

# Community Forests: A path to prosperity and connection

## NINE TIMES COMMUNITY FOREST

### NOTABLE BENEFITS



RECREATION



TOURISM



FOREST-BASED PRODUCTS

ACRES: 1,648

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2012

OWNERSHIP: Naturaland Trust

MANAGEMENT: Naturaland Trust

COMMUNITY SERVED: Pickens County, South Carolina

POPULATION: 126,884

TOTAL ACQUISITION COST: \$3,544,000

FUNDING BREAKDOWN:



■ Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

■ Cost Share

For a comprehensive review of the community and economic benefits provided by this forest and others, go to the full report at [www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests](http://www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests)



**Nine Times Community Forest** comprises 1,648 acres of Blue Ridge Escarpment in Pickens County, South Carolina. The forest takes its name from the Nine Times Creek, which passes through the property. The creek was named for a historic Native American trade route connecting several village complexes that crossed the creek nine times. In recent decades, Upstate South Carolina has experienced massive development pressure, losing nearly 100 acres of rural farm and forestland to suburban development each day. When the previous owner attempted to sell the site, touting its potential for residential development, the community asked a local land trust to protect the land. "People were pleading with us to buy this piece of land," recalls Mac Stone, executive director of Naturaland Trust. "This was marketed to be a huge development. Now this whole viewshed is protected."





**Enabling recreation:** Nine Times hosts roughly **3,500–4,000** users annually, most of whom are local and all of whom access the site free of charge. Residents use the forest for climbing, hiking, birding, mountain biking, and hunting. The Trust for Public Land estimates that the recreation value to residents is **\$40,000** per year.

Approximately **1,500** of these users are rock climbers, coming to explore Big Rock Mountain’s hundreds of bouldering and rock-climbing lanes. Although the previous owner had intermittently allowed rock climbing, Nine Times’ conversion to a community forest catapulted usership.

Nine Times has also become popular among hikers, with between 100 and 300 hikers visiting the property each month. In the fall, the area receives a rush of guests coming to view the changing foliage. In the spring, Nine Times is home to an immense wildflower bloom. The forest has also become a popular destination for birders. Mountain biking also attracts around 50 users each year. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, Nine

Times has seen a huge influx of hikers, with managers estimating as many as **150** visitors on weekend days and 15 to 25 visitors on weekdays.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources pays for a lease to allowing hunting, with payments averaging **\$13,800** per year over the last five years supporting maintenance at Nine Times.

**Bolstering tourism:** Nine Times has become not only the most popular climbing destination in the state, but also one of the biggest regional destinations, with climbers traveling from Georgia, North Carolina, and other regions of South Carolina each weekend. The Trust for Public Land estimates Nine Times Community Forest generates **\$70,000** in direct tourism spending that is new to the region.

**Generating timber revenue:** In 2014 and 2015, the land trust completed regeneration timber harvests on 170 acres, raising **\$80,000** in net revenue, which was spent on maintenance and the purchase of additional properties.

This project was completed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and would not have been possible without generous support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

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