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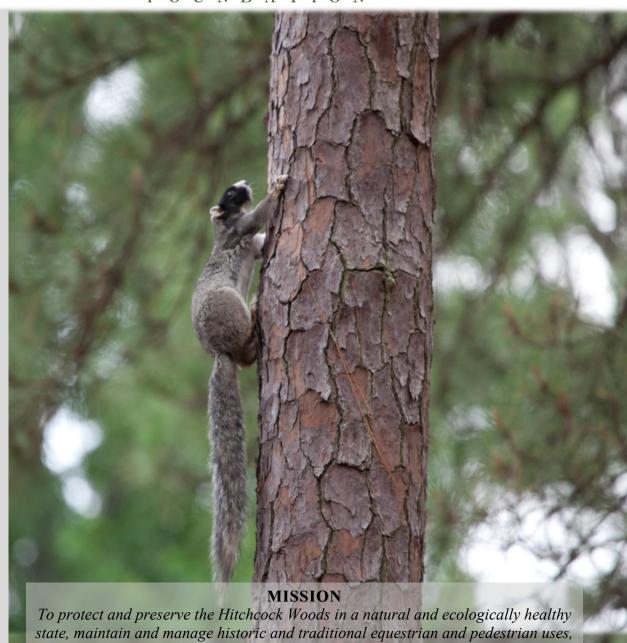
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and foster education and research on the history and resources of the Woods.

VISION

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.

PATRICIA E. COREY CHAIRMAN

Hitchcock Woods has been a constant throughout my life. I have spent seventeen years growing up in the Woods. This time has helped form me into the young man I am.

—Lewis David Hunter, 2017 Celestine Eustis Essay Contest Winner

It's been an incredible year for the Hitchcock Woods for so many reasons. Managing and protecting this extraordinary natural resource (the largest urban forest in the country, by the way) for future generations to enjoy is the primary focus of the Foundation's board of trustees and staff, and there are many exciting events to report.

In January, the Foundation and the city finally reached an historic agreement for a shared solution to resolve the fifty-year problem of the city's unmanaged and untreated stormwater runoff that has destroyed acres and acres of the Woods' fragile habitat and ecosystem. The approved plan to address the stormwater issues in the Sand River



Pat Corey moved to Aiken in 1985. Pat was instrumental in the drafting and passing of the Aiken Historic Preservation Ordinance and served as chairman of the 1st Historic Preservation Commission. Pat has served as a Trustee for over twenty years.

basin will be performed in phases, the first of which is expected to begin early in the first quarter of 2019. We applaud Mayor Rick Osbon for his leadership and city council for their commitment to stop the destruction of the Woods.

Last April, the remnants of the 1833 Charleston to Hamburg railroad track were discovered in the Woods, which allowed the first steam-powered engine (the Best Friends Express) in the nation and, possibly, the world to carry passengers and freight across South Carolina. This is a discovery of momentous proportions, and we continue to work with railroad historians and the Heritage Trust Program archeologists to document and preserve these precious artifacts that reflect yet another aspect of Aiken's rich history.

When the Foundation was founded in 1939 by the Hitchcock family to preserve the Woods in perpetuity, the gift of land to the Foundation was not accompanied by an endowment. Under the leadership of trustees Sara McNeil, Elizabeth Carey and Treasurer Larry Byers, the Foundation has formalized its endowment policies, as well as the protections accorded to donors to the endowment. It is our intention to grow the endowment fund to secure the long-term financial position of the Foundation in perpetuity.

The Foundation continues to educate the public about the history, the stewardship, and the magic of the Woods. Throughout the year we hosted dozens of public outreach programs, presentations, and tours for adults and children. We will continue to do so to ensure that future generations will come to love the Woods the way we do.

Finally, from October 15th to March 15th, the Woods continues to host the storied Aiken Hounds drag hunt created by Mrs. Louise Hitchcock in the early 1900s, as well as the historic Aiken Horse Show in the Woods, also organized by Mrs. Hitchcock for the first time in 1916.

The Woods is an astonishing natural preserve—a haven for equestrians, hikers, dog-walkers, forest-bathers, nature-lovers, historians, and archeologists. The Foundation considers its stewardship responsibilities of the Woods as a sacred trust. It would not be possible without the continued generosity and support of our donors. On behalf of the board of trustees, thank you.

W. BENNETT TUCKER WOODS SUPERINTENDENT

The stewardship of the Hitchcock Woods is the primary focus of the Foundation; it is both an on-going process and a challenge. I am privileged and honored to be the steward-in-chief of this amazing urban forest.

Over the past thirty years, the Hitchcock Woods Foundation has made great strides in its efforts to restore the Hitchcock Woods to a "forest in balance," a natural area that, with careful restoration, begins to resemble the long-leaf pine ecosystem that once dominated the southern landscape.

Our program of prescribed burning of targeted stands on two to four-year rotations not only reduces the potential for destructive wildfires, but also provides the necessary soil preparation for long-leaf pine seedlings to establish and grow. Our professionally-trained Prescribed Fire Management Team and volunteers have made this transformation possible, and we owe them a great debt of gratitude.

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Bennett Tucker was hired as Woods Superintendent in June 2006. His certification in firefighting and first responder training strengthens our prescribed burn program and enhances our ability to work with public agencies in emergency response.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of our progress in restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem in the Woods is the extraordinary success of the Foundation's re-introduction of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW), a keystone species in the longleaf pine ecosystem. At present, we have introduced and retained fourteen adult RCWs, who have produced eight fledglings in the 2018 breeding season. It is so exciting to see and hear them foraging among the pines, and we look forward to introducing more breeding pairs of RCWs in early November.

We also initiated a sustainable trails pilot project to re-route two significant trails that have suffered from chronic erosion issues: the Travers Line to Doll Lane, and the installation of a new path along the trail that runs from the Tea Cottage Path and Rabbit Valley traveling up to the Chalk Cliffs and includes a stunning overlook of Old Robinson's Pond Valley. In addition, the senior leadership of the Aiken Hounds and our Axe Club volunteers have continued their good work in rehabbing the "Aiken" drag line jumps, many of which have been in the same location for close to one hundred years.

I am also honored to work with our many state and local partners throughout the year: the South Carolina Prescribed Fire Council, Clemson University and the annual forestry camp, USCA's biology department, and the Longleaf Alliance, which educates landowners about the restoration and management of the longleaf ecosystem.

Finally, my work has been made so much easier thanks to the dedication of our new Woods technician, Mike Grabowski, who just celebrated his first-year anniversary with the Foundation.

And of course, all of the Foundation's work in the Woods is made possible by your continued commitment and financial support. On behalf of the Woods staff and the board of trustees, thank you.

As always, see you in the Woods!

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The Foundation hosted guided hikes in Hitchcock Woods in partnership with the City of Aiken on Earth Day. Above, Woods Superintendent, Bennett Tucker, leads one of the groups.



A new brush truck was graciously donated and immediately put to work this past Spring.



HITCHCOCK WOODS FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTORS CUMULATIVE GIVING FROM JULY 1, 2017 TO JUNE 30, 2018

The Hitchcock Woods Foundation works very hard to ensure that our donor information is listed correctly, however, occasional mistakes do occur. Please contact the Foundation office at 803.642.0528 with any questions or corrections.

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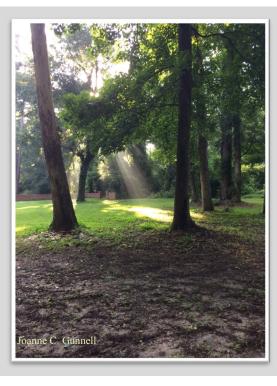
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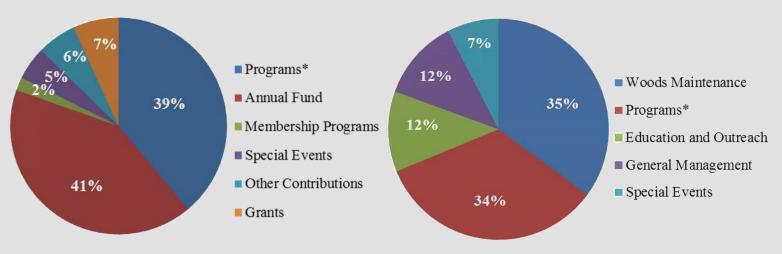


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^{*} Aiken Horse Show and Festival of the Woods

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Cover Photo: Fox squirrels thrive in a healthy Longleaf pine forest habitat. Their large size enables them to crack open Longleaf pine cones so they can eat the seeds. Photo courtesy of Beth Maynor Finch.