

PRESERVATION  
ESTD SOCIETY 1920  
of CHARLESTON

March 31, 2026

Honorable Senator Ed Sutton, District 20  
Honorable Senator Larry Grooms, District 37  
Honorable Senator Sean Bennett, District 38  
Honorable Senator Tom Fernandez, District 39  
Honorable Senator Deon Tedder, District 42  
Honorable Senator Chip Campsen, District 43  
Honorable Senator Brian Adams, District 44  
Post Office Box 142  
Columbia, S.C. 29202-0142

**Re: S. 508, Monument and Memorial Protection**

Via scstatehouse.gov email portal

Dear Senators,

On behalf of the Preservation Society of Charleston (PSC), we write in opposition to S. 508, amendments to the South Carolina Heritage Act, for two key reasons. First, a strict prohibition on adding new written information on the same property where historic markers and monuments are located will impede public education. Historic literacy is a value deeply held by South Carolinians. In public spaces, that value can almost always be enhanced through additive factual information produced by qualified historians.

Second, allowing enforcement by any individual will have a chilling effect on the production of new markers and memorials. Limiting sovereign immunity in the manner proposed will have the reverse impact intended when the public interest to be promoted by the law is the commemoration of the state's history.

The PSC is a non-profit membership organization founded in 1920 to preserve the history and special character of Charleston. Today, we represent over 4,000 members and our work has expanded throughout the Lowcountry. Our team builds on the legacy of our founders through advocacy and education initiatives.

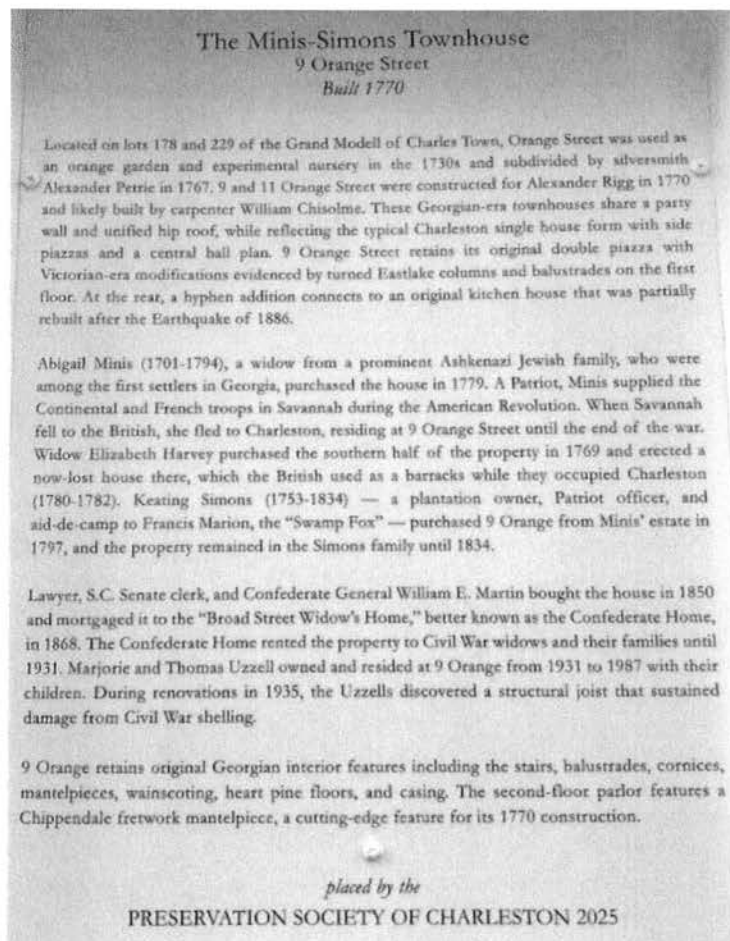
Our Historic Markers program, now in its 66th year, interpretes Charleston's history in the public realm. Each of the 169 markers we have produced for property owners over the years are viewable along public right of ways and online at: [www.preservationsociety.org/marker-map-page](http://www.preservationsociety.org/marker-map-page). As this program has evolved, we have witnessed a dramatic shift in the accessibility of modernized research tools. The stakes are higher to interpret public spaces better given the abundance of information about the past that has come to light through more readily accessible archival resources.

As a demonstration of how our marker program has adapted to these changes and responded to the wider public demand for more in-depth storytelling, consider the following images of existing PSC markers on homes at 35 Church Street and 9 Orange Street in Charleston. Both tell unique stories related to the American Revolution. Yet the Orange Street marker, erected in 2025, tells a much more detailed story that speaks not only to the occupants of the house, but to Charleston's place in our national story, and provides a unique opportunity to

educate citizens of the state of South Carolina and visitors alike.



35 Church Street



9 Orange Street

We recognize that markers placed in the private realm are not subject to the terms of the Heritage Act. But the point is apt in the context of monuments and memorials. We collectively gain as a community when we learn our history through interpretive signage, particularly in the places where history happened. Depriving the public of additional contextual information about historic properties is not just a lost opportunity, it falsely suggests that history is a static discipline.

The PSC has also sponsored several State Historical Markers, in partnership with the State Department of Archives and History. The Gibbes Landing marker, unveiled on June 7, 2024, marks the site of the British invasion that preceded the Siege of Charleston in 1780. This marker currently contains a QR code that students of history can access to learn more information than presented on the sign due to character limitations. The QR code directs users to the materials used in the marker unveiling ceremony including historic photographs that are an aid to the interpretation of the site. These materials do not editorialize the marker; rather, they add to and expand the story for the benefit of the public and to encourage a wider understanding of a story that is critical to Charleston's history (see attached).

In conclusion, we urge you to take every effort to maintain public trust in the interpretation of sites significant to South Carolina's history. As our knowledge and understanding of history continues to evolve, please consider the value in allowing for an evolution in how the lives of those from the past are told.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Turner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian R. Turner  
President & CEO

Encls.

Courtesy of Joel Caldwell.



# GIBBES LANDING

at Halsey Creek

## HISTORIC MARKER DEDICATION EVENT

**JOIN US in CELEBRATING**  
the history of a tidal creek and its people

PRESERVATION  
ESTD SOCIETY 1920  
of CHARLESTON



**Friday, June 7, 2024 | 6 - 8 pm**

10th Avenue between Gordon Street  
and Winyah Alley, Charleston, SC

BLOCK PARTY WITH FOOD TRUCKS TO FOLLOW.  
RAIN OR SHINE OR HIGH TIDE.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

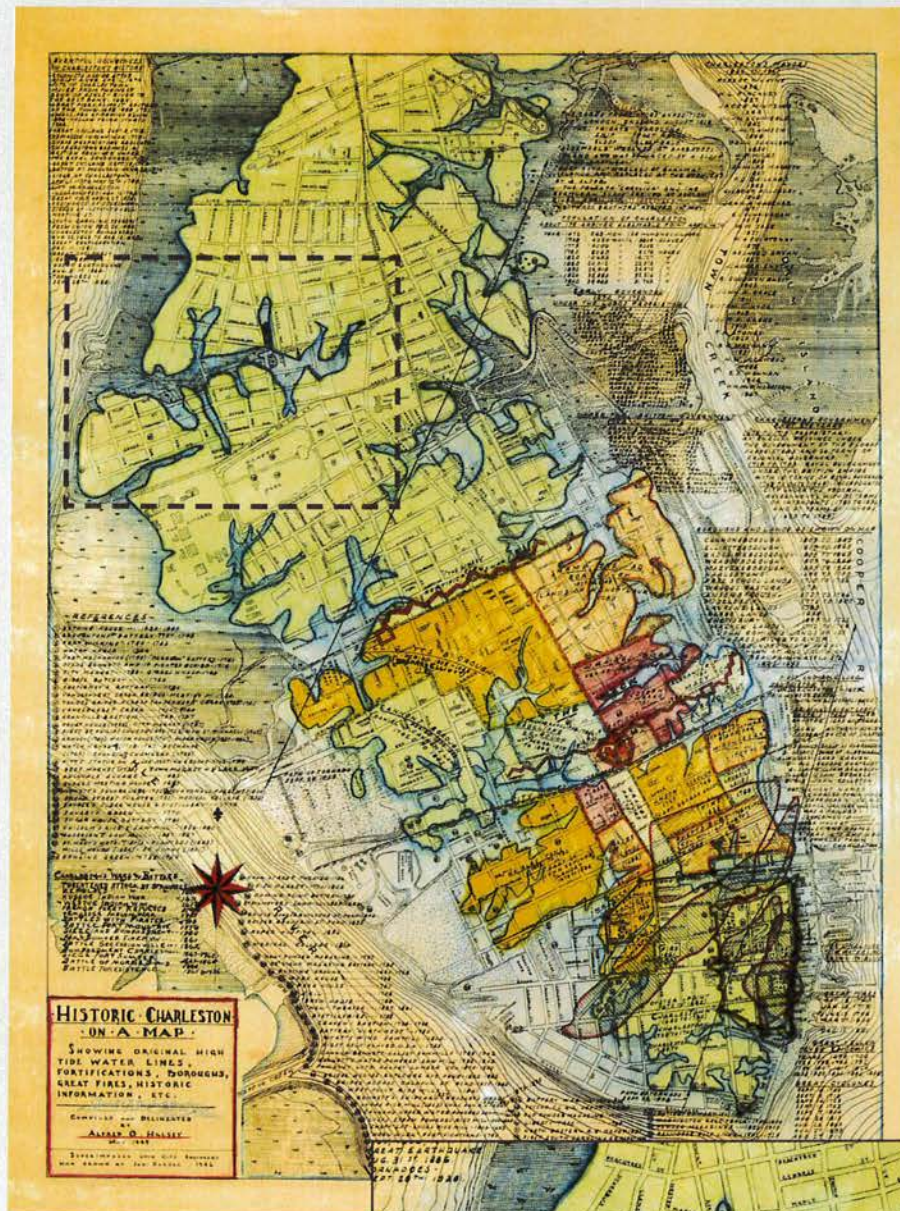


## Gibbes Landing State Historic Marker

*At the mouth of this tidal creek is the colonial-era site of Gibbes Landing. Located on a low bluff off the Ashley River, it was part of a plantation owned by John Gibbes and known as Orange Grove or The Grove. In spring 1780, British and Hessian soldiers encamped at the plantation after marching south down the Charleston Neck. The landing subsequently became an important supply point for the Siege of Charleston, one of the worst Patriot losses of the American Revolution.*

*From the river's west bank, British forces ferried artillery, provisions, and trench building materials to Gibbes Landing, the Neck's closest firm landing to Charleston proper. Sailors and enslaved people moved the supplies to other nearby positions. British forces besieged the city for six weeks and occupied it until December 1782. Any remnants of the landing were likely lost when this creek was flooded to create temporary Lake Juanita for the 1901-02 Charleston Exposition.*

*Sponsored by The Preservation Society of Charleston  
and The M.A.R.S.H. Project, 2023*



1949 Halsey Map, courtesy of SC Historical Society.

★ Location of historic marker



# Historic Timeline of Halsey Creek and Wagener Terrace Neighborhood

## **1. Indigenous Territory, pre-1670:**

The low bluff that is now the contemporary neighborhood of Wagener Terrace was first settled by indigenous people who seasonally hunted and gathered in the marshes, waterways, and maritime forests of the Lowcountry. When English colonists and enslaved Africans arrived around 1670, the area was home to indigenous Cusabo people who lived and traveled along the Kiawah River, now known as the Ashley River.

## **2. Colonial Foundations, 1670-1700:**

Charles Towne Landing, on the west bank of the Ashley River, was founded in 1670 by English colonists and named after King Charles II. At the time, the territory was still controlled by the Kiawah tribe of the Cusabo people, who initially invited the English to the area as allies. The Kiawah sought support in their efforts to avoid conflict with the Westo tribe, who waged war and enslaved neighboring indigenous groups. By the first decade of the 1700s, however, the English had forcibly removed the Kiawah and took control of all lands adjacent to the Ashley and Cooper Rivers. The Kiawah moved to the barrier islands and merged with other indigenous groups fleeing colonial violence and enslavement. Charles Towne, which relocated to the peninsula in 1680, became the capital of the Carolina colony and an important hub of English colonial expansion.

## **3. Establishment of The Grove Plantation, 1700-1780:**

In the first decade of the 1700s, the east bank of the Ashley River across from Charles Towne Landing emerged as a fertile and productive colonial plantation, dependent on enslaved labor. As the lower peninsula became the center of commercial activity for Charles Towne, the Grove Plantation was optimally positioned between the city and the countryside. By 1769, the property spanned 232 acres from the Ashley River and the current site of Hampton Park under the ownership of the Gibbes family. The Grove Plantation contained beautiful gardens, a pinery (similar to a greenhouse) for growing pineapples, along with a deep-water landing for maritime trade, known as Gibbes Landing.



Faden's plan of the Siege of Charlestown (Charleston), from Charles Stedman's *History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War*, 1794.



The Investiture of Charleston, S.C. by the English army, showing the position of each corps, 1780.

#### 4. The Grove Plantation during the American Revolution, 1780:

During the American Revolution, in March 1780, the Grove Plantation became a key site for the British Siege of Charleston. Under the command of Sir Henry Clinton, British forces ferried artillery and supplies from the west bank of the Ashley River to the peninsula utilizing Gibbes Landing and the property's tidal creek. Clinton set up his headquarters at the Grove Plantation and thousands of British troops encamped on the grounds as they laid siege to the city of Charleston for six weeks. Much of the plantation and the main house were destroyed during the siege and rebuilt after the war.

#### 5. A Changing Landscape, 19th Century:

Following the American Revolution and the death of John Gibbes, the Grove passed through several owners, including the Vesey and Lowndes families. It is believed that Denmark Vesey resided on the property for a short time before purchasing his freedom from Captain Joseph Vesey in 1800. Gradually, the expansive plantation was subdivided and sold off into smaller plots that also became farms, such as Dunnemann Farm. Part of the plantation near modern-day Hampton Park also became the grounds of the famous Washington Race Course, and during the Civil War, was used as a prisoner of war camp for Union soldiers. In 1881, Frederick W. Wagener, a German immigrant and successful dry goods merchant, purchased part of the remaining Grove Plantation along the Ashley River, which included the main house and Gibbes Landing.



C. 1790 main house at the Grove Plantation, now called Lowndes Grove, 1921, from "Historic Houses of South Carolina" by Harriette Kershaw Leiding.



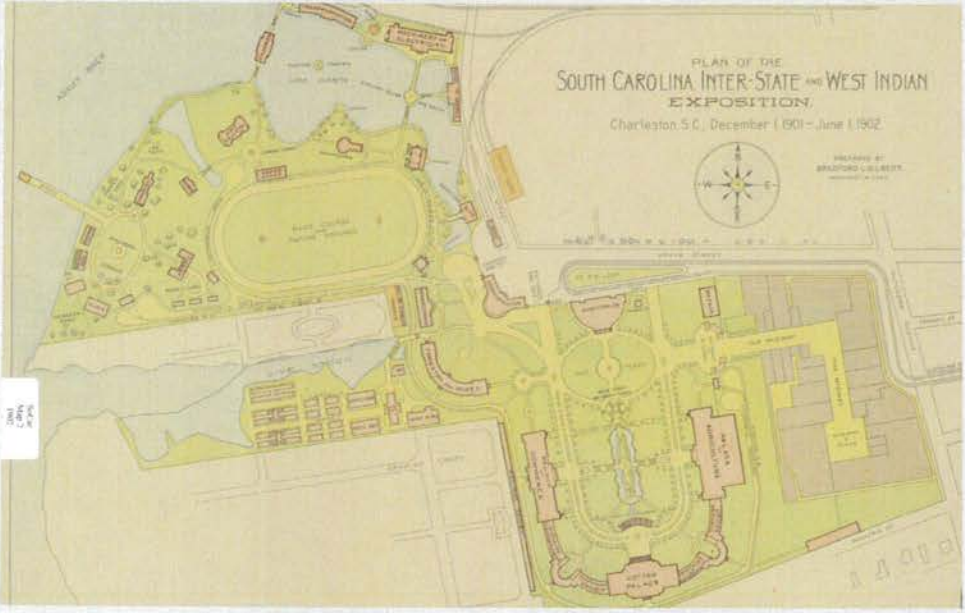
*"A monument to enterprise, the Inter-State and West Indian Exposition grounds,"  
Charleston, S.C., 1902. New York: Underwood & Underwood.*

## **6. The South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition, 1901-1902:**

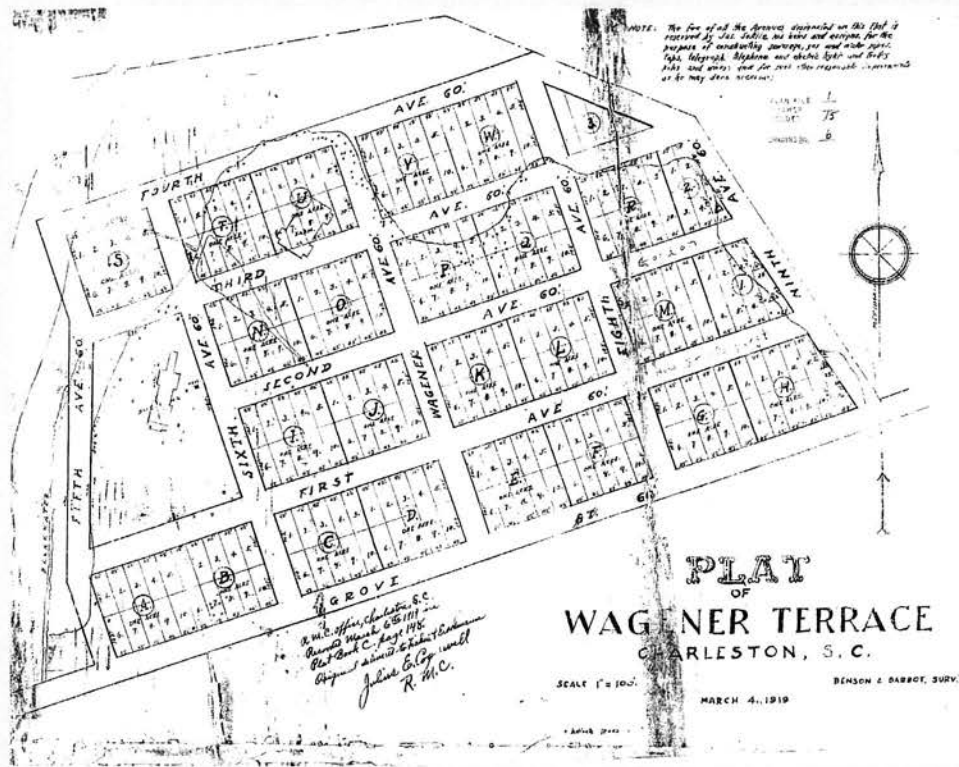
At the turn of the 20th century, city leaders, including Frederick Wagener, organized an exposition to highlight the commercial potential of South Carolina and the role of Charleston as its main port. As president of the exposition, Wagener volunteered his lands to be the site of the exposition and an elaborate building campaign began. Millions of feet of lumber were brought in to construct prominent temporary buildings for the exposition, which included the "Palaces" of Agriculture, Commerce, Cotton, in addition to buildings such as "the Negro Building," intended to display Black progress in southern agriculture and industry. The tidal creek near Gibbes Landing was also dammed and flooded to create Lake Juanita, which featured an electric fountain, gondola rides, and a paved promenade along the lake's shore. Although 600,000 visitors attended the exposition, including Mark Twain and President Theodore Roosevelt, the exposition was not profitable and considered a financial failure. The buildings were torn down, and the tidal creek eventually reclaimed the lake, making way for the next phase in the area's history.



*Panorama of the Charleston trade exposition with the racecourse/parade grounds and main auditorium at center (Bradford L Gilbert, architect), courtesy of Duke University Libraries.*



*"Plan of the South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition" printed by Bormay & Co., New York.*



1919 plat of the new Wagener Terrace neighborhood by Benson & Barbot.



St. Margaret Street, westward from Eleventh Avenue, showing new houses constructed from 1940 Yearbook.



*Lowndes Grove and surrounding area in 1926. Courtesy of Kevin Eberle, via Wagener Terrace Neighborhood Association Facebook page.*

### **7. The Development of Wagener Terrace, 1919-1990s:**

In 1919, Frederick W. Wagener sold his lands to James Sottile, one of five prominent brothers who immigrated to Charleston from Sicily, Italy in the late 19th century. Sottile soon platted Wagener Terrace as one of Charleston's early suburbs. Lots were sold off in the following years, with most homes constructed between the 1930s and early 1960s. Many of the first residents of the new Wagener Terrace neighborhood were Jewish, Greek, Italian, and other immigrant families. By the late 1940s, the neighborhood was also home to the first conservative Jewish synagogue in Charleston at 78 Gordon Street. Following desegregation and the gains of the Civil Rights movement, Wagener Terrace also became home to numerous middle- and upper-class African American families. In the 1970s, many of the neighborhood's Jewish residents relocated to West Ashley and the synagogue was sold to the Greater St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).



*Gibbes Landing and Halsey Creek Tour as part of May 2023 Preservation Month, courtesy of the Preservation Society of Charleston.*

## **8. The 21st Century and the Future of Community Preservation, 1990s to the present:**

Today, Wagener Terrace is a diverse community made up of eclectic, historic homes and beautiful views of the Ashley River and Halsey Creek. On any given day you will find many of its residents walking and playing outside, enjoying tree-lined streets and fresh breezes from the river and creek. The community, however, is experiencing significant challenges from flooding as sea levels rise and a loss of continuity and memory as it undergoes changes due to growth pressure. Like much of downtown Charleston, the price of homes in the neighborhood have increased dramatically. The question now is: How can the City of Charleston and the residents of Wagener Terrace preserve and remember the many layers of their neighborhood history, while proactively planning for the future? We hope that acknowledging this complex and layered history will help advance those efforts.

In recent years, the neighborhood has come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review for demolition of historic materials, in an effort to protect its unique character. The Preservation Society of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation recently created a **Wagener Terrace Area Character Appraisal** document that evaluates the neighborhood's historic evolution and distinctive architectural elements. This resource can help residents promote sensitive and appropriate alterations, and advocate for the preservation of their neighborhood.



910, 908, and 906 Ashley Avenue. Photo by Kerry Campion.



26, 24, and 22 Darlington Avenue. Photo by Kerry Campion.

## EVENT SPONSORS

### PRESERVATION ESTD SOCIETY 1920 of CHARLESTON

Founded in 1920, the Preservation Society of Charleston (PSC) is the oldest grassroots preservation organization in the nation. The PSC is more resilient than ever as it enters its second century of recognizing, protecting, and advocating for the Lowcountry's historic places, while serving as a strong advocacy leader for citizens concerned about preserving Charleston's distinctive character, quality of life, and diverse neighborhoods. Anyone can become a Preservation Society member. For more information and to learn how to join, please visit [preservationsociety.org](http://preservationsociety.org).



The M.A.R.S.H. Project is a grassroots and community-based program working to revitalize and advocate for the unique marshland ecosystems in Charleston, South Carolina.

(Insert pluff mud here!)

We started T.M.P. as a personal project among three friends. We wanted to see if we could revitalize and steward one-acre of marsh on the peninsula. We were all new-ish parents at the time and wanted our little ones to experience this with us. After hosting a cleanup of the area, which drew out about 50 volunteers, we realized our community was itching for more restorative efforts.

We are proud to share that, as of April 2023, we have become a program of the Carolina Ocean Alliance, a 501(c)3 nonprofit. With their help, T.M.P. is working to ecologically revitalize their neighborhoods through volunteer efforts - cleaning up debris, planting native plant species, citizen-science monitoring, and community and educational outreach.

Courtesy of Joel Caldwell.



We are the Carolina Ocean Alliance, a 501(c)3 nonprofit that advances community-driven solutions through strategic coalitions of our partners, develops the next generation of leaders, and fosters a culture of environmental stewardship.

To heal our world, and ourselves in the process, we must see ourselves as a part of the natural world, not apart from it. This begins by reframing our understanding of “communities” to embrace their ecological definition of all interconnected life that sustains and regenerates itself within a shared area. The Carolina Ocean Alliance believes in the power of partnerships led by local people and guided by local and traditional knowledge to promote equitable and sustainable community-driven solutions. We are committed to using our network-of-networks model to collaborate with local and regional partners to solve the challenges facing our community and communities like ours around the world. To achieve this, our approach is based on community ecology where each individual and organization has a role to play and collaboration is necessary to promote a resilient community and a future fueled by hope.



The M.A.R.S.H. Project

*Get involved at [themarshproject.com](http://themarshproject.com).*



COA

CAROLINA OCEAN ALLIANCE

*Learn more at [carolinaoceanalliance.org](http://carolinaoceanalliance.org).*

*Courtesy of Joel Caldwell.*



PRESERVATION  
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*Learn more about our advocacy work at [preservationsociety.org](http://preservationsociety.org).*