



PHOTO CREDIT | PAUL NURNBERG

SOUTH CAROLINA

Nature is hard at work for South Carolinians. Investing in natural infrastructure, such as wetlands, forests, and farms, is critical to supporting South Carolina's economy and securing our way of life. The benefits of these resources include:

PUBLIC SAFETY

Reduced Flood Risk: From 2000 to 2023, flooding cost 25 lives, \$39.8 million in crop damage, and \$263.4 million in property damage in South Carolina.¹ During the same period, hurricanes and severe storms cost 11 lives, \$2.3 million in crop damage and \$359.1 million in property damage. Protecting and restoring salt marshes, dunes, oyster reefs, forests, wetlands, floodplains and open space can dramatically reduce the risk of future damage. For example, just 15 feet of salt marsh can absorb 50 percent of wave energy from storm surge.² The protection value of undeveloped floodplains along the Black and Coastal Waccamaw/Pee Dee Rivers—a region with a history of heavy inland flooding—is about \$70 million.³

Reduced Wildfire Damage: South Carolina wildfires had an economic cost of \$76.4 million in direct damage to property from 2000 to 2023.⁴ Buffering residential areas with well-managed protected open space and investing in forest restoration can reduce wildfire risks to people and property.

MILITARY READINESS

Boosted Training Resources and National Security: The Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program facilitates cost-sharing agreements between the military, federal agencies,

state and local governments, and accredited land trusts to protect land near military installations. From FY 2005 through FY 2024, the Department of Defense and partners contributed over \$107.5 million to protect 35,312 acres in the state. Keeping those lands undeveloped provides space and security for military exercises.⁵

PROTECTED HOUSING

Rising tides and storm surges have damaged the shoreline and inundated roads at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort.⁶ The Nature Conservancy and station leaders, through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, are implementing a large-scale living shoreline to help protect the station's Laurel Bay housing complex. More than 250 Marine and civilian volunteers have built nearly 1,000 feet of reef as of September 2025.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Supported farmers and fishermen: Thriving South Carolina farms uphold the state's \$116 billion agriculture industry and 680,000 agriculture jobs. Our seafood industry contributed over \$78 million to the South Carolina economy in 2022.⁷ These industries depend on conservation, from private land stewardship to the protection of salt marshes that nurture crabs, shrimp and juvenile fish.

Secured Forestry Jobs: South Carolina's forestry industry generates \$23.2 billion annually and supports over 100,000 jobs.⁸ For every 10 jobs created directly

by the forestry industry, another 11 jobs, on average, are created elsewhere in South Carolina. Keeping forestry profitable means protecting our state's wood basket—healthy, conserved forested lands.

Generated Outdoor Recreation Income: In 2023, outdoor recreation in South Carolina generated \$8.6 billion, supporting over 86,000 jobs.⁹ In 2022, residents and tourists spent \$2.1 billion on recreational fishing services and supplies, supporting 18,120 jobs.¹⁰ Hunters spent \$704 million on hunting-related purchases, supporting over 6,400 jobs.¹¹ There were

1.3 million visitors to the state's National Parks and historic sites in 2023. These visitors generated \$80.9 million in economic activity and supported 1,060 jobs.¹² These robust economic drivers depend on healthy forests, rivers and wildlife.



For the full report

Nature's Dividends: The Economic, Health, and Safety Benefits of Investing in Nature.



PHOTO CREDIT | ANDREW KORNYLAK

1. Center for Emergency Management and Homeland Security. 2025. "SHELDUS Version 23.0." February 19. <https://cemhs.asu.edu/sheldus/metadata>. 2. Shepard, Christine C., Caitlin M. Crain, and Michael W. Beck. 2011. "The Protective Role of Coastal Marshes: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." PLOS ONE 6 (11): e27374. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0027374>. 3. GEOSCIENCE Consultants, The Nature Conservancy, Open Space Institute, and Southern Environmental Law Center. n.d. The Value of Undeveloped Floodplains to Downstream Flood Reduction Along the Black and Coastal Waccamaw/Pee Dee Rivers in South Carolina. 4. Center for Emergency Management and Homeland Security. 2025. "SHELDUS Version 23.0." February 19. <https://cemhs.asu.edu/sheldus/metadata>. 5. Department of Defense. 2025. REPI State Fact Sheets South Carolina. 6. The Nature Conservancy. 2024. Securing Our Coasts. Nature South Carolina. 7. NOAA Fisheries. 2024. Fisheries Economics of the United States 2022. Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-248B. U.S. Department of Commerce. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2024-11/FEUS-2022-SPO248B.pdf>. 8. Von Nessen, Joseph. 2022. The Economic Impact of South Carolina's Forestry Industry. South Carolina Forestry Commission. <https://www.scfc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/economicimpactofforestry2022.pdf>. 9. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2024. "Outdoor Recreation 2023." Outdoor Recreation, November 20. <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>. 10. American Sportfishing Association. 2022. Economic Contributions of Recreational Fishing: South Carolina. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wildlife Sport Fish & Restoration, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. 11. Sportsmen's Alliance. 2022. Economic Contributions Hunting: South Carolina. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wildlife Sport Fish & Restoration, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. 12. National Park Service. 2024. "Visitor Spending Effects - Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending - Social Science." September 10. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>.