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**Partner Groups File Coordinated Motions to  
Intervene in Pine Island Case**

Today, four groups filed independent motions to intervene to defend Beaufort County's denial of plans for three (3) 6-hole golf courses on St. Helena Island in the appeal initiated by Pine Island Property Holdings, LLC.

The Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition (filed by the South Carolina Environmental Law Project), The Penn Center (represented by Jack Smith of Nelson Mullins), Coastal Conservation League (represented by Ross Appel of McCullough Khan Appel), and individual landowners (represented by Will Cook of Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC) all filed separate motions seeking to intervene and uphold the Beaufort County Planning Commission's denials based on the Cultural Protection Overlay (CPO) zoning law. The CPO has been in place since the 1990s, which prohibits golf courses, gated communities, and resorts on St. Helena Island, a sea island community that is the epicenter of the Gullah/Geechee culture and people. While these motions were filed separately, this was a coordinated effort among multiple partners to continue to stand behind the St. Helena community.

Despite the long-standing protections of the CPO, a developer has sought to circumvent these community-based rules to build a luxury, gated golf resort on the 502-acre Pine Island/St. Helenaville property on St. Helena Island since entering an option contract to purchase the property for this purpose in October 2021.

On March 1, 2023, Pine Island Property Holdings, LLC officially purchased Pine Island for \$18 million to build an exclusive golf club and resort, despite the CPO prohibiting this type of development. On June 5, the Beaufort County Planning Commission unanimously upheld staff's denial of plans for three (3) 6-hole golf course on Pine Island. On July 5, Pine Island Property Holdings LLC filed an appeal challenging the denial in Circuit Court. The appeal also includes a request for pre-litigation mediation.

Now, our partner organizations are filing to intervene in this appeal to give community members the opportunity to meaningfully participate in pre-litigation mediation for cases where the outcome will impact their ability to pursue a livelihood and support their families, protect their culture, and preserve the rural way of life on St. Helena.

Decades ago, the St. Helena community made clear that its vision for the island's future was a place where generations of Gullah/Geechee families could continue to sustain their rich farming,

hunting, and fishing culture. This vision does not include golf courses, gated communities, and resort developments, which threaten to destroy the cultural way of life for this community, as has occurred on Hilton Head and Daufuskie Islands.

Golf courses, gated communities, and resort developments directly threaten the heritage of the people who live in this important sea island community, which is why these uses have been prohibited by the CPO since its inception in the 1990s. It is also why St. Helena has Beaufort County's most notable concentration of Gullah/Geechee culture and land ownership today.

“As the St. Helena Island Gullah/Geechee that served as the inaugural CPO District Chair and the current Chair, I can let the world know that my people seek to focus on ensuring the sustainability of not only the environment of historic St. Helena Island, but also of our culturally rich community and heritage,” said Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation and Founder of the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition. “These land uses are incompatible with the Gullah/Geechee traditional way of life and more oft than not, lead to the loss of the Gullah/Geechee culture due to the displacement of the people and the loss of access to vital environmental resources that add to our quality of life and sustain us physically and spiritually.”

“For years we’ve been standing with the St. Helena Island community to protect their vision for this nationally significant rural sea island, and this filing is a continuation of that support,” said Jessie White, Coastal Conservation League’s South Coast Office Director. “Rules exist for a reason, and the St. Helena community has worked diligently to defend the CPO’s long-standing protections for their island.”

“The Penn Center has a substantial interest in the three appeals by Appellants ("Pine Island") against the Beaufort County Planning Commission. The Gullah culture centered on St. Helena Island is at risk from the type of development the zoning appeal is about,” said Robert L. Adams, executive director of the Penn Center. “The threat to the entire St. Helena Island community is real, as seen by the virtual collapse of the Gullah population and its culture on Hilton Head Island following the development of similar types of gated communities, golf resort development, and residential sprawl. Instead of one-sided development projects, we need economic growth that serves all the Island's residents.”

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