



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

The 170 acres of accreted land on Sullivan's Island are protected from development by the Lowcountry Open Land Trust.

Island's maritime forest an asset

As a long-term resident of Sullivan's Island, I contend the accreted land on the island is neither an eyesore nor a potential hazard to residents. It is an amazing area on our island that needs to be preserved.

The 170 acres are owned by the town and are conserved and protected from development by the Lowcountry Open Land Trust, whose great work was the subject of congratulatory articles in the Feb. 15 issue of *The Post and Courier*. This area was placed under protection in 1991 to benefit all residents of Sullivan's Island. Ordinances were then developed by our Town Council, with the aid of a citizens' committee, that currently regulate how this land is to be managed. This has resulted in the continued growth of a multistage successional maritime forest with areas of grassland, wax myrtles, and mature hardwood trees.

I have lived on the island for over 30 years and have always enjoyed walking in front of, behind, and through this wonderful green area. Experts who have studied the ecosystem in this protected land, which includes wetlands, have described the wonderful plant and animal life, bird nesting areas, and endangered species present in our "front yard." The aesthetic and protective function provided by this land is undeniable — even in the worst of storms. In fact, Tim Kana, Ph.D., of Coastal Science and Engineering, has said, "The beach is your first line of defense against a hurricane. The key to this protection is a wide sandy beach and established vegetated dunes that work together to absorb much of the energy of waves."

A debate about how to continue to best manage this land is ongoing among residents of

our island, by our elected town council members, and, sadly, through the courts. Those of us who feel that this land is a treasure worth protecting also believe that many of the concerns expressed in recent letters, especially on April 10, can be addressed in an ecologically constructive manner.

Rotational cutting of the foliage could provide enhanced, ever changing ocean views. Removing harmful, invasive species of vines, shrubs, and trees would have a similar effect — remembering that all trees in a maritime forest are not "invasive trees." Buffer zones between homes and the protected land could be established and dead understory vegetation could be removed.

Other management principles can be implemented, and are being considered by town council, that both protect the land and address the concerns of some homeowners. But remember, this land is under protection for the benefit and enjoyment of all people which encompasses all visitors and all residents throughout the Lowcountry and the state. The *Post and Courier* recognized the benefits of coastal forest preservation in a Dec. 1, 2003 editorial titled "Preserving our coastal forests."

Our coastal forest, our open, protected, green space is not a problem to be solved. It is an asset, a treasured asset that we must manage and preserve wisely. Proper management will not only protect this land for our pleasure today, but will give future generations the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy this beautiful acreage for years to come.

W. HOWARD HOLL, M.D.
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