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## Protecting the Barry Tract - Grant

<b>Grant Name</b>	Protecting the Barry Tract - Grant	<b>Today's Date</b>	12/15/2023
<b>Staff Size</b>	19	<b>Organization Name</b>	Lowcountry Land Trust
<b>Total Membership</b>	862	<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$2,383,725.00
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	No	<b>Operating Budget Year</b>	
<b>C-Suite Staff</b>		<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	501c3 Organization
<b>Notes</b>			

### Project Information

<b>Project/Campaign Name</b>	Protecting the Barry Tract	<b>Project Address</b>	
<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	SC	<b>Amount Requested from Alliance</b>	\$50,000.00

### Proposal Questions

<b>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</b>	<p>Lowcountry Land Trust (LLT) is a regional conservation organization focused on protecting ecologically, agriculturally, and historically significant Lowcountry land. Founded in 1986, LLT has worked for 37 years to protect the iconic landscapes that make coastal South Carolina unique and enable the culture that thrives within it. Operating in all seventeen of South Carolina's coastal counties, LLT has grown from a small community effort that rallied to protect an island on the Stono River, to one of the leading local land trusts in the nation responsible for the permanent protection of over 158,000 acres.</p> <p>The mission of LLT is to protect land and water forever, nurture relationships between people and place, and connect community to conservation. LLT is committed to preserving the Lowcountry and is driven by an understanding that if we fail to protect our treasured land, our culture, economy, and environment will also be lost, forever.</p>	<b>7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes</b>	<p>LLT anticipates the following outcomes in the next year: 1) Fee simple purchase of the Barry Tract property; 2) Submission, in partnership with the SC Conservation Bank, of National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant application; and 3) Confirmed funding from the Dorchester County Greenbelt Commission and timeline for property transfer.</p>
<b>2. Final Success</b>	<p>Final success will be the permanent protection through conservation easement of 67 acres of mixed hardwood-pine forests, woody wetlands and marshes, intermittent streams, vegetated islands and broken dikes, rolling coastal topography and 643 feet of river frontage along the Ashley River in the Ashley River Historic District near</p>	<b>8. Evaluate Your Progress</b>	<p>LLT has a clear strategy for acquiring and funding the fee simple purchase and permanent protection of the Barry Tract. As details regarding the mechanisms and timelines associated with the project become clearer (in the next few months), we will further articulate goals and benchmarks for its progress and success.</p>

Charleston, SC; and the creation of a passive nature park and historical interpretation site adjacent to a national scenic byway and a state scenic river, which will preserve the community's connections to nature and the very founding of the state and the nation.

As an organization, LLT has a proven track record of setting quantifiable goals against which we measure our progress each year, including the number of acres conserved; the number of conservation easements and fee-simple acquisitions closed; the ability to conduct stewardship visits on 100% of our protected properties and assist landowners with land management concerns; the success of our outreach to connect Lowcountry resident to conservation; and the sustainable and steady growth of contributions from an increasingly diverse set of individuals, foundations and corporations. We will apply this same standard to the Barry Tract project.

### 3. Location Details

LLT respectfully seeks funding to permanently protect a 67-acre property along the Ashley River with the intent of creating a passive nature park and historical interpretation site.

Nestled between the State-Scenic Ashley River and the Ashley River Road National Scenic Byway (believed to be the oldest road still in use in SC) the property lies squarely within the boundaries of what was Lord Ashley's Barony, 12,000 acres conveyed in 1675 via a deed negotiated and "marked" by 29 Kusso tribe leaders, 12 of whom were women.

In 2023, Phase II National Register of Historic Places evaluative testing on the property determined the presence of an African American settlement ruins first occupied during the eighteenth century as part of the 6,000-acre Wragg Plantation (purchased from Lord Ashley's grandson in 1717) and concluded the site should be considered a contributing element to designation of the Ashley River Historic District and itself be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Barry Tract has considerable conservation value. The Ashley River Historic District was named in 2018 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation a "National Treasure" and one of the nation's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. The property is comprised of a variety of habitat types - mixed hardwood-pine forests, wetlands and marshes, intermittent streams, vegetated islands, broken dikes, and a nearly 20-foot northeast facing bluff sloping down to the river. According to The Nature Conservancy's resilience modeling, this last area provides above-average topo-climate options for species as climate conditions change, as well as marsh migration space.

LLT's work along urban-rural corridors like the Ashley River is more important now than ever, as they define the edge of growing regions like Charleston. The immediate area is significantly

### 9. TCA Funding Plan

As stated earlier, LLT will need to cover transaction costs, including potential loan costs and interest, of between \$75,000-\$150,000 in order to complete the fee simple acquisition and permanent protection of the Barry Tract. LLT intends to use funds granted. by the Conservation Alliance for these purposes.

threatened by rapidly encroaching urban development, with several hundred homes currently being developed directly across the road. The Barry Tract itself was under contract through September 2023 with the same developer, but LLT made an offer to purchase designed to prevent an extension of that contract. For a property recently under contract with a developer, the conservation outcome LLT envisions - permanent protection as a passive nature park and historical site - would represent a significant success both in terms of threatened land and riverfront protection and historic preservation and community greenspace creation.

#### 4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

As referenced above, the Barry Tract was under contract with a large-scale residential developer until late summer 2023. In September 2023, LLT made a fee simple purchase offer designed to prevent the landowner from granting a second extension of that contract. LLT's contract terms were designed to encourage the landowner to not grant a second extension of the developer's contract. Fair market value appraised at \$2,225,000 and the fee simple purchase price is \$2,200,000. The due diligence period ended on November 30, 2023, at which point LLT's \$10,000 in earnest money went hard. The contract requires closing to occur within 30 days thereafter, or January 2, 2024.

A lead donation of \$200,000 is being made by Atlantic Packaging as a part of the efforts of its CEO, Wes Carter, to spark a movement among corporations to voluntarily offset the footprint of their facilities by funding land protection. Half of that funding will be available at closing, and the other half around February 2024. LLT expects to use the creation of the park as an opportunity to spread that story and encourage more corporate conservation funding.

Dorchester County officials have indicated their intent to support the project with a portion of the County's new Greenbelt funding (referendum passed in November 2022), as well as incorporation of the property into the County's park system as a passive park. The Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission is currently working to develop a master plan for the expenditure of Greenbelt funding and council members have not yet voted on the project, but LLT anticipates the County's support will fill the gap in funding, possibly up to \$975,000. The timing of the availability of these funds is still to be determined.

LLT has requested a \$2,100,000 reimbursable grant from the SC

#### 10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

LLT's constituents primarily have been landowners of large, mostly intact parcels of land that represent the ecosystem of SC's coastal plain. Recently, LLT's constituency has begun to focus increasingly on projects where conservation intersects with community concerns tied to public access, flood mitigation, cultural heritage, and maintaining traditionally underserved agricultural communities and heirs property.

Conservation Bank to cover the financial need at the time of initial purchase. The availability of that amount has not yet been confirmed. The Conservation Bank Board meets in December 2023, and we understand it will approve partnering with LLT on a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation (NCWC) grant proposal for \$1,000,000. If awarded, the NCWC grant funds would likely be available mid-2025. The total amount of Conservation Bank funds estimated to be left in the ground for the project is \$300,000.

Because the NCWC grant program rules prohibit funding projects that are already protected, Conservation Bank and/or Dorchester County funds cannot be applied to the project at the 2023 year-end closing deadline. As a result, LLT is securing a low-interest bridge loan to meet the financial need at closing, and will not consider the property protected until all funding is applied to the transaction.

The variation in potential financing mechanisms and timing, including potential loan costs and interest, creates a range of transaction cost estimates, between \$75,000-\$150,000. LLT expects to pay these from a mixture of fundraising and a legislative appropriation made for such purposes. LLT is seeking to raise at least \$100,000 through foundation support. These funds, along with the Atlantic Packaging funds, will play a critical role in helping secure this conservation opportunity along the project timeline through 2025.

**5. Key Decision Makers**

At present, the key decision makers LLT is trying to influence are: 1) the SC Conservation Bank; 2) Dorchester County officials and the Dorchester County Conservation and Greenbelt Advisory Commission; and 3) private funders.

1) LLT has a strong relationship and long track record of successfully partnering with the SC Conservation Bank. Discussions to date regarding the Barry Tract have been incredibly positive. LLT does not foresee any obstacles and expects to begin working with the Bank on the NCWC grant application in early 2024.

2) Again, LLT has cultivated strong working relationships with Dorchester County officials and leaders, including members of the newly appointed Greenbelt Advisory Committee. While the Commission does not have an official plan for the expenditure of its Greenbelt funds, they have indicated initial support of the Barry Tract project and have made clear their appreciation of LLT's role in taking the lead on its acquisition and

**11. Confidential Items**

No

protection. LLT plans to have regular communications with Dorchester County as they move forward with their Greenbelt master planning and official consideration of the Barry Tract park.

3) Private funding is critical to this project and to others like it in that it allows LLT not only to move quickly to secure high priority land before it is too late but also to carry the costs often associated with these transactions. LLT is keenly aware that private funding is in high demand and therefore emphasizes a personalized approach to fundraising. An example of this personal and innovative approach is our partnership on the Barry Tract with Atlantic Packaging Corp and its CEO, Wes Carter, to spark a movement among corporations to voluntarily offset the footprint of their facilities by funding land protection.

#### 6. Elevate Voices

LLT's constituents primarily have been landowners of large, mostly intact parcels of land that represent the ecosystem of SC's coastal plain. Recently, LLT's constituency has begun to focus increasingly on projects where conservation intersects with community concerns tied to public access, flood mitigation, cultural heritage, and maintaining traditionally underserved agricultural communities and heirs property.

LLT has hired a Community Lands Program Director focused specifically on strengthening community through conservation by pursuing three major goals: (1) enhancing opportunities for all people to access green space, water, and working lands; (2) in partnership with other non-profits and recreation agencies, advocating for and facilitating the creation of human-powered connectivity corridors between public spaces; and (3) addressing land and water matters identified as community needs by people of color or economically-disadvantaged people, when conservation tools can provide a positive impact.

In addition to its work on Johns Island with the Angel Oak Preserve and Johns Island Community Collaboration Initiative, LLT is also collaborating with three African American Settlement Communities in the greater Charleston area to protect and retain ownership of heirs property and valued community park lands. Success on these projects not only protects threatened landscapes and community greenspace, but also helps to advance conservation objectives in ways that empower all local communities to shape the future of the places they call home. Through these community collaborations, LLT has

gained invaluable insight into the expressed needs of these communities and intends to work with community leaders to create a community action network to provide a network of resources for communities to more effectively address the issues that concern them and to assist them in their ability to effectively advocate for themselves in terms of their community and conservation goals.

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