



# NATION FORD LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

Volume IV Spring 2016

Preserving the open spaces, natural beauty, and scenic heritage of

York County, South Carolina

[www.nationfordlandtrust.org](http://www.nationfordlandtrust.org)

## An Update from Chairman John Hiott

The Nation Ford Land Trust (NFLT) has just finished its first year with Janet Steele as Executive Director. Her duties include day to day operations, as well as easement acquisition and monitoring, grant writing, and over sight of local trail systems which fall under our control. Janet also represents the NFLT on several committees and boards. Because of Janet and her hard work, we have had a very successful year.

We received two important easements: the Jack and Ann Roddey easement on the south side of Rock Hill, which in addition to protecting land, also protects the structures on the property including a house that dates back to the early 1800s. We also accepted the Eloise Miller easement, which protects 50 acres of land in a rapidly developing area of Rock Hill. This easement is important because Ms. Miller is the granddaughter of an emancipated slave who acquired this property shortly after the Civil War. The land trust is also working on several other important easements that should close later this year.

The NFLT, through work with the Carolina Thread Trail System, received two trail easements along the Catawba River in Fort Mill, which will connect another major portion of the Thread Trail to the existing trail system at Riverwalk on the Rock Hill side of the river. These easement donors were Crescent Communities and the Sara Belle Smyth Scott family. We are also working to acquire more connectivity to the system.

All our work cannot be done without the support of all our members and corporate sponsors. We continue to appreciate the generous support you have given to the NFLT. Land conservation is very important in that it provides needed green space in a rapidly developing world.

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## Mission

*To preserve the open spaces, natural beauty, and scenic heritage of the York County, South Carolina area.*

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## Staff

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The Nation Ford Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1989. The board of directors is a dedicated group of volunteers who support the land trust's mission and seek opportunities to further its land conservation efforts.

# The Abell Place at Cotton Hills Farm

Cotton Hills Farm has belonged to the Wilson family since 1882. The farm began as a wedding present to Theodosia Abell when she married Joe Wilson. Her father gave the young couple 100 acres of land and a newly built home.

In 2007, the Wilsons placed a conservation easement with NFLT on 230 acres of their farm located in York County, known as the "Abell Place of Cotton Hills Farm". The remaining acreage of Cotton Hills Farm located in Chester County was placed in a conservation easement with Katawba Valley Land Trust (KVLV). York County Forever and the SC Conservation Bank contributed funding to these easements. The family felt the need to protect their farm from the encroachment of development they were seeing in the greater Charlotte area. They also had a desire to preserve the great beauty of their property and to share it with others. The Wilsons have used their farm as a living classroom where the public can learn how farming is practiced today, and come to appreciate those who provide their food and fiber. The importance of conservation of resources on the farm and the methods used to achieve it are also part of the message they seek to impart.

Cotton, row crops, peaches, and winter cover crops are grown on the Abell Place. The farm retains the history of its past while utilizing cutting-edge technology to improve its production methods, keep the farm profitable, and maintain its status as an asset to the Lowrys Community. In February the Wilsons hosted local state legislators for lunch and a tour of their farm warehouse to highlight the role of the SC Conservation Bank in conserving working family farms in the state.



Clockwise from top left: The original Wilson home; cotton picking on the Abell Place; Peter (I) and Jeb Wilson demonstrating peach basket operation; okra picking machine; March peach blossoms; local legislators with SC Conservation Bank, NFLT and KVLV representatives on February farm tour.



## ***Scott Family Dedicates Trail Easement on Catawba River***

A key section of the Carolina Thread Trail along the Catawba River is now one step closer to a reality. James Scott signed an agreement with the Nation Ford Land Trust on Friday, May 1, 2015 granting access for a public trail on his family property. “We’re very happy that the public will have pedestrian access along the river. The walk is a beautiful one, very close to nature”, said Scott following the signing.

Travis Morehead, former director of operations for the Carolina Thread Trail, had been working with Murray White of the Nation Ford Land Trust to acquire trail easements along this corridor for years. “Through Jim and his family’s generous donation, we now have the land to build 1.3 miles of additional trail upstream from Riverwalk”, said Morehead. “While additional discussions and permitting will be needed before construction can begin on this trail segment, the Scott’s family gift sets the stage for future Thread Trail segments towards Baxter Village and eventually the state line”. The Carolina Thread Trail has already received a \$15,000 grant from REI for the project.

The Scott trail easement is a key connection between the Fort Mill and Rock Hill sides of the Catawba River and will provide access to the pedestrian lanes on the Highway 21 bridge from Fort Mill. A trail easement was signed with Crescent Masons Bend, LLC in September 2015 for an additional section of Carolina Thread Trail that has been constructed in their new development on the Catawba River west of the Scott tract.

(In photo standing (L to R) - Former Carolina Thread Trail Director of Operations Travis Morehead, Former Nation Ford Greenway Coordinator Beth Chuck, and Nation Ford Land Trust and Former Carolina Thread Trail Board Member Bernie Ackerman; Seated (L to R) - James Scott and Nation Ford Land Trust Chair John Hiott)



## ***NFLT Accepts Easements on Historic Rock Hill Farms***

Jack and Ann Roddey (right) placed their family farm, which contains 57 acres and the historic Roach-Roddey home built in 1812, in an easement with NFLT on December 8, 2015. The property is located at the city limits of Rock Hill and protects a quarter mile of Wildcat Creek, as well as the traditional land uses of the area. Mr. Roddey’s father purchased the farm in 1937. Several additions have been made to the home, but its original architecture is still evident. The Roach-Roddey house was one of the earliest homes of this style built in York County. The Roddeys received funding through York County Forever for their easement expenses.



A conservation easement was accepted from Miss Eloise Miller by the NFLT on 53 acres of her historic farm in Rock Hill. Miss Miller’s grandfather Ned Miller, an emancipated slave, began acquiring land in the 1870 and 1880s and his farm eventually totaled over 200 acres, of which 100 acres remains. At 95 years of age, Miss Miller wanted to ensure that a portion of her family farm would be forever protected as open space in a rapidly growing part of York County. The project received funding from the SC Conservation Bank and the York County Forever Commission. Miss Miller (left) signed the easement on January 25, 2016.

## ***Federal Conservation Easement Tax Incentive Made Permanent***

In December 2015, the U.S. Congress made permanent an enhanced incentive for conservation easement donations. The enhancement raises the deduction a landowner can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of his adjusted gross income to 50%, and extends the carry-forward period from 5 years to 15 years. In addition, farmers and ranchers who qualify can deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income for a conservation easement donation. The enhanced incentive will make the donation of a conservation easement financially feasible for more landowners, increasing the acreage that land trusts and other conservation organizations can now protect nationwide.

## ***Nation Ford Land Trust Membership***

The Nation Ford Land Trust depends on its members to help further its mission to enhance the quality of life in the York County area by preserving its open spaces, natural beauty, and scenic heritage. We continue to look for opportunities to partner with the York County Forever Commission on conservation easements, as well as land purchases that provide public access. We are also working with landowners on a variety of conservation projects on private lands, including easements. Your membership will be used to protect land with significant conservation value through projects such as these.

The protection of open space with significant conservation and public value is crucial as our region faces unprecedented growth. Recent studies indicate that if growth continues at the current rate in the southeast, urban sprawl will engulf thousands of acres of forest and agricultural lands from Raleigh, North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia within the next 50 years. Charlotte and its surrounding counties, including York County, are directly in this path. To donate to the Nation Ford Land Trust or to become a member, please visit our website at [www.nationfordlandtrust.org](http://www.nationfordlandtrust.org).



The volunteers for Nation Ford Greenway are such an important part of its success! There are two sections of the NFG that require routine maintenance. The 2.5 mile Springfield Trail section runs south from the Nation Ford Greenway parking lot on AO Jones Boulevard, along Sugar Creek behind the Springfield neighborhood golf course. The 1.5 mile Regal Manor stretch goes north along Sugar Creek to the Regent Parkway bridge. The Regal Manor section is part of the Carolina

Thread Trail (CTT) and is maintained by the help of volunteers who can register at the CTT website.

Many of our volunteers are from area corporations that support local organizations such as the NFLT and NFG. In the past we have had employees from Duke Energy, Regions Bank, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Accenture, and Daimler participate. We appreciate all our corporate employee volunteers and anyone that wants to be a part of this special trail. Please contact us at [greenwaytrails@gmail.com](mailto:greenwaytrails@gmail.com) if you would like to volunteer or have your employees get out of the office for a day or a few hours. We need all of you to keep the Nation Ford Greenway trails looking great!



Some of our great volunteers!!  
Duke Energy (above) & Accenture & Trailmasters (below)

### **NFLT Receives \$150,000 Grant from Carolina Thread Trail**

In November 2015, the NFLT received a \$150,000 grant from the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) to construct approximately 2 miles of natural surface trail along the Catawba River in Fort Mill. This path is a key connection between Fort Mill and Rock Hill and will provide access to the CTT at Riverwalk. It will also be a part of the CTT's North-South spine, a planned 140-mile continuous trail stretching from Statesville, NC to Great Falls, SC.

