

REAL ESTATE NEWS

Conservation group buys 336-acre Jasper County land for \$1.68M. How will it be used?

BY KACEN BAYLESS

UPDATED NOVEMBER 02, 2021 12:14 PM



ORDER REPRINT →



The Slater Tract is home to one of the largest gopher tortoise colonies in South Carolina. BY DANA BEACH



Only have a minute? Listen instead

-03:20

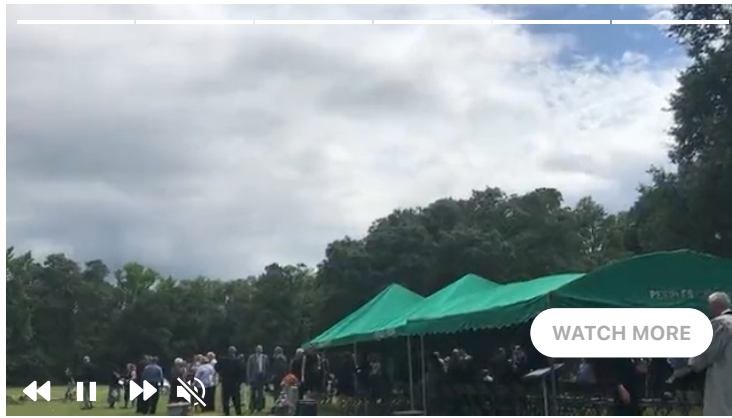
Powered by [Trinity Audio](#)

A 336-acre tract near the Coosawhatchie River in Jasper County will be protected for public use — a land purchase that complements one of the state’s largest-ever conservation agreements.

The Southeast office of the [Open Space Institute](#) purchased the property, known as the Slater Duck Ponds, for \$1.68 million, using money from the South Carolina Conservation Bank, said Nate Berry, senior vice president. The purchase comes five months after the national conservation organization [bought the nearby 3,800-acre Slater Tract](#) for \$16 million.

“Permanent conservation of this parcel protects essential wildlife habitat in one of the most vulnerable areas of the state, while creating new opportunities for recreation in a region with severely limited public access to nature,” according to a news release about the purchase.

TOP VIDEOS



Family and friends gather to commemorate the life of Randolph Murdaugh III in Hampton, SC

With the purchase fully funded, The Open Space Institute (OSI) now plans to donate the 336-acre property to the S.C. Department of Natural Resources so the wildlife agency can open it up for the public, Berry said in a Monday interview.

“This is going to provide another quality duck hunting opportunity,” he said. “The demand for these water fowl hunts far exceeds the supply that SCDNR has.”

\$2 for 2 months

Subscribe for unlimited access to our website, app, eEdition and more

[CLAIM OFFER](#)

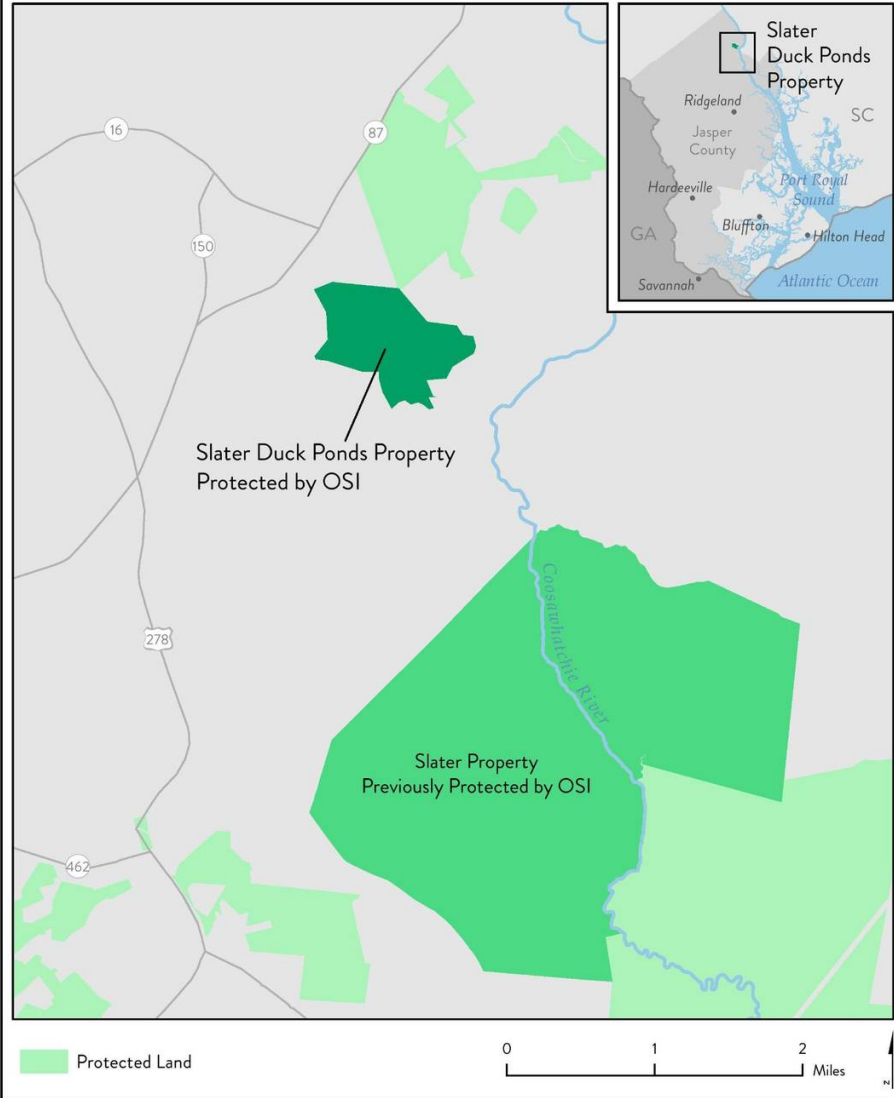
Protection of the two properties, both located near the Coosawhatchie River, comes as Jasper and Beaufort counties are facing [immense growth](#) and [development pressures](#). By preserving them for recreational use, the properties will provide rural residents a great spot for fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation, the news release said.



A photograph of the Slater Duck Ponds property, purchased by The Open Space Institute in October. CJ Brown
BROWN LAND + PLANTATION ADVISORS AND WISE BATTEN, INC. COURTESY OF THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE.

Along with offering public space for birdwatchers, hunters, hikers and cyclists, the Slater Duck Ponds property is also home to more than 200 acres of wetlands. The wetlands provide refuge for an estimated 70 species classified as “Greatest Conservation Need” by the South Carolina Heritage Trust program and the State Wildlife Action Plan, the news release said.

“Projects like Slater Duck Ponds and Slater not only save spectacular wildlife and plant habitat in the rapidly growing coastal plain,” Raleigh West, executive director for the S.C. Conservation Bank, said in a statement. “They also help the state expand opportunities for outdoor recreation, the demand for which has surged since the pandemic began.”



A map showing the locations of the Slater Tract and the Slater Duck Ponds. The Open Space Institute purchased both Jasper County properties this year. *THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE*

[READ MORE](#)

South of the Duck Ponds parcel, the 3,800-acre Slater Tract, purchased by OSI for \$16 million in May, is home to one of the largest colonies of gopher tortoises in the eastern United States.

A federally designated “at risk” species, gopher tortoises bury themselves in underground burrows that provide homes for dozens of other animals, Berry

previously told The Island Packet. This makes them a keystone species on the property.

The purchase of the Slater Duck Ponds is the conservation organization's 47th completed project in South Carolina and Georgia in six years, the release said. Founded in 1974, OSI has protected nearly 2.3 million acres in eastern North America — from Quebec to Florida.

Just this past summer, the conservation group [bought a 116-acre property](#) near the Savannah River in Jasper County, which also will be used to expand the area's gopher tortoise habitat.

The organization's South Carolina office, based in Charleston, opened in 2014 and has since protected over 20,000 acres.

This story was originally published November 1, 2021 3:00 PM.



A photograph of the Slater Duck Ponds property in Jasper County, purchased by The Open Space Institute in October. CJ BROWN
BROWN LAND + PLANTATION ADVISORS AND WISE BATTEN, INC. COURTESY OF THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE.



KACEN BAYLESS

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Email](#) [Phone](#) (843) 560-9167

A reporter for The Island Packet covering local government and development, Kacen Bayless is a native of St. Louis, Missouri. He graduated from the University of Missouri with an emphasis in investigative reporting. In the past, he's worked for St. Louis Magazine, the Columbia Missourian, KBIA and the Columbia Business Times. His work has garnered Missouri and South Carolina Press Association awards for investigative,