

ANNUAL ²⁰¹⁰ REPORT

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"We have completed a strategic plan for the next five years, our relationship with the City of Aiken has never been more cohesive, and our balance sheet is strong."

☞ (See page 2.) ☞

"How inspiring it is to see 1,011 households and businesses come together to voluntarily fund the management and care of the Hitchcock Woods."

That's how many supporters you will find recognized throughout this report."

☞ (See page 3.) ☞

"As you can imagine, in maintaining 2,100 acres with nearly 70 miles of trails, and being at the mercy of Mother Nature at times, the Woods staff certainly stays busy year round."

☞ (See page 4.) ☞



Louise and Thomas Hitchcock set the example for generosity and hospitality. For information on the history, operations, activities, and natural resources of the Hitchcock Woods, visit the Foundation's new website at hitchcockwoods.org.

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The Foundation's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, aligning our annual budget and operating schedule with the cycle of peak activity in the Woods, from early fall to late spring.

HONORING THE LEGACY AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The past year has been very active for the Board of Trustees of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation. We have completed a strategic plan for the next five years, our relationship with the City of Aiken has never been more cohesive, and our balance sheet is strong.

In 2006 the Foundation's Board and staff met for a full day retreat to discuss the current and future status of the Foundation. At this retreat, we developed and articulated the Foundation's Mission Statement and Vision Statement. The next step was to develop a Strategic Plan, a process that took several years to complete. This past year we accomplished this milestone through another organizational retreat. We discussed 122 action items for Board Committees and staff, resulting in five Strategic Statements and assignments to each Committee. The Strategic Plan is a valuable tool in guiding the Board toward successful completion of the Foundation's goals. As Chairman, I would like to personally acknowledge the dedication and hard work of each and every Trustee in their involvement in this process, and their diligence in serving on the Foundation's 15 Board Committees.

In January, the community mourned the loss of Samuel A. Cothran, the former editor and publisher of the Aiken Standard. Mr. Cothran also served as the Chairman of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation from 1979 to 1989. He was among the first to serve as Trustee Emeritus and we will miss him always.

This year the City of Aiken is celebrating its 175th anniversary. The Hitchcock Woods has been a major part of this community's history, and we are pleased to be a part of this celebration. The Aiken Horse Show and the Festival of the Woods are "Proud Participants" on the schedule of events for the City's "Celebrate Aiken!" program. Hitchcock Woods has helped to shape this community, its neighborhoods, its traditions, and even the economy of Aiken, so it is fitting that we participate in this community-wide campaign.

The Foundation and the City of Aiken have worked very closely this year, sharing a common goal of reducing the volume and velocity of the storm water entering the Woods. Toward this goal, the City received a grant for the Green Infrastructure Project in the downtown parkways. This funding came from the EPA through the SCDHEC. The pervious paving and parkway redesigns will reduce a significant amount of water entering the storm drain and, therefore, the Woods.

The City has responded to issues resulting from many heavy rains this year. The gabion

baskets which had supported the Coker Spring Trail crossing of Sand River were completely washed away, exposing a major sanitary sewer line. The City has protected the watershed more than once, and has designed a solution. The proposed solution honors the interests of the Foundation in keeping this historic crossing in tact while improving the City's infrastructure. This is just one example of many that show the mutual respect and cooperation between the City of Aiken and the Hitchcock Woods Foundation.



The Foundation has a very strong history of financial support and its financials remain positive. Our Executive Director's letter details the increase in the membership of households and businesses, as well as the fiscal restraint shown by the entire staff. The Board is proud of these accomplishments. The Foundation is very pleased to report that a total of \$57,933 of capital equipment was purchased this year, with only \$11,927 funded through operating income. Funding for capital initiatives typically comes through special appeals. It was through several very generous donations that this was accomplished. Also announced was the completion of the campaign to raise the

funds necessary to build a new maintenance shed. This will be another milestone that we will celebrate soon. These gifts are a blessing, but it's the many smaller gifts all year long that keep the Woods going. The value of each Friend of the Woods renewal, annual fund donation, memorial gift, and merchandise purchase all help in funding the operating budget.

Another major portion of our annual income derives from our programs. The Festival of the Woods is in its second year with an expanded format, and the Aiken Horse Show continues to be one of the highlights of the Aiken calendar. These events require many volunteers. The entire Board joins me with a big "Thank You" for all of your support.

Hitchcock Woods is one of the greatest assets of our community. We can all help to protect and preserve this treasure for generations to come. We all wish to keep the Woods a special place and you are all a part of this, so we welcome your feedback.

Thank you for your support.



Randy Wolcott, Chairman

Randy Wolcott moved to Aiken in 1989 and joined the Board of Trustees in 1998. After serving on many Board committees over the years, and chairing several of them, he was elected Chairman of the Board in 2008.

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.

EXPANDING PARTICIPATION AND ENJOYING PROGRESS

Several developments this past year demonstrate that upholding the mission of the Hitchcock Woods Foundation is increasingly a collective effort. The generosity first shown by the Hitchcock family has become a great Aiken tradition that is practiced by many.

How inspiring it is to see 1,011 households and businesses come together to voluntarily fund the management and care of the Hitchcock Woods. That's how many supporters you will find recognized throughout this report.

The members of these households and the employees of these businesses share in the privilege of making the Hitchcock Woods available for the benefit of Aiken's residents and visitors. Together, you are a model of community spirit.

The Hitchcock Woods Foundation is committed to operating efficiently and to using your gifts wisely. Annual operating expenses were reduced another 6% this past fiscal year – on top of a 10% reduction the preceding year – in order to “live within our means” in a difficult economy. The Foundation ended the fiscal year (on June 30) in the black, with a modest surplus. A cushion like this helps the Foundation to meet expenses throughout the summer months, when all charitable giving tends to be lighter.

The past year had many encouraging signs of the community's growing commitment to the Hitchcock Woods. Membership in the Friends of the Woods program reached an all time high of 635 “current” households. Participation in the Business Partners program continued to recover from considerable attrition that followed the economic events of the fall of 2008. In addition, a full slate of ten corporate sponsors supported the 94th annual Aiken Horse Show in March.

Clearly, the Foundation's support base is growing, which is crucial as Aiken continues to grow and use of the Woods continues to increase.

Also during the past year, the Foundation reached its goal on a long term capital campaign to build a Woods Maintenance Shed. The campaign began in September 2006 with a grant awarded for this project from the Gregg-Graniteville Foundation.

Over the following four years, a number of major gifts have been received for this cause. A gift and pledge in June 2010 made it possible for the Foundation to proceed with this important initiative. The building was scoped and designed this past winter and spring, and construction is planned to begin this fall. This new facility will house the three new tractors acquired by the Foundation last October. The Maintenance Shed will complete the “campus” at the South Boundary entrance to the Woods, where the Foundation completed and opened its first owned office in early 2007.



The Foundation's staff consists of (from left to right) Doug Rabold, Bennett Tucker, Deon Mealing, and Chris Reichel.

In another important area of development, significant steps were taken to enhance the Foundation's knowledge of, and interaction with, its diverse supporters and visitors.

Last September, the Foundation celebrated 70 years of service to this community and held the inaugural Festival of the Woods to celebrate the pedestrian uses of the Woods. Through lively activities, this event provides education on the history, resources, and stewardship of the Hitchcock Woods.

In February, the Foundation launched an all new website with extensive information on the operations, activities, history, and natural resources of the Hitchcock Woods. Visitors to the website can access past issues of the Foundation's annual reports, newsletters, and other published articles. Visitor Guidelines are presented in a user friendly format designed for ease of use. In addition, visitors now can enjoy the convenience of making purchases and contributions online. The website also recognizes the Foundation's many loyal supporters.

Vigorous public outreach continued this year. Speaking engagements were held with Sand River Woman's Club, Country Gardeners Club, and Clemson University Parks and Recreation classes, to name a few. Tours of the Woods were conducted for First Baptist Church and Aiken Newcomers Club, again to name a few. The Hitchcock Woods booth is always a destination in the traditional Earth Day celebration organized by the City of Aiken.

To manage relationships with its many members and contacts, along with their gifts, the Foundation transitioned to a new, customized database. The process of transferring thousands of records with

multiple years of data from one software program to another was a monumental feat that was ably managed by Chris Reichel, the Foundation's Administrator.

Chris is a familiar figure to many in Aiken and her work with the Foundation for nearly a decade has been a somewhat hidden, but substantial, service to this community. It is a privilege to work with Chris, and with Woods Superintendent Bennett Tucker and Woods Technician Deon Mealing, in the daily operations of the Hitchcock Woods.

Thank you, each of you, for the roles you play and the gifts you make throughout the year to sustain this incomparable resource and cherished Aiken tradition.

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 2005.

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.

RESTORING THE LONGLEAF PINE ECOSYSTEM

The forest management plan that guides the Foundation in caring for the Hitchcock Woods focuses on the long term restoration of the longleaf pine and wiregrass savanna. To become better stewards of this ecosystem, the Woods staff attended a five day training program this past year. Some of the other highlights of the year were receiving new tractors and equipment, and completing a very successful year of fuel reduction and restoration burns.

In April, Woods Superintendent Deon Mealing and I took a Longleaf Academy course taught by the Longleaf Alliance at Auburn University's Solon Dixon Forest Research Center in Andalusia, Alabama. The Alliance serves to coordinate partnerships of private land owners, foresters, and state and federal agencies interested in managing and restoring longleaf pine forests for their ecological and economic benefits. This experience was very beneficial and we learned a wealth of knowledge and management techniques for the proper care and restoration of the longleaf forest. Another benefit is enhanced networking relationships with similar organizations.

Closer to home, representatives of the Foundation this past year visited the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve to learn about management practices there, and hosted members of the Aiken County Forestry Association in a management tour of the Hitchcock Woods.

Equipment acquisitions have brought forth a big change this year. Thanks to generous donors, and with help from Derrick Equipment, the Foundation last fall took delivery of two new John Deere tractors. For the first time, the Foundation has two tractors that are 100 horsepower and four wheel drive, suitable for the deep sand conditions throughout the Woods. These features provide the traction needed to push and pull in the Woods, and to ascend steep trails with ease.

One tractor is outfitted with a six way dozer blade used to maintain the water bars that prevent erosion on many of the trails. The second tractor is outfitted with a loader and a quick attach bucket system. It has a grapple used for picking up logs and limbs to keep trails cleared and to clean up after tree felling projects. A regular scoop bucket, another essential tool, helps in earth moving for various projects. These equipment and technology enhancements enable us to accomplish more in a shorter time.

In addition, through a generous donation from the Aiken Hounds, the Foundation received a 28 horsepower Kubota utility tractor that perfectly rounds out the fleet. It is great for running the finish mower used at the Horse Show Grounds, the Tea Cottage, Memorial Gate, the Foundation's office, and the South Boundary Avenue entrance.

This tractor is impeccable for maintaining some of the smaller walking trails that are too sensitive for the larger equipment.

In another undertaking this year, Woods staff began to lay the drag for the Aiken Hounds on Tuesdays. The history and traditions between the Hitchcock Woods Foundation and the Aiken Hounds go back many years to when the Hitchcock family began the hunt. It is satisfying to carry on a tradition that has such deep roots in this community.

This year we were able to complete 428 acres of prescribed burns. This was the most acreage accomplished in one year since I joined the staff in 2006. Because the Hitchcock Woods is an urban forest, we need to have highly specific weather conditions that are conducive for conducting prescribed burns in the Woods.

These conditions help to minimize smoke impacts in nearby neighborhoods.

Of the 428 acres burned, 308 acres were burned during the winter and early spring. These dormant season fires function as fuel reduction burns. The remaining 120 acres were burned during the growing season to reduce competing hardwood species and to stimulate the native grasses to seed. These fires function as restoration burns because of their ability to help the herbaceous species produce and

release viable seed across the forest floor.

Prescribed burns are an essential management tool for reducing hazardous fuel loads in southeastern forests. This goal is especially important for an urban forest and the Hitchcock Woods burn program is a model for other communities with urban forests. Prescribed burns diminish the threat of wildfires, control competing hardwood species, and improve wildlife habitat by creating better foraging opportunities and bedding conditions.

As you can imagine, in maintaining 2,100 acres with nearly 70 miles of trails, and being at the mercy of Mother Nature at times, the Woods staff certainly stays busy year round. My thanks go to Deon Mealing for his trusty service. We thank everyone who supports the Woods through their gifts, time, and talents. As always, 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.



Derrick Equipment Company extended nonprofit discounts and adjusted the sale price of two new John Deere tractors and was a Diamond Sponsor of the 2010 Aiken Horse Show.

One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, 'What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?'
 – Rachel Carson

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTORS

Cumulative giving from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010

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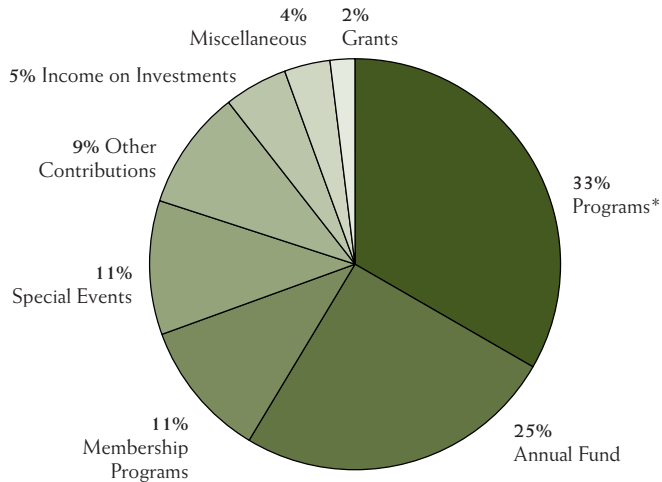


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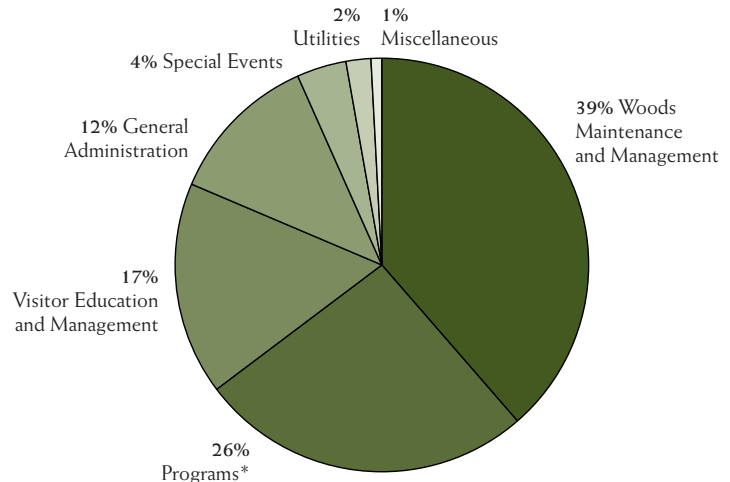
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