



Nation Ford Land Trust *Spring 2024* Newsletter

Our Latest Easement—An Ecological Opportunity: *Blue Branch Farm*

Blue Branch Farm is a 373-acre site located in the southwest of York County near the town of McConnells. Protected by William Fennell IV, the tract has both ecological and historical significance to York County. Most of the acreage is forested with about 130 acres (~35%) composed of bottomland hardwoods near Turkey Creek and Blue Branch. Upland forests go up as far as 550 ft in elevation and are home to a diverse range of flora and fauna. Turkey Creek (east) and Blue Branch (west) run alongside the borders of the property for approximately 10,700 feet of combined creek frontage.

Frequent visits to the property show an abundance of wildlife, especially bird species including migratory waterfowl who frequent the area year-round. On the eastern edge of the property along Turkey Creek, at an elevation of around 390-415 ft., the property is periodically flooded and hosts a large bottomland hardwood forest (~80 acres). The low flow

flooded areas provide a sustainable habitat and potential spawning area for many fish and amphibian species.

Since the early 1900s, Blue Branch Farm has been known in its history as a farm. By the 1930s, however, the farm was abandoned due to depleted nutrients in the soil. Before that, the property may have had ties to Lacey’s Fort (est. 1780) as evidenced by a large, deep rock-lined well and other remnant structures not typical to a 20th century farm. This is still being investigated! The Fennell family started to obtain the

property in the 1960’s. 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 two new conservation easements: Blue Branch Farm & Thistle 1
- NFLT has two new board members: Dwayne Rollins and Jennifer McAdams
- There are several events in store at NFLT for this spring such as a continuation for the 144: Honoring the Lost Ancestors, a bird walk at Anne Springs Close Greenway, Plein Air Painting at Smith Ford Farm, and more!
- Tune in to one of our latest projects with our Chairwoman Janice Chism, a prairie restoration project at Murray White Preserve.

2024 Spring Sponsors



Andrew Lazenby, Craig Craze, Eleanor Landstreet, Joyce White, Patrick White, Janice Chism & Bill Rogers, Harry Dalton & Kathie Brabham, Anna Marriott, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Derick Close, David G. Anderson, Douglas Hansen, Dr. Robert Walker

Mission

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

Board

Dr. Janice Chism – *Chair*
Hope Matthews – *Vice Chair*
Dwayne Rollins – *Treasurer*
Kathy Pender – *Secretary*
Bernard Ackerman
John Hiott
Allison Love
Will Close
Patrick White
Perry Johnston
Eleanor Landstreet
Dawn Johnson
Laura Brewer
Jennifer McAdams

In Memoriam, Murry White, Jr.

Staff

Steve Hamilton
Executive Director
nationfordlandtrust@gmail.com

Megan Mahoney
Land Trust Associate
mmahoney@nationfordlandtrust.org

Mailing Address

Post Office Box 1273
Fort Mill, SC 29716
www.nationfordlandtrust.org

Office

242 Dairy Barn Lane (Epps House)
Fort Mill, SC 29715
Phone (803) 547-8140

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: 15,880 acres

A Letter from Our Executive Director—Steve Hamilton



Sometimes it is important to be reminded what a land trust is all about. A land trust helps landowners place their property into a conservation easement. This is where landowners and a land trust enter a legal agreement to permanently limit the use of an area to protect conservation values. Landowners can either sell or donate the easement to land trusts. Landowners retain ownership of the land, can sell their land in the future or pass it on to heirs. But the

conservation restrictions remain forever.

Collectively, land trusts have saved more than 60 million acres of land in the US. In South Carolina, over 20,500 acres were protected in 2023. Nation Ford Land Trust contributed to this number by adding a 380-acre conservation easement known as Blue Branch Farm located in the McConnells, SC area. (See details in this newsletter).

I would like to welcome out two newest board members to NFLT. They are Dwayne Rollins and Jenifer McAdams. I look forward to working with them in the future. More on them in this issue.

We continue to push our land preservation acreage total to over 15,886-acres with more projects in the works. One new project will be in our “Black Jack” soil focus area. Another will be near our Worth Mountain conservation easement. 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 our county.

What's Happening at NFLT

April 13th—The 144: Honoring the Lost Ancestors

Join Nation Ford Land Trust on April 13th for this limited-access visit to an historic slave cemetery as we learn about and honor those who are buried there. In 2022, a single grave site was discovered on private property in York County. With the help of archaeologists, property owners discovered 144 gravesites believed to be those of enslaved Africans. The cemetery property, protected by a conservation easement with Nation Ford Land Trust, will never be developed. Just like in 2023, please join us as we honor these 144, acknowledge their lives, existence and value, and lay their souls to rest. Our continuing program will explore the funerary traditions of enslaved Africans and we will continue to honor the 144 Lost Ancestors.

April 27th—Spring Birding Walk

Dr. William “Bill” Rogers, a Winthrop University emerita biology professor and ornithologist, will be directing a small group in birdwatching along the trails at the Anne Springs Close Greenway. Birdwatchers are encouraged to bring their own equipment (binoculars are highly recommended).

May 11th—Plein Air at Smith Ford Farm

Join us for the day, immersed in beautiful landscapes overlooking the Broad River. Local artists will draw inspiration from the views to create unique works of art. Learn about local artists, local landscapes, and how Nation Ford Land Trust preserves open spaces. Smith Ford Farm is a hidden gem and this program is a rare opportunity to combine art exploration with the great outdoors.

For any questions about our upcoming events, contact us at events@nationfordlandtrust.org or call us at (803)-547-8140.

Meet Our Newest Board Members!



Dwayne Rollins, Accountant, BNA CPAs

Dwayne Rollins

Dwayne Rollins is originally from Greenville, SC before he moved to Rock Hill in 2019. He graduated from Western Carolina University with a Bachelor's in Business Administration in Accounting. He then obtained his Masters in Business Administration—Accounting at Winthrop University in 2020. He has been working for BNA CPAs & Advisors since December of 2019 as an accountant. He became a volunteer at NFLT, in early 2023, and worked with our Treasurer Dan Love. He became heavily involved in NFLT's finance committee and has learned the ropes before officially becoming an NFLT Board Member in January of 2024. He was elected the executive role as Treasurer. He spends his free time with his wife and son and enjoying the outdoors through hiking, biking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, and golfing.

Jennifer McAdams

Jennifer McAdams is a passionate local government professional committed to sustainable, equitable growth and community development. She's worked over 20 years for the City of Rock Hill as an expert in project management and urban development. She currently works for the Catawba Nation here in Rock Hill as their Executive Director of Planning. Her involvement in the Rock Hill community has only continued to grow as she volunteers for several board member positions including: the Clinton College Community Development Corporation, Catawba Area Coalition for the Homeless, United Way of York County, and more! As expected, she is passionate in the conservation of land and wildlife, especially when it comes to planning for urban development to allow greenspaces for the community to enjoy. Outside of her professional life, she has three children and lives on a small farm with chickens, goats, a pig, and dogs. Jennifer officially became a part of the NFLT Board of Directors in January of 2024.



Jennifer McAdams, Executive Director of Planning, Catawba Nation

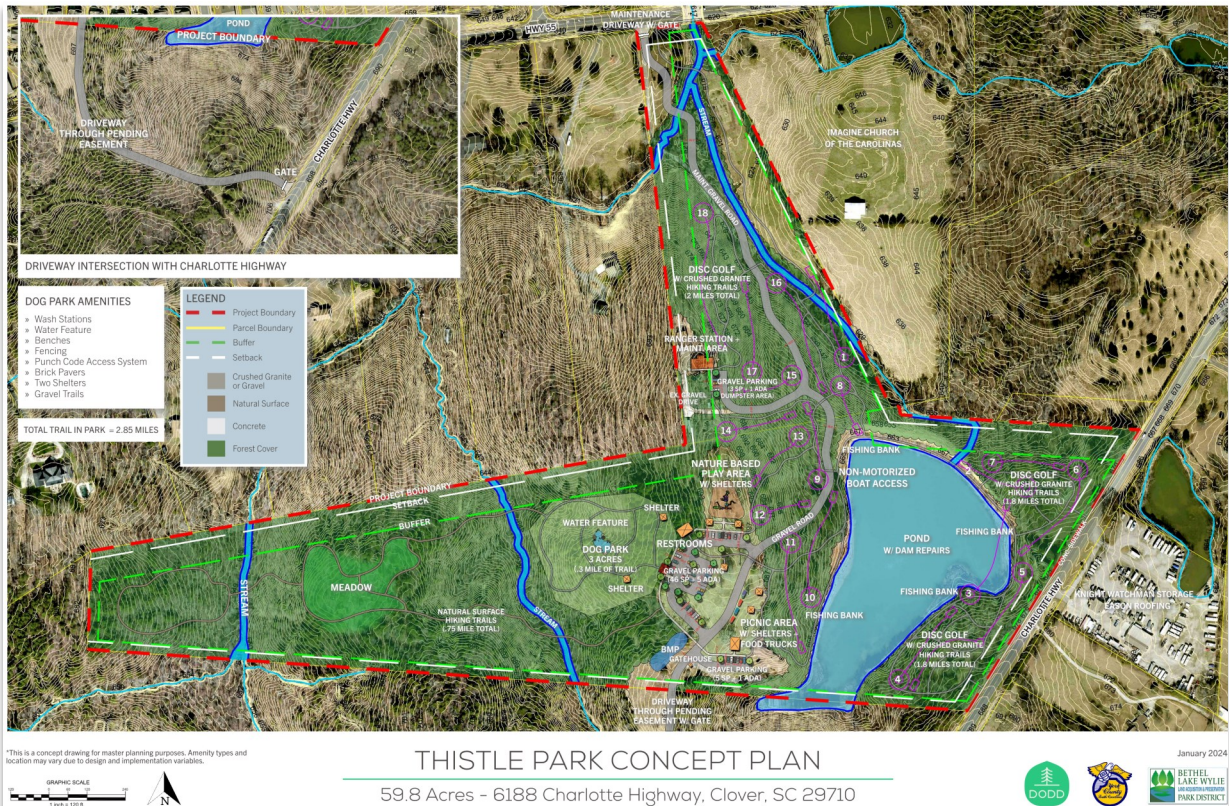
New Conservation Easement—A Developing Community Greenspace:

Thistle 1

Thistle 1 is a 46-acre site located in the Lake Wylie area of York County. Owned by York County and preserved by the Bethel-Lake Wylie Land Acquisition and Preservation Park District (BLW-LAPPD), the land is largely forested with a picturesque large pond. Bordering Highway 49, the property used to be a simple homestead before being sold. The property runs deep from the road into the woods and seems to be frequented by deer and other wildlife alike. With the purchase of the property by the County, plans have been underway since 2022 to develop the property into a greenspace area for the community of District 2.



Just this year, official plans to turn the property into a recreation area have been released (see Thistle 1 Concept Plan). It will include a dog park, hiking trails, disc golf, fishing area and more! This future park will be part of the growing Bethel-Lake Wylie Land Acquisition and Preservation Parks District. This project would not have been possible without the support of York County Forever.



Chairwoman Address—Janice Chism

Spring has arrived in York County. As I write this, daffodils and grape hyacinths are blooming outside my office window and birds are singing in the garden. This spring is bringing exciting events for Nation Ford Lant Trust as well. On April 13th we will build on the energy of last year's event, The 144: Honoring the Lost Ancestors, which movingly commemorated the lives of enslaved people buried long ago on what is now the Lazenby family's home site. Then on Saturday, April 27th, Dr. Bill Rogers will lead our annual spring bird walk at Anne Spring Close Greenway. This is when local bird populations are joined by seasonal migrants, many of which winter in Central and South America, so it is a great opportunity to see these colorful visitors. More details of these events and others can be found at the events tab on our website.

Last spring NFLT began what will be a many years-long project to restore about four acres of Piedmont Prairie at the Murray White Preserve in Rock Hill. This site, for many years a farm, is now surrounded by industry. Over the last few years NFLT's conservation committee has worked to make this neglected land into a model for sustainable habitat restoration and protection. The trees we planted on part of the site are taking up carbon dioxide and helping offset effects of climate change. They will provide wildlife habitat and eventually, through conservation-friendly timber management, some income to support other restoration activities at the site.



Murray White Preserve—The Return of the Piedmont Prairie



Our Piedmont Prairie project at Murray White Preserve is being guided by Trish Kemper, who, with her husband Tom Ludlow, moved to York County a few years ago from Pennsylvania. Trish brings training and experience in prairie habitat restoration to this project. Under her guidance we've conducted spring and fall plant surveys of a grassland area at the preserve, documenting the presence of a large number of native prairie species coming up out of the long-dormant soil seedbank. It is humbling and encouraging to see how resilient nature can be -- that so many wild plant species have persisted here through many years of intensive cotton farming.

Our future plans for the preserve include extending our prairie restoration efforts (bigger prairies are more biologically diverse and sustainable!). We are also developing plans for limited controlled burns to reestablish a more natural balance of woodland and open areas. Historically, Piedmont Prairies were maintained by seasonal fires and the native plants are adapted to and probably dependent on regular burning. While we were thrilled to find so many native prairie species already present, we will need to increase the numbers of these and bring in some missing keystone species by seed sowing and planting. And, of course, there is the inevitable need to weed out, by hand, some invasive nonnative species that keep showing up in the prairie area. Tough work, not fun, but necessary.

If these efforts at restoration are going to succeed, we will need strong support from our NFLT family. So far most of the work has been done by a few board members (thanks especially to John Hiott and Hope Matthews), our small staff, and three very committed volunteers, Trish Kemper, Bill Rogers and Tom Ludlow. To make our nascent prairie into a thriving and sustainable reality we will need lots of help from many volunteers. If this sounds like something you would like to get involved with, please come join us! There is plenty of opportunity to contribute labor and monetary support. We are planning a very special fall event at the preserve to highlight these efforts – so stay tuned for more details

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Mailing Address
P.O. Box 1273
Fort Mill, SC 29716
www.nationfordlandtrust.org

Office Address
242 Dairy Barn Lane (Epps
House)
Fort Mill, SC 29715
Phone: (803) 547-8140



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**.