



friends of
HUNTING ISLAND

Annual Report 2022

Friends,

2022 kicked off to a great start with the 12th Annual Pelican Plunge. The weather was beautiful and we had upwards of 500 people on the beach! This event was our best attended yet!

In January 2022, FOHI participated in the 2nd Annual Beaufort Oyster Festival and we were able to achieve new membership and launch the highly anticipated *Wild Island Nature* book at this event.

Wild Island Nature, by President Carol Corbin, was beautifully received in the community. Micro events were set up for Public Relations introductions and the book had near sell out at each event. The Pat Conroy Library Foundation was key in giving Friends of Hunting Island a launch platform and the visibility of our book was held at, and with, this highly respected venue and organization in February, 2022.

The 2022 Sea Turtle Conservation Project kicked off with volunteer solicitation, planning and logistics for volunteers February, 2022. The first mama was discovered, ironically, on Mothers Day, May 1st. This led to an unprecedented year of unexpected nests which kept the SCTP leaders and volunteers busy throughout the season to end it in late October - another milestone. 175 nests were laid season 2022 which broke all records since the turtle program was established by FOHI at Hunting Island State Park. It was a record breaking year in all of the Lowcountry and we are certain that DNR had their hands full with all the research collected from season 2022.

In May, it was announced by SCPRT, that the Lighthouse would be closed for climbing due to repairs assessed, and authorized commencement of the 3million dollar budgeted renovation. FOHI continued to have tours at the Complex with the help and direction of our Director and docents. This will continue until they begin construction at the Complex mid 2023.

Fortunately we experienced a quiet summer/fall season without severe weather interruption. The Park successfully completed the much awaited paving project and new roads were readily received by the community in time for high season traffic and flow.

Summer, 2022 saw a shift in leadership at FOHI as our President took early retirement from the Board. The VP stepped in as acting to see the year finish up for the Board. With the departure of the President, several key positions also departed - Education Director for the People's Park Project, Outreach Director and, in September, the Events Director. Our Construction Director returned and a new position was filled for Community Relations Director during nomination 2022. A quick transition took place to keep the pace of FOHI on track.

In September, 2022, FOHI applied for an A-Tax Grant to initiate a potential renovation project for the Hunting Island Nature Center and Interpretive Classroom, as offered and discussed, by Park Manager Brandon Goff. We applied and presented and were awarded \$35,000. The FOHI Board generously added \$75,000 at our September 2022 meeting for a total renovation package of \$110,000.00. This will be the signature goal and achievement for FOHI calendar year 2023, with full credit to Friends of Hunting Island for funding and execution.

Our successful Adopt-a-Nest program for Sea Turtle Conservation had a great year of donations and collected \$2600. Nests are \$50.00 each and we are always delighted to take this program one step further each year and engage with the adoptee's and their visits.

In September, 2022, the Rotary Club of the Lowcountry - Beaufort presented FOHI with a generous contribution of \$1,000 which went to the purchase an additional beach wheelchair for our accessibility initiative.

Several key projects were completed in the Fall of 2022 with the return of our Construction Director. The Campground Host Hut was ordered and paid for by FOHI, serving as an additional location to facilitate the flow of Campground registration.

Our beloved Caretta, the ATV that supports the FOHI Sea Turtle Conservation Program on the ground with mobility and supplies, was in need of an overhead space for weather protection which was approved by the Board. Construction crew and HISP worked together to collaborate a solution and was completed in December, 2022.

Sand dune fence repair was on the calendar for October, 2022 and was completed. This will be an ongoing restoration project yearly for the protection of the dunes and erosion.

October, 2022 saw the re-launch of our beloved Shorebird Stewardship Program at North Beach. In conjunction with Audubon of South Carolina and our newly appointed Director, a successful program was put together and marketed for Membership and Social Media. It was important to get this launched prior to membership as our volunteer initiative was in place and this was a great opportunity to get the word out and jump start the program.

Membership was automated for online registration and renewal only. Months of planning and logistics took place to achieve this goal with our Technology Director. Leadership decided it would be a good opportunity to define the Core Programs for Friends of Hunting Island and present membership renewal and new members with an option to choose a volunteer category at sign up. These categories are: Lighthouse, Sea Turtle Conservation, Environment, Shorebird Stewardship, Education, Special Events and Construction. At our November 1, 2022 launch, we received over 250 registrations in one day; with a more than 50% volunteer sign up.

Also in November, 2022 we initiated the relaunch of the Shorebird Stewardship Program through our new Director. In collaboration with Audubon South Carolina, the marketing team put together information to facilitate enthusiasm in the community for steward volunteers. We are happy to announce that two banded Piping Plovers were discovered in November and December with information collected and sent to Audubon for tracking.

Marketing has been running on all cylinders and Social Media has proven out very successful with Facebook eclipsing 10k followers and Instagram just shy of 5k. The Newsletter continues to be a tremendous source of messaging and we are able to see immediate results in the metrics produced from our Website. The website continues to evolve through interactions, and has become an invaluable resource of information to our members and followers. We implemented a sales channel on the website with the launch of *Wild Island Nature*, and was a powerful tool for ticket sales for the Pelican Plunge.

New slate was unanimously approved for 2023 at the November, 2022 Annual Meeting.
