

## Living In Harmony with Nature in the Lowcountry

**Location:** Okatie, SC

**Population:** 270

**Size:** 860 acres

**Type of property:** Private community

**Type of membership:**

Sustainable Communities Program

**Member since:** January 2006

**Certified since:** February 2018



Oldfield, South Carolina

The Lowcountry is a geographical and cultural region along the South Carolina coast that is defined by its subtropical climate, its architecture, and its cuisine. This climate has resulted in a

unique natural environment that is characterized by cypress-tupelo swamps, savannas, and longleaf pine sandhills. With this setting comes unique challenges in trying to live in harmony with nature, but from an early date, Oldfield Community Association has embarked on a path to think more carefully about its future.

Oldfield's relationship began with Audubon International (AI) in 2002, when their Greg Norman Signature golf course joined the AI Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf. A short two years later and the Oldfield Club had already achieved certification in the program. Management was then eager to expand the efforts to the whole community, and a few years later Oldfield joined AI's Green Neighborhoods Program, a project-based approach to recognize environmental improvement efforts. Oldfield was a distinguished Green Neighborhoods member for many years, and in 2015 they were the only recipient of our Neighborhood for Nature award. It was with that momentum, and with some changes already taking place in the community as it transitioned from being developer owned to becoming a member equity club, that the residents said, "We want more!" and they joined the Sustainable Communities Program.



Oldfield is replete with magnificent moss-draped specimen live oaks.

Building off of the work they'd begun in the Green Neighborhoods Program, Oldfield was able to work their way through the Sustainable Communities Program in record time!

Oldfield received designation as an Audubon International Certified Sustainable Community in February of 2018, and they are the fastest community to ever achieve certification, completing the work in only a year and a half. It is a testament to the commitment of Oldfield's leadership to this work that they were able to complete the program in such a short time, as it typically takes most communities at least 3 years, if not more.

Since joining the program in 2016, Oldfield has brought together the efforts of residents, local organizations, and the community staff and management. To become certified, Sustainable Communities Program members must develop and implement management practices and policies according to a community-driven Long Term Sustainability Plan that has timelines and measurable goals addressing 15 focus areas. To preserve its

natural and recreational amenities, Oldfield is implementing action items from their adopted long-term sustainability plan and measuring initial progress towards its chosen sustainability targets. Oldfield's accomplishments include:

- **Food Sourcing:** Oldfield is home to a community garden, and with time they hope to expand the number of beds. There is also a Garden Club in the community, and they aim to promote the Garden Club through their monthly newsletter, e-blasts, etc. This will also help get the word out about produce at the farmer's market.
- **Waste Reduction:** Oldfield is aiming to increase recycling efforts by providing more visible opportunities for their members to recycle. Members came together to build and install recycling receptacles and they can be found all around the community.
- **Volunteerism & Civic Engagement:** Oldfield provides many volunteer opportunities for residents to get involved, such as tallow removal and river clean-ups. They have also begun tracking the number of volunteers at each event.
- **Green Cleaning:** Oldfield set a goal to reduce their overall number of cleaning products used and to convert to

plant based cleaning products. They achieved this goal in 2017 for their venues. They are also creating procedures for "green" cleaning for their housekeeping staff.

- **Education:** Oldfield has set out to develop educational material for their residents regarding environmental practices, such as pest management. The pest management list will help homeowners with their lawn care and critter control.

- **Open Space & Land Use:** A long-term goal of Oldfield is to repurpose some of their greenspace in to a wildlife scenic area. As a plan is developed, and funding is acquired, this will help to enhance habitat for wildlife.



An aerial view of Oldfield overlooking the Outfitters Center and three docks that extend out on to the Okatie River.



Jill Kombrink, Oldfield's Staff Naturalist, with a barred owl

- **Healthy Living:** Oldfield provides ample opportunities for residents/guests to be physically active i.e. equestrian facility, cycling maps, nature trails, and community sponsored yearly fitness challenges. They also provide healthy living tips in the sports director’s monthly newsletter. Additionally, they offer healthy eating choices in their dining venues, having at least one choice on the menu.
- **Water Quality & Conservation:** Oldfield initiated monthly water quality testing in their ponds to start gathering data to track the health of their water bodies. Additionally, they are working to establish a rain barrel program to help increase water conservation and decrease runoff.
- **Recreation amenities:** Oldfield aims to be more sustainable with their recreational facilities. For example, they are investigating converting the pools to salt water and using solar power in their amenities. Additionally, they will begin to offer eco-friendly golf tees at the Golf Club.
- **Planning, Zoning, Building & Development:** Oldfield hopes to increase awareness about green building practices with their residents, and one way they’re trying to accomplish this is by distributing a ‘green building resource materials list.’ In addition, they are also trying to develop a list of ‘green’ resource materials and manufacturers to include on their website.



Jill Kombrink (Oldfield’s Staff Naturalist), and her committee members, receiving their Sustainable Communities Award at their designation ceremony in February 2018.

Jill Kombrink, Oldfield’s Staff Naturalist, is to be commended for her hard work and dedication to this process, and she was recognized for her efforts with the Environmental Planning and Stewardship Award upon completion of Oldfield’s Long-Term Sustainability Plan. In addition, Jill had a dedicated sustainability committee that offered their support and expertise to the process. “Oldfield residents, management and staff joined in a common cause to mold the community

in accordance with the precepts established by Audubon International,” noted Steve Massas, Oldfield Club board member. “Oldfield has doubled its emphasis on sound ecological and sustainable practices to ensure Oldfield remains a community attractive to future generations of environmentally conscious individuals. We look forward to a long term, mutually beneficial relationship with Audubon International.”

Living at Oldfield offers a unique experience, as well as an opportunity for adventure. From golf, kayaking, horseback riding, or fishing from Oldfield’s private docks, or whether its hiking the nature trail or simply taking in the gently rolling landscape, there is no shortage of ways to connect with outdoors in Oldfield. Activities at Oldfield are as diverse as the rich ecology of its surroundings.

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Signage on the nature trail to point out the community bee hives in the background.