

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH 2, 2023

MEDIA CONTACTS

Leslie Lenhardt, Esquire

Senior Managing Attorney, South Carolina Environmental Law Project

leslie@scelp.org

(843) 527-0078

Queen Quet

Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation

gullgeeco@aol.com

Jessie White, South Coast Office Director

Coastal Conservation League

jessiew@sccl.org

(843) 522-1800

Developer drops its appeal of permit decision on proposed luxury resort

A developer hoping to construct a luxury resort on Beaufort County's Bay Point Island, a shifting, biologically rich barrier island at the mouth of Port Royal Sound, dropped its appeal of a Circuit Court decision from July 2022 upholding the denial of a special permit to build on the island. On Tuesday, February 28, the South Carolina Court of Appeals issued an Order dismissing the developer's appeal. The decision marks the likely end of any hopes of constructing such a resort on the island.

Bay Point Island, LLC initially appealed the Circuit Court decision upholding the Beaufort County Zoning Board of Appeals' denial of a permit that would have allowed the developer to move forward with its plans to construct a luxury resort on the island.

"With very few remaining natural barrier islands left in South Carolina, and particularly those as culturally and ecologically rich as Bay Point, their protection is needed now more than ever," said Amy Armstrong, Executive Director of the South Carolina Environmental Law Project. "We are grateful that the developer reversed course on its luxury resort plans and are optimistic for a conservation outcome for this valuable resource."

In addition to being a haven for coastal wildlife and a highly erosional barrier island, Bay Point is also a significant site for the Gullah/Geechee Nation and the Gullah/Geechee Fishing Association, who have relied on fishing in the waters around the island to sustain

their families, their livelihood, and their unique cultural heritage, which has been rooted in the area for over three centuries.

"Rest assured that our Gullah/Geechee ancestors that worked the waters surrounding Bay Point and who no doubt left tracks in its sands of that place are pleased that a resort will not destroy it," said Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation. "We pray that the land will now officially become the 'preserve' that it is zoned as by Beaufort County and be conserved, preserved and protected for future generations of not only the native people here, but also the future generations of sea creatures and birds that will be born there as this place is left under disturbed by destructionment."

This is a big victory for conservation on South Carolina's coast, and SCELPA and its partners will continue to fight against any development of this sensitive barrier island, bringing it closer to permanent preservation and protection.

"The developer's decision to walk away from their appeal of the permit denial for a luxury resort on Bay Point Island is a major victory for the people of Beaufort County and for the flora and fauna that thrive on this dynamic, undeveloped barrier island in its natural state," said Jessie White, South Coast Office Director at Coastal Conservation League. "This decision brings us another step closer to realizing a permanent conservation outcome for Bay Point, which benefits us all."

###

*The **South Carolina Environmental Law Project** is a nonprofit public interest law firm. We use our legal expertise to protect land, water and communities across South Carolina. Learn more at www.scelp.org.*

*The **Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition** operates in accordance with the mission of the Gullah/Geechee Nation and spans from North Carolina to northern Florida and receives the downward flow of the Savannah River. Learn more at www.gullahgeecheenation.com.*

*Since 1989, the **Coastal Conservation League** has worked to protect the health of the natural resources of the South Carolina coastal plain and ensure a high quality of life for all of the people who live in and love this special place. The Coastal Conservation League is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Learn more and get involved at www.coastalconservationleague.org.*