

# Taking steps toward handling Sullivan's accreted land

BY BLAKE BUNCH

To date, the lawsuit against the Town of Sullivan's Island concerning the handling of the island's accreted land area has cost the town nearly \$103,000, and in an effort to be proactive, Mayor Carl Smith and the Council have been hard at work trying to devise an

efficient plan for the area which will be acceptable to all island residents. The fact of the matter is that the accreted land area is a very unique natural habitat; it's a growing maritime forest. This fact, and the ongoing controversy of the land's use, inspired the Sullivan's Council recently to take a "nature walk" of accreted land areas one and three, led by Dr. Richard Porcher of the Citadel. The walk preceded a special meeting of Council which was held the following day in order to discuss a strategy for the use and treatment of these areas.

On Friday, March 11, Council members along with several citizens met at Town Hall and proceeded towards Station 17 near the northern end of Fort Moultrie. Dr. Porcher led the group down the familiar trails, pointing out the invasive species in the area.

"There are three endangered species of plant life in the state of South Carolina. None of these species can be found in this young maritime forest," stated Porcher. As most know,

maritime forests are found near shorelines all along the coasts of the eastern seaboard, and consist mainly of Southern Waxmyrtle, Eastern Baccharis, and Popcorn Trees. Dr. Porcher further explained that this environment is constantly growing at a rapid rate, due largely in part to the moisture and productive breezes. The accretion of this particular area of land is completely normal, he said, and, in most cases it protects against flooding.

This area is also home to foxes, raccoons, bird life, and sometimes even coyotes.

Dr. Porcher has been volunteering his services to the Lowcountry, and Sullivan's Island in particular, since early in 1991, shortly after the Town acquired the accreted land. Porcher was certain to point out on several occasions that he "is not a paid consultant. I have worked with Kiawah and Seabrook in a similar fashion, and find that this work is of utmost necessity to preserving this habitat."

Most of the council members present had questions pertaining to the management of the invasive species, especially near the homes located in

accreted land zone three. Dr. Porcher stated that it would not take an excessive amount of maintenance, in which minimally invasive techniques could be utilized.

With the help of Dr. Porcher's informative walk, Council met again the following Saturday, March 12, to discuss their separate findings and ultimately strive for a land management plan that is satisfactory to all.

In 2008, when Mr. Tim Kana of Coastal Science and Engineering discussed the accreted land area, he stated that if islanders decided to do "nothing" that "patches of shrubs and low rolling dunes would continue the land's succession into a maritime forest in the short term."

The Council will be touring zones two and four this May in a similar fashion. During the last meeting of Council on March 15, it was decided to view these lands on Thursday, May 5, at 6 p.m. A meeting discussing the walk will occur the following day at noon.

For more information on the upcoming tour of accreted land zones two and four, visit [www.sullivanisland-sc.com](http://www.sullivanisland-sc.com).



Dr. Richard Porcher



A pathway winds through the accreted land area.

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