was protected in perpetuity in 2020.

Smith Ford Farm had been a priority of NFLT since its founding in 1989 because of its massive 1.6-mile Broad River frontage. Smith Ford and the area surrounding the river is rich with historical features:

from the original Smith's Ford to Native American fishing weir traps in the river. The farmhouse was constructed in 1790, was included in the YC Survey of Historic Architecture in 1992, and is National Register Eligible. Smith Ford is actually a crossroad of American history as it was used by troops during the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The river crossing was used by the Cherokee and Catawba Indians and by retreating Confederate troopers detailed to Jefferson Davis during his flight after the fall of Richmond. It served as the District Post Office and a ferry operated off the property. This easement supports and is adjacent to Worth Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

The Smith Ford Project is a partnership for conservation, as most conservation easements tend to be. Smith Ford has been recognized on the York County Forever List of Significant Properties from its founding. York County Forever helped with the funding for this project and later the South Carolina Conservation Bank contributed significant funds to conserve the property. NFLT cannot thank these two organizations enough for continuously supporting projects Nation Ford Land Trust seeks to protect.



Stakeholder Notification and Public Notice of Accreditation Application

Nation Ford Land Trust is in the process to become an accredited land trust with the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization.

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. Nation Ford Land Trust is pleased to announce it is applying for accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how Nation Ford Land Trust complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices>.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org, or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Comments on Nation Ford Land Trust's application will be most useful by July 19th, 2023.

Sincerely,

Steve Hamilton
Executive Director

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Nation Ford Land Trust

Nation Ford Land Trust is dedicated to the preservation of open spaces, natural beauty, and the scenic heritage of the York County, South Carolina area. Preserving these qualities will ensure that as our home grows, it retains the qualities that have made it a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family.

Nation Ford Land Trust is a 501 (c)(3) organization.

Nation Ford Land Trust Membership

The Nation Ford Land Trust depends on its members to help further its mission to enhance the quality of life in the York County area by preserving its open spaces, natural beauty, and scenic heritage. We continue to look for opportunities to partner with the York County Forever Commission on conservation easements, as well as land purchases that provide public access. We are also working with landowners on a variety of conservation projects on private lands, including easements. Your membership will be used to protect land with significant conservation value through projects such as these.

The protection of open space with significant conservation and public value is crucial as our region faces unprecedented growth. Recent studies indicate that if growth continues at the current rate in the southeast, urban sprawl will engulf thousands of acres of forest and agricultural lands from Raleigh, North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia within the next 50 years. Charlotte and its surrounding counties, including York County, are directly in this path. To donate to the Nation Ford Land Trust or to become a member, please visit our website at **www.nationfordlandtrust.org**.

We accept online donations through PayPal and major credit cards and mail-in donations through our membership form with a check sent to our P.O. box at **P.O. Box 1273 Fort Mill, SC 29716**.