

The Lowcountry Open Land Trust (LOLT) was formed in 1986 in Charleston, South Carolina. The land trust was modeled after historical preservation societies; protecting the architectural integrity of the Charleston area, except instead of buildings, for land. Today, in its 27th year, the Land trust has protected over 90,000 acres with conservation easements on both public and private lands, with many more projects in the works to break the 100,000-acre threshold by the end of the year. Land trusts protect land through the use of a Conservation Easement, a legal document that once the terms are agreed upon, becomes attached to the deed of the land for perpetuity. This document aims to protect the integrity of the land, preserve the culture and viewscape, while positively influencing the conservation value of the property under easement. From www.LOLT.org, "LOLT honors and celebrates the profound, essential relationship between people and land by protecting ecologically, agriculturally, and historically significant Lowcountry lands." The goal is to protect these lands that are valuable in so many ways from harmful, unplanned development that would destroy the conservation value of said property.

During my stay with Lowcountry Open Land Trust, I was appointed to a variety of tasks and responsibilities that allowed me to use my previous knowledge of subject matter as well as expand to new topics and gain understanding that before was beyond grasp.

My first task was to help pack up and move the office of the Land Trust to its new home at 43 Wentworth Street in Charleston to help a 1800's era church make payments to keep the property from becoming a private residence. The new office is

located within the congregation building of a very historic area of downtown Charleston. This tested my strength as well as planning and organization.

My primary job during my internship was to create baseline documentation maps of protected properties at the time they are put under easement using ArcMap GIS. These maps consisted of a true color aerial photograph, an infrared aerial photograph, topographic maps, land use maps, forest cover and management maps, photo locations and field of view of photos map, among others. I created maps for private landowners we are currently working with to define terms of the easement to help show buffer areas and what uses are allowed post-easement. This allowed me to use my newly acquired GIS skills that Nicole Nunley (Snowden Lab coordinator) taught me in my independent study that has been invaluable. GIS is one of the most important tools a graduate can have and gives those with knowledge of how to use the program a huge step up on the competition. Nicole's teaching has actually allowed me to show the GIS coordinator at the land trust a few things.

The land trust is responsible for visiting every protected property at least once a year in order to confirm the terms of the easement are being followed. I participated in site visits to a variety of properties, from small family farms and rural residences, to thousand acre plantations. We photo-documented any changes from the previous year, took measurements of all structures for square footage measurements and to calculate total impervious area per site. I have met a lot of important landowners in the process and become very familiar with the properties

and land use of the different focus areas of the lowcountry, from the sea islands to the inner swamps.

Although my paid portion of my internship has ended, I am still working with the land trust to gain more experience. My current project is to read through all the easements that LOLT has to see which properties have bottomland hardwoods and whether or not the owner is allowed to cut the wood in these bottoms. There is grant money for landowners that have bottomland hardwoods on protected properties for experimental forestry of regeneration of these hardwoods. Once the list is completed, landowners will be contacted to look for interest and then a application will be sent in for grant money. There are millions of dollars available for management and restoration of lands protected under conservation easement, and this is only one example. Organizations are willing to give such generous donations when they know that the land is protected in perpetuity.

This internship has been and continues to be a wonderful experience that has introduced me to a myriad of landowners, lawyers, planners, scientists, and other professionals that will prove to be future contacts for work. I have helped the land trust move forward in acquiring new properties, and introduced a few of my own connections to the land trust to begin contact for putting their properties under easement with LOLT. I must say, the only low point was moving offices, however a few well-scheduled site visits broke up the move and made it bearable. The experience thus far has been invaluable and I cannot thank Sewanee enough for providing me with the opportunity to be paid for such a great experience. I am interviewing for a full time position as Stewardship coordinator with the land trust

this coming week and feel very positive about it. All my colleagues are very excited and hopeful. I hope it works out and this can become my career as I can see myself working with the land trust for a number of years.