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NC Coastal Land Trust Preserves 5,400 Acres

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The recently purchased Salters Creek property in Carteret County is home to longleaf pines. Photo: NC Coastal Land Trust

CARTERET COUNTY – The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust has transferred most of a recently purchased 5,400-acre tract to the state Wildlife Resources Commission to be used as public game lands.

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The trust this month purchased the tract along Salters Creek that is adjacent to the Cedar Island National Refuge from the Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of New York, a nonprofit corporation.

"This property represents the best of what is left Down East in terms of relatively pristine natural areas," Janice Allen, deputy director of the Coastal Land Trust, said in a statement.

Of the more than 5,400 acres, the Coastal Land Trust transferred 5,170 acres of the property to the Wildlife Resources Commission and will retain the remaining 311 acres to be managed as a nature preserve.

"We are extremely excited about this large acquisition," said Brian McRae, Land and Water Access Section Chief for the Commission. "This property will provide tremendous opportunities for birding as well as hunting for deer, bear, turkey and small game."

The tract has been designated by National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area and provides habitat for 23 rare plant and animal species including the black rail, a small marsh bird that has been proposed for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act, according to the Coastal Land Trust.



Salter's Creek Landing
Carteret County, NC
2016 NAIP Imagery

In addition to adjoining the 14,494-acre Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge, the property is across Long Bay from the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point's 11,000-acre Piney Island Bombing Range in Carteret County, according to the Land Trust.

The Department of Defense provided funds to purchase for the property a restrictive easement, which prohibits incompatible development of the property that might compromise the safety of pilots and crew who fly over the property for training missions.

"The goals of the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program are certainly met with this easement," Col. Todd Ferry, Commanding Officer, MCAS Cherry Point, said in the release. "Through our partnership with the Coastal Land Trust and the State of North Carolina, we have shared the burden of protecting this strategic property which will help us sustain training capabilities at Piney Island for future generations."

Walter Clark, executive director of North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund, explained that the acquisition of the Salters Creek Landing property touches on several critical objectives of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

"Conservation of the property, which is classified as an exceptional Atlantic Natural Area, protects 17 miles stream buffer and 4,285 acres of wetland. Additionally, the acquisition protects North Carolina's military mission which is so important to national defense and North Carolina's economy. And finally, much of the property will be open for public use as North Carolina Wildlife Commission game land," he said.

North Carolina Coastal Land Trust partnered with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and the U.S. Marine Corps, with the support of eight partnering organizations and funders, starting with a grant from a private philanthropist for a long-term option on the property. The Coastal Land Trust also worked with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetlands Conservation Act program, Enviva Forest Conservation Fund, Duke Energy's Water Resources Fund, and the North Carolina Native Plant Society to secure funding.

"The Coastal Land Trust is grateful to all the participating grant-making agencies, individuals and funders," said Ms. Allen, "for their investments in this amazing conservation project."