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Oxbow island added to Black River Preserve

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Cypress trees grow out of the Black River. (AP Photo/John A. AFFANE)

ANDREWS - In terms of the 1,700 acre Black River Preserve, a new 80-acre holding might not be much. But the large oxbow island swallowed in wetlands is a big swath of habitat that can support

critters from bald eagles to alligators.

Because the Black River flows around the island as well as by it, that much more of the river's prized declining habitat is preserved, said Maria Whitehead of the Nature Conservancy. The property sits along the north bank of the stream downstream from the Pine Tree Landing outside Andrews, north of Charleston.

Photos



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The Black is one of the quietest and most significant quilts of Lowcountry conservation being sewn, a total of more than 47,000 acres so far under some sort of conservation easement, with 1,000-year-old cypress trees in blackwater environs considered vital to the region's animal and plant life as well as its natural

landscape.

Among the region's outdoors enthusiasts, the Black is prized for gleaming jungle of hardwood bottoms.

The Nature Conservancy now holds more than 1,700 acres in the "Narrows" downstream of the S.C. 41 bridge, 10 miles of critical cypress bottoms that are considered the heart of the holdings. The 80-acre Freeman holding helps fill in a gap in the lower portion of the conservancy's preserve.

"It's a wonderful addition to a decade of extraordinary work protecting one of the most beautiful rivers in the nation," said Dana Beach, of the Coastal Conservation League. "It's a world-class but remarkably little known natural resource."

The property purchase was a collaboration between the conservancy, a land protection environmental nonprofit with offices in Charleston, and TD Bank. It was bought from a private, absentee owner.

"It's exciting to see a corporate entity stepping outside of the regulatory framework to offset the consumptive cost of doing business," Whitehead said. "I've never heard of another company that accounts for and offsets their paper use by protecting North American forests."

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