

ANNUAL ²⁰⁰⁷ REPORT

Hitchcock Woods
FOUNDATION

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Hitchcock Woods Foundation has converted to a fiscal year running from July 1 to June 30 in order to align the organization's annual budget and operating schedule with the peak season for visitation to Hitchcock Woods, which is early fall to late spring. For this reason, our annual report is issued in late summer. We hope you will enjoy our first formal annual report.



MISSION

The mission of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation is to:

- protect and preserve the Hitchcock Woods in a natural and ecologically healthy state,
- maintain and manage historic and traditional equestrian and pedestrian uses, and
- foster education and research on the history and resources of the Woods.

VISION

The vision of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation is to maintain and restore the ecological integrity of the Hitchcock Woods and to serve as a model for sustainable urban forestry, balancing stewardship of forestland natural resources with compatible human uses.

BUSINESS PARTNERS

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THE SPIRIT OF AIKEN

Aiken's greatest asset is its oldest asset. Long before our plantations and agrarian community ... before our winter colony and equestrian community ... before the railroad and light industry ... before the burgeoning retirement and relocation communities we see today ... there was a lovely forest here.

This was a place of longleaf pine sandhills, verdant hardwood bottomlands, and the delightfully unique Sand River. What's truly amazing is that 2100 acres of this distinctively southern forest have survived and remain with us today, situated in a lively urban setting.

Members of this community have almost immediate access to this tranquil natural environment, free of charge, every day of the year. It's this resource more than any other (except, of course, for the talented, generous people of Aiken) that shaped the character and nature of this community throughout the years.

The Thomas Hitchcock family epitomizes this spirit. They owned and loved the forest, making it the locus of community life. Yet, when the time came, they established the Foundation and turned custody of their land over to the Foundation ... a step that, in effect, gave the land back to the community.

Now that's Aiken.

For this reason, the Hitchcock Woods Foundation is committed to preserving and protecting this forest as well as the traditional uses and cultural activities of the Hitchcock Woods. Our stewardship of the Woods can be characterized as "acting in the present to make something from the past available for the future."

Hitchcock Woods very well may be the largest privately owned urban forest in the nation. Despite local lore, Hitchcock Woods is not the nation's largest urban forest. There are a few larger urban

"What's truly amazing is that 2100 acres of this distinctively southern forest have survived and remain with us today, situated in a lively urban setting."



Osmunda cinnamomea, cinnamon fern

Photo credit: Ken Perrine

forests – parks that are owned by municipalities or the federal government. It's precisely this difference, however, that brings us to several very important points.

Hitchcock Woods is not supported through taxes, as public parks are. Instead, it's supported through the private gifts of people like you who care about the Woods and who wish to conserve the Woods for future generations.

The Foundation's vision is "to maintain and restore the ecological integrity of the Hitchcock Woods and to serve as a model for sustainable urban forestry..." Yes, that's a monumental challenge, but we take it very seriously.

In the years ahead – indeed, for decades to come – the Foundation will be implementing actions to address its greatest challenges ... an ever growing population, a dramatically increased number of visitors, and the ecological impacts these changes have on the Woods.

This is why your support of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation is so important, and so appreciated. We will continue to do our part and we ask that you continue to do yours. Please sustain your membership in the Friends of the Woods and Business Partnership programs and

encourage others to join.

To those of you who aren't participating already, we hope you will be soon.



Doug Rabold has been involved in Aiken's business, civic, and cultural life since 1990. He was hired as the Hitchcock Woods Foundation's first Executive Director in October 2005.

A LOOK AHEAD

In the current fiscal year, the Foundation will hire a Communications Specialist to help with our increased number of fundraising initiatives and to improve communications with our supporters and our visitors in general. Look for a new, interactive website and the long overdue, premiere issue of our newsletter very soon. We also will hire an Environmental Specialist to help us with our diligence in caring for the Woods.

This year the Foundation hopes to complete several projects as funding becomes available. We plan to complete the landscaping and the (unpaved) parking lots at our Administrative Office, and to upgrade our kiosk system.

The Foundation also is exploring the purchase of a new tractor and the construction of a Woods Maintenance Complex. The new structure will be a base of operations for our Woods staff and will keep our vehicles, equipment, and supplies safe and protected from the elements. Local governments already have offered to house emergency vehicles in this facility, a gesture that will improve responsiveness in the event of an incident in the Woods.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

Major donors may be interested in the following opportunities to support the Woods.

\$75,000	Woods Maintenance Complex (outstanding balance)
\$50,000	Administrative Office Conference Room (naming opportunity)
\$40,000	GPS / GIS / Mapping Initiative
\$20,000	Historic Resources Management Plan
\$3,000	Individual Kiosk (naming opportunity)

THANKS TO YOU

If you're taking the time to read our annual report, you obviously have more than a passing interest in the Hitchcock Woods ... and for this we are most grateful. We've had a busy and productive year. If you'll allow me, I'd like to take a moment of your time to touch on some of the highlights.

We've seen some changes in faces this year. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to four distinguished, outgoing trustees – Bud Herbruck, William Howard, Charlie Bostwick, and Mark Meiler. These individuals have contributed to the community and to the Foundation in so many ways. We shall always value their dedication and service.

On the other hand, we welcomed Bennett Tucker as our new Woods Superintendent, a position responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the Woods. Bennett already has made significant, visible improvements in maintaining the Woods and he has endeared himself to our many visitors.

The organization is evolving at the corporate level. This year we crafted and approved our mission and vision statements in order to guide our decisions and actions. Please take note of these statements within this report. In addition, we modified our bylaws to reflect our new organizational structure and our current operations.

Many have noticed that we even changed our corporate name, from "The Hitchcock Foundation" to "Hitchcock Woods Foundation," to more clearly identify and distinguish the organization. Then, last summer, we unveiled a new logo which now graces our literature and signage, helping to establish our image.

A very exciting development this year was the renovation of the house at the end of South Boundary Avenue as our first-ever office space. This full-house remodeling project was a yearlong endeavor managed by our Infrastructure Committee and funded by past and present trustees. We extend special thanks to trustees Randy Wolcott, Sandy Tucker, and Sara Wood, who contributed untold personal time to this project.

Before we moved into our charming, new Administrative Office in February, staff had been provided with office accommodations compliments of The Carolina Real Estate Company and trustee Courtney Conger. We are deeply grateful for their generosity (and patience with us) for the past six years.

The 2007 Aiken Horse Show in the Woods was extraordinary in its elegance and beauty. We broke several records, thanks to the spirit of continuous improvement established by Event Director William Howard. We wish to thank William, our honorary chairs, the 2007 Aiken Horse Show Committee, and the record number of volunteers who made this year's event a memorable success.

In addition to our other standing fundraisers – the Run for the

"Clearly, we're making considerable progress in our ongoing efforts to be responsible stewards of these precious Woods."



Wahlenbergia marginata, southern rockbell
Photo credit: Ken Perrine

Woods, the Aiken Fall Steeplechase Fete, and the Knowles Bowl – the Foundation embarked on some exciting new fundraising initiatives and events this past year.

We launched our first-ever membership campaigns, the Friends of the Woods program for individuals and the Business Partnership program for companies. Our Friends of the Woods members received a benefit package including a color calendar displaying the wildflowers of Hitchcock Woods photographed by our advocate Ken Perrine. We thanked our Business Partnership members at an appreciation luncheon during this year's Aiken Horse Show.

In the inaugural year of these two membership programs, we enrolled 570 Friends of the Woods and 65 Business Partners. They are identified in the list of all donors provided within this report.

Many long-time supporters stepped forward to support a special fund created to provide a retirement package for Namon Corley, our dear friend and employee of 48 years. Thanks to the generous outpouring of support, a package is in place for Namon's eventual retirement. At 72, he's still going strong!

If this weren't enough, this past year we added several fundraising events to our

increasingly full calendar. We enjoyed a great response from the hunt community at the inaugural Hunt Week Gala held in February. Then, thanks to a lively partnership with 302 Polo, we saw the premiere Aiken Equine Charities Cup (a 30-goal polo match) and the first annual Tommy Hitchcock Memorial Polo Tournament.

Finally, cameras were rolling overtime in the Woods this year. ESPN showed images of the Woods worldwide when it covered the USPA Gold Cup last fall. SCETV aired coverage of the Woods in several segments of its Roadshow Live program and in a travelogue segment produced by South Carolina DNR. Next January, PBS will broadcast nationally an already filmed episode of "Expeditions with Patrick McMillan" consisting of a guided tour of the Woods by trustee Harry Shealy.

Clearly, we're making considerable progress in our ongoing efforts to be responsible stewards of these precious Woods ... and that progress is being recognized more and more at the local level and beyond. We thank you for your support and for making it possible.

Gail King has served as a trustee of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation since the 1980s and as Chairman of the Board since 2005. She has been highly instrumental in the organization's fundraising activities for many years.

BACK TO THE WOODS

I grew up playing and riding in the Woods, so I was thrilled to be named Woods Superintendent upon graduating from college last spring. In my first year on the job, I found that I enjoy working in the Woods just as much as I enjoyed those childhood experiences. I hope you noticed progress when you visited.

For the first time, the Woods staff was fully uniformed. We're now outfitted for the elements and equipped to do the job safely. Our uniforms reflect the increased professionalism of our service. We also acquired proper first aid supplies for a station at our shed and for a mobile unit that's taken into the Woods in case of an injury on the job.

Several generous donations of vehicles this year enhanced our capabilities. One Friend of the Woods donated a four-wheel-drive, crew cab pickup and another donated a compact utility tractor that we use to mow grass at the horse show grounds, Tea Cottage, Memorial Gate, and several entrances. Derrick Equipment donated a John Deere all-terrain utility vehicle that has become an indispensable tool in our daily work.

One major project the Woods staff undertook this past year was revamping Palmetto Ride, a trail that had become so overgrown and eroded that it was impassible in several places. First we cleared and widened the trail. Then, using a rented excavator, we dug new drainage lines and installed large diameter drainage pipes under the trail. A separate project with the excavator involved re-establishing a creek channel alongside Doll Lane to prevent flooding of the trail during major rains.

An aspect of Woods maintenance is keeping the trails stable with linear mounds of earth called "water-bars" to prevent heavy erosion of trails. Much of our time last summer was dedicated to repairing the many water-bars all over the Woods. Staff also worked on reconstructing the "Aiken Fences," the many horse jumps along the draglines in the Woods. This yearly project must be completed before the popular Blessing of the Hounds, which marks the opening of the hunt season on Thanksgiving Day. This year's event seemed to hit record attendance.

In the winter, Woods staff made improvements to the horse show grounds. Because of the increased popularity of the Aiken Horse Show in the Woods, more parking space was created in several different areas, the earthen jump on the lower end of the ring was turned into an earthen box jump, and the tent area was leveled and planted with turf grass to enhance the experience for patrons in the tent.

The 2007 prescribed burning season was quite successful and we finished having burned nearly 300 acres. This season was probably our third most successful in terms of acreage burned

"The 2007 prescribed burning season was quite successful and we finished having burned nearly 300 acres."



Pinus taeda (loblolly pine) and pinus palustris (longleaf pine) dominate Hitchcock Woods.

since the program began in the early 1990s. The dry spring limited the number of growing season burns we were able to conduct. All of the units we burned since have greened up and the results are very satisfying. In support efforts, we re-established the firebreak along Hitchcock Parkway to prevent grass fires along the highway from spreading into the Woods ... and we finished establishing a fuel break behind the Foxchase neighborhood.

Our prescribed burning program accomplishes several goals for Woods safety and stewardship: reducing fuel buildup on the forest floor, controlling the growth of hardwood underbrush, returning nutrients to the soil, and restoring native wildlife habitat. Since this program began, we have greatly reduced much of the hazardous fuel load in the Woods. This makes subsequent burns more efficient and helps to minimize smoke during and after those burns. The burn program is helping to restore Hitchcock Woods to the longleaf pine and wiregrass savanna that once dominated this part of the country.

This past year we responded to several emergency incidents in the Woods, all of them being medical calls. These calls went

smoothly in terms of accessing the injured, stabilizing them, and getting them out of the Woods in a timely manner.

To help visitors identify their location in the Woods, staff made new alphanumeric signs and installed them at major intersections throughout the Woods. The code on each sign corresponds to the letters and numbers on the grid system on the popular map of the Woods. In an emergency, these signs will help visitors pinpoint their location in a call made to an emergency dispatcher. This system will help police, fire, and medical services get more timely access to the emergency scene. An awareness program of this system will be conducted for public agencies and general public this fall.

This past year we said goodbye (and thanks!) to Woodsman Lee Atkinson, who left after two years of service to pursue a career with the Sheriff's Department. On a special note, I'd like to honor Namon Corley for marking his 48th year of service to the Woods. Thank you, Namon, for all that you have done and continue to do for our visitors ... and for sharing your expertise.

I'll see you in the Woods!

Bennett Tucker was hired as Woods Superintendent in June 2006. His many certifications in firefighting and first responder training strengthen our prescribed burn program and enhance our ability to work with public agencies in achieving more efficient response to incidents in the Woods.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTORS

Cumulative giving from July 1, 2006, to June 30, 2007

\$50,000 and Up

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\$10,000 to \$49,999

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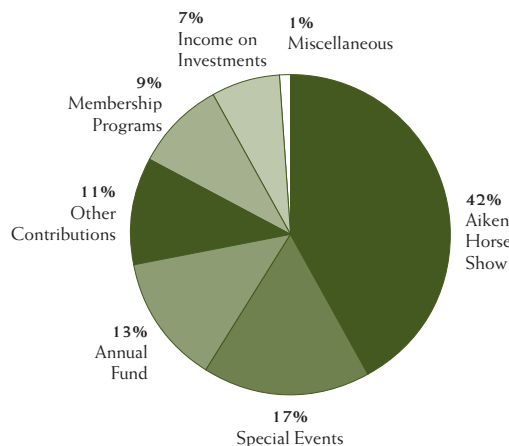
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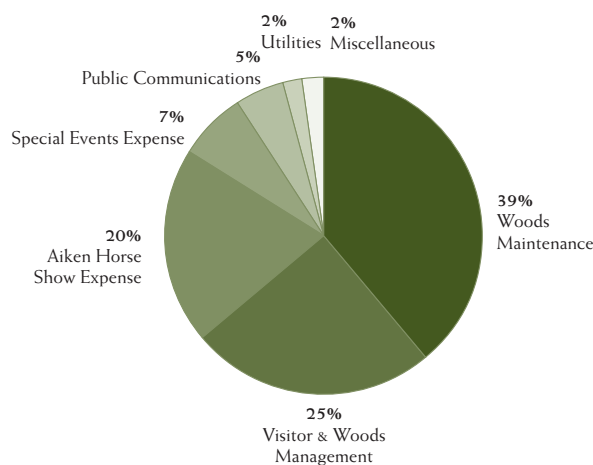
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