



Through a generous and selfless act, the greenspace known as Oak Island in St. Helena is now protected from development via a group of anonymous donors from Dataw Island. The group, Oak Island Preservation LLC, comprises an unknown number of Dataw Island residents who purchased the land and donated it to the Dataw Island Owners Association (DIOA) with significant restrictions to assure it will remain protected from development.

Oak Island is accessible only by water and via a bridge inside the gated community of Dataw Island, and it has changed ownership several times. The most recent private owner aborted plans to build condominiums and gave the parcel to The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy determined its best plan for the island was to re-list it for sale with restrictions requiring much of it to remain natural and for only a few estate-sized compounds to be allowed to be developed.

Long a natural area of trails enjoyed by many Dataw members and their dogs, the brief period of being met by a “keep out” sign and an unknown future drew dismay from many members who were understandably thrilled when Oak Island Preservation LLC came forward with an offer to purchase the land. An acceptable offer initiated a months-long negotiation with The Nature Conservancy and the Beaufort County Open Land Trust to author a set of easements and guidelines that would please all parties.

Many thanks particularly are owed to Barbara Holmes at the Beaufort County Open Land Trust and Jim Grimsley and his team at Tupper, Grimsley, Dean and Canaday, as well as The Nature Conservancy, for their countless hours of making this dream a reality.

“I’ve never known another attorney or firm to be as responsive and proactive in helping to complete a challenging closing during an even more difficult period in a short period of time,”

said Ted Bartlett, the general manager of Dataw Island, who acted on behalf of the DIOA throughout the process. “Dataw appreciates the stewardship and leadership of Grimsley during the negotiations and the subsequent closing. He and his associates were a solid partner and a real asset during the transition, as was the Beaufort County Open Land Trust. It’s an arrangement that we can all be happy about. A true win-win-win.”

The DIOA is pleased to announce that the property transaction has successfully closed and been transferred to them to maintain as a passive recreation area. Plans included some minor trail maintenance, addition of benches, and a dog exercise enclosure.

Guy Apicella, president of the Dataw Island Nature Conservancy, spoke on behalf of this non-profit when he stated, “The Dataw Island Conservancy thanks those who are responsible for acquiring Oak Island. The general plan for Oak Island fits nicely with our mission of conservation, habitat management, and environmental education and we (the Dataw Island Nature Conservancy) look forward to assisting the DIOA in developing plans for Oak Island.”

Much gratitude is felt by the members and staff of Dataw Island for the generous act of these anonymous donors; they lit up the community’s bulletin board with notes of gratitude. All of similar sentiment, one from Al and Susy Marchioni that captured the overall enthusiasm read “Bravo to the generous folks who stepped up, bought Oak Island, and gifted it to Dataw! Not only was this beyond generous, it provides an amenity legacy that will be treasured for generations to come. And to be essentially preserved as natural habitat is just icing on the cake. Makes us proud to count ourselves as members of this outstanding community.”

Bartlett also said, “The donors have deep roots and a great love for Dataw Island. They want to assure that current residents, as well as future Dataw residents, can enjoy this natural area now and for years to come. We all should be very appreciative of this selfless and generous act.”

From all on Dataw Island, thank you once again to these anonymous donors.