



TO • PALMETTO TRAIL • →



**PALMETTO**  
CONSERVATION

**2017**

**REPORT TO MEMBERS**



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**PALMETTOCONSERVATION.ORG**



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SOUTH CAROLINA, FROM MOUNTAINS TO SEA



## MISSION:

To conserve South Carolina's natural and cultural resources, preserve historic landmarks, and promote outdoor recreation on the Palmetto Trail and other greenways.

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## To Our Members and Supporters:

Palmetto Conservation Foundation is pleased to present this report to you, the members and supporters of its work to conserve natural and cultural resources, preserve historic landmarks, and promote outdoor recreation on the Palmetto Trail and other greenways in South Carolina.

Looking back over the past year, we want to celebrate advances in our goal to Finish the Trail, while addressing serious maintenance needs caused by difficult weather and wildfires. We continue to be blessed by generous donors giving time, money, and materials to help stretch trail dollars as far as they will go. If you have given to the Trail in anyway this year, we want you to know how much we appreciate you.

We have opened up one entirely new passage in the upstate, the Roundtop Mountain Passage, and we have rerouted the Eutaw Springs Passage through a beautiful lowcountry plantation. In addition, our super volunteers and employees have worked tirelessly to reopen trails damaged by hurricane winds and wildfire. We are also especially proud of new boardwalk features on several parts of the Trail that add beauty and functionality to the hiking and biking experience.

In addition, we celebrate the end of the inaugural year of the Palmetto Conservation Corps and the beginning of the second year. We could not be more thrilled with the outcome. This is truly a win-win situation for the crewmembers, for PCF and the Palmetto Trail, and for our state trail partners who have seen incredible trail improvements across the state.

With dedication and determination we will, with your continued help, keep moving toward our goal to **#FinishtheTrail**.

Mikee Johnson, *PCF Chairman of the Board*

*In every walk with  
nature, one receives far  
more than he seeks.*

*—John Muir*

## PCF STAFF

### **NATALIE Britt**

Executive Director

### **SUZETTE Anderson**

Office Manager, PCF Press Manager

### **MARY Roe**

Director of Programs & Development

### **RUTH Card**

Administrative Assistant

### **KAT Crawford**

Community Outreach Coordinator

### **RACHEL Price**

AmeriCorps Program Director

### **JIM Majors**

Upstate Trail Coordinator

### **JIM Kelly**

Assistant Upstate Trail Coordinator

### **PATRICK Brittain**

Traveling Trail Supervisor

### **FURMAN Miller**

Regional Trail Coordinator

### **MARIE Butler**

Lowcountry Trail Technician

### **SHARON Givens**

Communications Specialist

### **DAWN Catalano**

Development

### **STEVE Collum**

Map Specialist

SPECIAL THANKS  
TO **MIKEE JOHNSON**  
FOR HIS SERVICE AS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE  
BOARD FOR PCF!





## ROUNDTOP MOUNTAIN PASSAGE

The ribbon was cut last April to open the new Roundtop Mountain Passage. The 5.1-mile passage is located in the Pickens County Jocassee Gorges. In 2012, National Geographic ranked Jocassee Gorges 9<sup>th</sup> among its "50 of the World's Last Great Places," calling them "destinations of a lifetime." The new passage connects the Palmetto Trail's Blue Ridge Electric Co-op Passage with Sassafras Mountain via the Foothills Trail. The three trails create a superb circular hike from Table Rock State Park. From the Foothills Trail between Sassafras Mountain and Table Rock SP, signs will direct hikers to the Roundtop Passage trailhead. An overlook on the new passage provides a spectacular view of Rock Mountain.



*SC Biz News continued raising awareness for the Palmetto Trail via donated advertising. Thank you, Grady Johnson, for publishing three ads in 2017!*

**The Power of Partnerships**

Roundtop Mountain Passage, the newest Palmetto Trail passage, illustrates the power of partnerships. Palmetto Conservation Foundation, SC Department of Natural Resources, and the Foothills Trail Conference joined forces on a common goal: Environmental conservation with access to public lands for recreation.

The outcome: A new 6.1-mile hiking trail in Jocassee Gorges Wilderness Area that creates a picturesque loop between Sassafras Mountain and Table Rock State Park.

Together, Let's #FinishTheTrail.

**Roundtop Mountain Passage**  
Pickens County

Standing on a Sassafras outcrop are (l-r) Jim Majors, PCF Upstate Trails Coordinator; Mark Hall, SCDNR Jocassee Gorges Land Manager; and Heyward Douglass, the Foothills Trail Conference Executive Director.

For Palmetto Trail info, visit [palmettoconservation.org](http://palmettoconservation.org).

Want to help #FinishTheTrail?  
Call (803) 771-0870 | (803) 771-0590



COMING  
2018

## STUMPHOUSE PASSAGE & MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

The dream of mountain biking trails in the Upstate moved closer to reality in November when PCF and partners broke ground to create Stumhouse Passage of the Palmetto Trail and Stumhouse Mountain Bike Park in Oconee County. The first three miles of bike trails will open in the spring. Groundbreaking was the culmination of several years of planning and fundraising.

**Partners:** City of Walhalla, Walhalla Partners for Progress, Oconee County Council, Oconee County Chamber of Commerce, Oconee Economic Alliance, Visit Oconee SC, Oconee Parks, Recreation, & Tourism, SC Parks, Recreation & Tourism, SC Department of Natural Resources, SC Legislature, Upstate Forever Land Trust, Issaquenna's Last Ride, Upstate SORBA, Oconee Hiking Club, REL, US Forest Service, and SC National Heritage Corridor



## DUG MOUNTAIN PASSAGE

Construction is well underway for a summer opening of the new Dug Mountain Passage through the lower Eastatoe Creek watershed near Lake Keowee in Pickens County. Last March, Kodwo Ghartey-Tagoe, Duke Energy's SC president, presented PCF's Natalie Britt and Jim Majors with a \$100,000 grant from Duke's Water Resources Fund. The WRF is a \$10 million commitment from Duke Energy to protect regional waterways. The grant matches construction funding from the Recreational Trails Program administered by SC Parks, Recreation and Tourism, and protects Jocassee Gorges waterway while making the area accessible for hiking, fishing and kayaking. The four-mile trail will connect Keowee-Toxaway State Park with the Dug Mountain Fishing Access off Roy F. Jones Highway. This new passage includes two 65-foot fiberglass pedestrian bridges as it winds through forests protected by Naturaland Trust, a PCF partner.



## BLUE RIDGE ELECTRIC CO-OP PASSAGE REOPENS

The 2016 wildfires in the upstate damaged thousands of acres in the Jocassee Gorges Wilderness Area, including the Foothills Trail on Pinnacle Mountain. Bulldozers used to access the blaze and create a fire line ruined about half of the Palmetto Trail's Blue Ridge Electric Co-op Passage. Soon after, PCF's Trail Coordinators and the Palmetto Conservation Corps refurbished five miles of the now much wider passage and replaced directional signage. They relocated a damaged campsite, improving campers' access to the water source. Last fall, the passage was closed from damaging winds and rains of Hurricanes Irma and Nate. Huge trees were uprooted and limbs downed. PCF Trail Coordinators, Corps and volunteers returned to clear the Palmetto Trail and sections of Table Rock State Park. SCDNR reported that spring hiking should be beautiful in the fire-ravaged areas. Without the heavy tree canopy and the thick stands of mountain laurel and rhododendrons, the forest is regenerating a diverse understory of wildflowers.



### MIDLANDS



## PEAK TO PROSPERITY PASSAGE

Since Dominion Energy Carolina Gas Transmission arrived in South Carolina in 2014, the company and its Dominion Foundation have become excellent corporate partners. Last year, company representative Kristen Beckham presented a check to PCF's Grady Johnson, Tracy Macpherson, and Natalie Britt. Funds were earmarked along with a Dominion work crew to refurbish a Peak to Prosperity Passage trestle. Thanks to funding from Lisa Powell, PCF also upgraded the parking ramp at the Alston trailhead.



## MORE P2P BRIDGE REHAB

The 20 wooden trestles on the Peak to Prosperity Passage in Newberry County suffer yearly from summer heat, high humidity, and damaging insects. The 2015 flood added insult to injury as Crims Creek raged over and under many of the passage bridges. Natalie Britt accepted a check from Fluor's Laura Ware in April to purchase materials. In June, a "Fluor Cares" volunteer crew was sent to rehabilitate Trestle 13 near Pomaria. They outfitted the bridge with new decking and guardrails.



**Thanks to the Peak to Prosperity work crew:** (above left, l-r) Patrick Brittain, Charles Weber (supervisor), Lyn Card, Michael Hatchell and Furman Miller.

**Partners:** Fluor, a global engineering and construction corporation with offices in Greenville and North Charleston, is one of PCF's newest corporate partners.

## PALMETTO TRAIL SUSPENSION BRIDGE

Palmetto Trail's first and only suspension bridge was intalled last April to span a 60-foot section of the Wateree Passage elevated boardwalk. Most of the boardwalk is affixed to trestle supports from the pre-Civil War S.C. Railroad that crossed Wateree Swamp between Columbia and Sumter. The suspension bridge spans a section where the antique rail supports were rusted out, toppled over, and could not be reclaimed. Construction of the suspension bridge was a major operation because of the remote location in Wateree Swamp.

**Partners:** Alpine Towers International installed the bridge. SCE&G funded the suspension bridge and Cox Industries donated the wood supports.



## FORT JACKSON PASSAGE BOARDWALK

A new 370-foot boardwalk through the swamp on Fort Jackson Passage greatly improves the nature experience. This beautiful, winding boardwalk relocates the trail farther into the woods and away from busy Leesburg Road in Richland County. Palmetto Conservation Corps members, PCF staff, and volunteers worked along with Deno Cantos of Benchmark Trails to complete the four-week project last October.

**Partners:** Dominion Energy, Cox Lumber, and McCrady National Guard, and Benchmark Trails of Greenville (a professional trail design, construction and maintenance company and PCF partner).



## WATEREE BOARDWALK UPDATE

The pace of work on the three-quarter-mile elevated boardwalk across Wateree Swamp picked up dramatically last spring and summer. Project supervisor and chief builder Furman Miller, the Palmetto Conservation Corps spring crew (pictured) and Trail Work Wednesday volunteers energized the project. By fall, the boardwalk almost reached its destination, the Wateree River. Hurricane damage in the upstate diverted the Corps crew and boardwalk completion was pushed from fall 2017 into 2018. The boardwalk elevates the Trail onto historic railroad pilings about 15 feet above the swamp, and replaces the frequently impassable ground-level trail. Wateree Swamp is part of Manchester State Forest in Sumter County.

“The Wateree boardwalk is a stunning addition to the Palmetto Trail,” PCF Executive Director Natalie Britt said. “This is one of our greatest undertakings in awhile and weather set backs have been dragging things out longer than we anticipated, but the wait is worth it.”



**Sponsors:** Edward and Dorothy Kendall Foundation, Cox Industries, and SCE&G. **Thanks to our Palmetto Trail super volunteers:** (above left, l-r) Louise Oxner, Warner Wunsche, and Tom Michalski.



## LOWCOUNTRY

### LAKE MARION PASSAGE MAINTENANCE

Lake Marion Passage sustained a lot of damage from Hurricane Matthew in October 2016, and an influx of spring hikers brought attention to needed maintenance, especially in Hickory Top Wildlife Management Area and Sparkleberry Swamp. Trail crews of staff, Corps, and volunteers worked last year to repair and install bog bridges to control ecosystem and trail damage in low-lying areas.



**Sponsors:** Santee Cooper and Cox Industries provided material for bridges. **Thanks to our volunteers:** Joint Base Charleston (top two images), Boy Scout troop 78 (bottom image). Thanks to super volunteer Jamie Turner for terrific work clearing the passage with a DR Mower.





IF YOU DON'T  
*smell like*  
**DIRT**  
THEN IT'S NOT  
**REAL WORK**







**WE CONSERVE**  
FOR THE  
**GOOD OF OUR state**



*The inaugural year* for the Palmetto Conservation Corps, celebrated last July, was overwhelmingly successful. Following orientation and training, crews #1 and #2 completed projects across the state. Crew #3 began their term in September and continued the trend of success.

The Corps worked on 15 different Palmetto Trail passages in 2017. From the Upstate to the Lowcountry, the Trail benefitted immeasurably from their hard work. Projects included building a new passage, rerouting well-used passages, litter cleanup, disaster relief, volunteer workdays, and general Trail improvement projects.

The Corps worked in four state parks and forests last year. Projects included reopening trails damaged by Hurricane Matthew, repairing fire breaks created during the Pickens County wild fires, clearing Hurricane Irma's damage, general trail maintenance, and building new sections and reroutes of the Palmetto Trail.

Last spring, the Corps collaborated with three elementary and middle schools in the Midlands to build or rebuild outdoor learning spaces to enhance science and environmental education. At two of the schools, existing outdoor classrooms, nature trails, and instructional gardens had fallen into disrepair and disuse. Crews made these spaces accessible, useable, and kid friendly.

In order to rally community support for the Palmetto Trail and Palmetto Conservation programs, the crew participated in six community events around the state. These events found Corps members volunteering to cleanup litter, recycle, lead hikes, and more.

Service projects were completed with two PCF partners in the Upstate, Greenville Water and Spartanburg Area Conservancy. Projects included installing water drains for erosion control and demolishing old, out-of-date kiosks.

The Corps worked on trail projects in Enoree and Andrew Pickens Districts of Sumter National Forest, as well as in Francis Marion National Forest. Crews cleared downed trees, completed basic maintenance on boardwalks, and improved trail tread.

PCF hosted required training for the Corps in wilderness first aid, CPR and AED, as well as chainsaw management and safety. The training helps crewmembers handle Trail projects safely and reduces the risk of accidents. The programs were (and are) open to the public.

*A huge **THANK YOU** to all those who made 2017 a smashing success for the Palmetto Conservation Corps! Without ongoing support from our sponsors, partners, and community, this PCF program would not be possible.*



# NATIONAL TRAILS DAY®



National Trails Day is celebrated annually nationwide on the first Saturday of June. On June 3, Palmetto Conservation Foundation celebrated with guided hikes in the upstate, midlands, and lowcountry, and weekend campouts in Poinsett and Croft State Parks. These events are free to PCF members. Nonmembers are encouraged to join for a nominal fee. National Trails Day was created with the goals of connecting more people to trails and connecting hikers and cyclists to trail organizations and clubs. Trails Day also attracts volunteers to help care for the nation's many trails. Mark your calendar for the next National Trails Day on June 2, 2018.



## LEGISLATIVE LUNCH

For the fourth spring in a row, PCF hosted a Legislative Luncheon on the S.C. State House grounds, providing an informal opportunity to educate and generate excitement about the cross-state Palmetto Trail. PCF directors, staff, members, and volunteers met with legislators to share information about the Trail's importance, especially to public health and tourism.



*Sponsors: SCE&G, Dominion Foundation, and Nephron Pharmaceuticals*



Each spring, PCF sponsors the Palmetto Challenge to encourage folks to shake off the winter doldrums. Last year, 49 teams participated by hiking or biking from March 6 to April 24. Teams logged more than 32,000 miles! Weekly progress is tracked on a special PCF webpage. The friendly competition ended with prizes and a PCF cookout, thanks to Mary Roe, Director of Programs and Development, who is also a superb caterer.

*Congratulations Anna and Will Haltiwanger, 2017 Palmetto Challenge winners!*





Now in its sixth year, the Ladies of the Palmetto Trail (LOPT) continued to draw women on second Saturdays each month to enjoy South Carolina trails. Five to 15 hikers typically hike four to seven miles. Mother-daughter team Suzette and Katherine Anderson have led LOPT on 23 of the 27 Palmetto Trail passages, as well as other trails around the state. If you are interested in leading hikes on the Palmetto Trail, contact Suzette for training.

*Join us for*  
**OUTINGS & EVENTS!**

**FAMILY FUN** FOR ALL AGES

**PLUS, MANY EVENTS ARE**  
**FREE** FOR PCF MEMBERS

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
**[PALMETTOCONSERVATION.ORG/EVENTS](http://PALMETTOCONSERVATION.ORG/EVENTS)**

## *Thru Hikers Promote the Trail*

### **PATRICK: HIKING FOR VETS**

In September and October, Iraq War veteran Patrick Elswick thru hiked the Palmetto Trail to raise awareness for veterans suffering from PTSD and raise funds for the nonprofit WhenLifeSucks.org Foundation of Greenville. Of, by, and for veterans, the national organization provided services to 600 veterans, preventing 37 suicides in 2016. Patrick made promotional stops along the way from Walhalla to Awendaw, including a meet-and-greet at Columbia's Mast General Store, his sponsor and a PCF partner. He was surprised by a special fundraising brunch with the Eutawville VFW and Ladies' Auxiliary.



Patrick Elswick (l) with PCF's Marie Butler and a hiking buddy in Awendaw.

### **MULE AND INCHWORM: HIKING FOR MS**

"Mule and Inchworm," the trail names of Bernie and April Hester of Beaufort, became the first hikers to thru hike the Palmetto Trail twice in the same year. They hiked from sea to mountains last spring in 66 days, "just to see if we could do it," Mule wrote in their trail journal. They were not sure because Inchworm has multiple sclerosis (MS).

They could, they did, and they decided to hike the Trail again, but this time for a purpose. As ambassadors of the Palmetto Trail, they began their second thru hike in the mountains on October 1 to raise awareness and funds for the National MS Society. They arrived at Buck Hall Landing in Awendaw 34 days later to complete their "Finish MS Hike." They posted updates on social media and their online trail journal. PCF staff celebrated their adventure with a cookout at the office when the Trail brought them through Columbia.



### **TABA: HIKING TO REVISE PALMETTO TRAIL BOOK**

Using the trail name "Taba," Scot Ward and his dog Kaya thru hiked the Palmetto Trail last year from sea to mountains, taking notes and photos to update the Thru Hiker's guidebook. When he wrote the guide on his first trek in 2013, Taba hiked from mountains to sea. He commented, "I am pretty sure that was our celebration photo for finishing the trail on April 12th. Even Kaya looks happy. We had a great time on the PT. The trip was fun, challenging, educational, culturally diverse, all while traveling through a beautiful state with beautiful people. I have no idea who took the picture." Scot's 2018 guide will help hikers navigate passages and the unfinished gaps—about 125 miles of the 500-mile Trail.





## TRANSFERS TO LOCAL OWNERS



## GLENDALE OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP SCHOOL

At the end of August, PCF transferred ownership of the Glendale Outdoor Leadership School, including property and facilities, to the Local Hiker of Spartanburg. This exchange will ensure that the mission to foster environmental stewardship and create opportunities to enhance personal growth, healthy living, and recreation will continue. GOLS was established as a PCF program in 2007. For the last decade, GOLS has trained hundreds of people of all ages, skill levels, and walks of life. GOLS offered training in wilderness first aid, rock climbing, biking, camping, high and low ropes challenge courses, and kayaking.

“We are so proud of our past, but even more excited about the future of GOLS under the leadership of the amazing folks at Local Hiker,” Natalie Britt said. “They are passionate about continuing the mission of GOLS, creating more community access, and expanding the reach of GOLS’s outdoor recreation programming beyond Glendale into the Upstate.”



## BATTLE OF CAMDEN CORE BATTLEFIELD

Last April, PCF transferred to Historic Camden Foundation ownership of the 476-acre core battlefield where the Revolutionary War Battle of Camden was fought. The exchange ensures that work will continue to protect the site where hundreds of soldiers lost their lives. Historic Camden will build on the archaeological research that PCF began, and will work to improve public understanding of the battle’s historical significance. The battlefield is recognized as a National Historic Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## NEW PCF STAFF

Lowcountry Trail Coordinator **Matthew Lawson** left PCF in early 2017, and three new staffers have been hired. **Patrick Brittain** stood out as an excellent team player and hard worker among the Palmetto Conservation Corps’ inaugural crew. He was hired as PCF’s Traveling Trail Superintendent, and he works wherever needed on the Trail. Matthew is continuing to help with PCF mapmaking.

**Marie Butler**, the new Lowcountry Trail Technician, comes to PCF from a long career with the U.S. Forest Service. She worked in Francis Marion National Forest, which hosts the 47-mile Swamp Fox Passage. Marie’s husband, Bill, is a Palmetto Trail “super volunteer” and frequently accompanies Marie on the Trail.



The third new staffer is an old hand at building and maintaining the Palmetto Trail. With 11-plus years of volunteering, **Furman Miller** retired from SCE&G last June and made an immediate transition to PCF employment as a Regional Trail Coordinator. Furman’s wife, Peggy, often joins him on the Wateree Boardwalk. She has an eagle eye for snakes.



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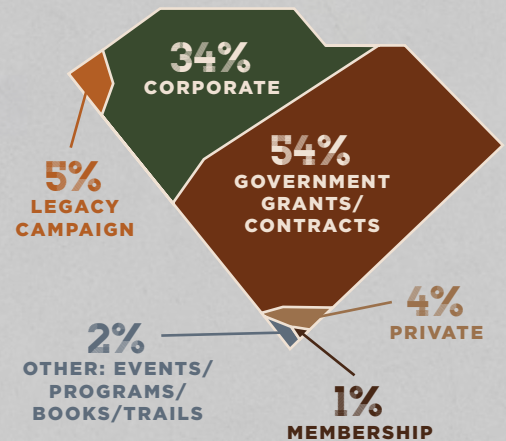
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*A special thank  
you to all of our  
PCF members!*

## Funding Sources

BY PERCENTAGE  
JULY 2016 – JUNE 2017



### SUPER Volunteers

Bill Butler  
Lyn Card  
Sonny Chunn  
Tom Denholm  
Hank Edens  
Neal Gibson  
Larry Gilbertson  
Darlene Greene  
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Mike Hodges  
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*in honor of Marge Dorey & Dianne Odom*  
Tony & Kristin Taffar  
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*The*

**PALMETTO TRAIL**

— DEPENDS ON —

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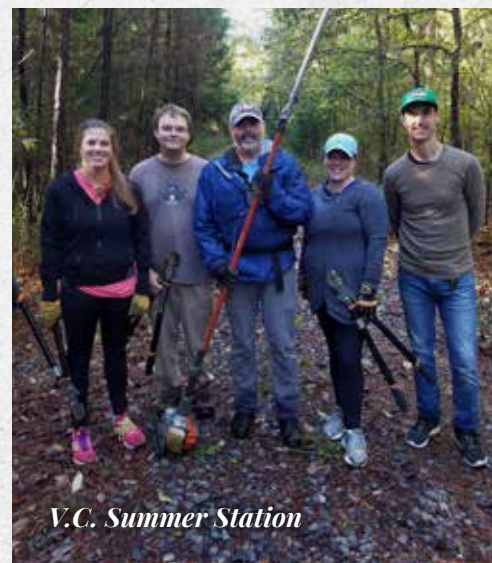
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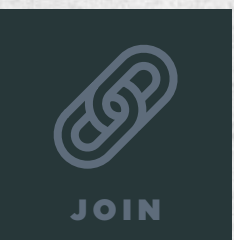
*Matthew Wall with  
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