

# SC to gain a new state forest with \$11.35M Lowcountry timber tract purchase



The Beech Hill tract is a 1,644-acre pine forest in Dorchester County near the Edisto River.

File/Brown Land + Plantation Advisors & Wise Batten Inc./Provided

A national land [conservation](#) group has bought and will permanently protect from development a 1,644-acre timber tract in Dorchester County by making the property part of South Carolina's state forest system.

The Open Space Institute closed on its \$11.35 million purchase of the Beech Hill property last week, according to public real estate records. The seller was Davis Land & Timber Limited Partnership of Greenwood.

The property is near the Colleton County line, between the Edisto River Wildlife Management Area and Givhans Ferry State Park. It's about 30 miles from Charleston.

Nate Berry, chief land protection officer for the Open Space Institute, described Beech Hill as a "critically threatened property" that will give the S.C. Forestry Commission "a foothold in this special part of the state."

"It has long been a conservation priority because of its location between these protected areas and intensifying development pressure," his New York-based group said in a May 29 written statement. "The property is unusually high and dry for the Lowcountry, containing fewer than 100 acres of forested wetlands, elevating the threat of subdivision and conversion."

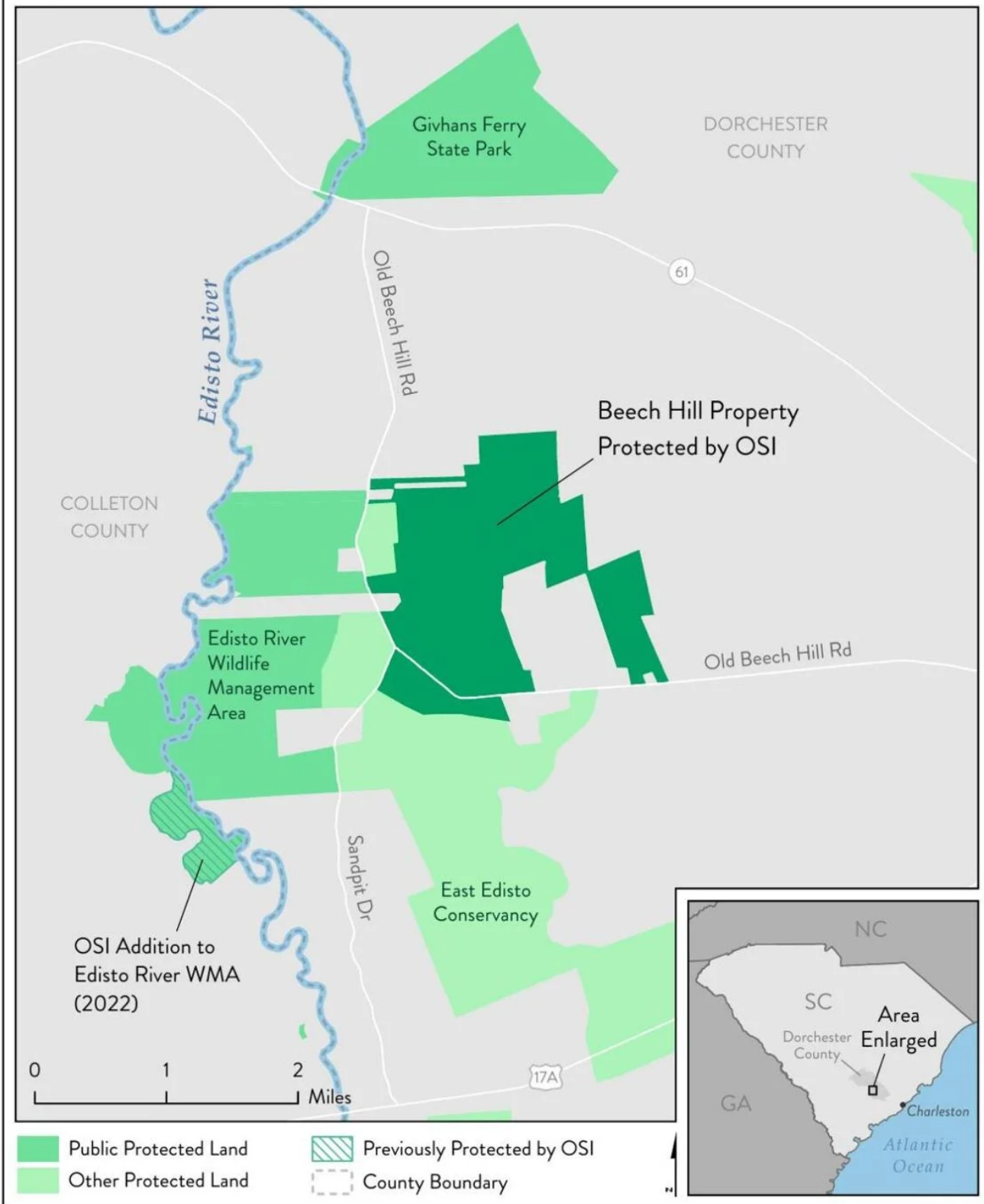
The new owner added that the acquisition "will prevent fragmentation of natural areas, link previously protected lands, expand public recreational opportunities and catalyze further conservation" efforts in the nearby ACE Basin and other areas.

The Open Space Institute said it expects to transfer the tract in a future sale to the Forestry Commission, which will manage it as a public forest sometime next year. It's expected to become part of the S.C. Department of Natural Resource's Wildlife Management Area initiative.

"The property will be open to the public with opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, hiking and biking," the Open Space Institute said.

State Forester Scott Phillips said the Beech Hill tract "represents a renewable resource that provides a multitude of benefits, including clean water, scenic beauty, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation."

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The purchase includes funding from the Forestry Commission and the S.C.

Conservation Bank. Also, Dorchester County has committed to contribute \$4.125 million, marking the largest land acquisition to date from its Greenbelt program.

The land for years was owned by the former [Westvaco Corp.](#) and its successors, which used it to grow trees and supply pulp for their North Charleston paper mill. The property was [listed for sale](#) in late 2023.

Davis Land & Timber bought Beech Hill for nearly \$4.9 million in 2016. It's managed by [Stephen Davis](#), the chairman and CEO of the engineering firm Davis & Floyd.