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Wednesday, May 19, 2021

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## A vast haven for paddlers in Berkeley's backyard



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SCOTT LYNCH/BERKELEY COUNTY BLUEWAYS/PROVIDED

Whitney and Andrew Oxner paddle down a trail on the Berkeley County Blueways.

## Blueways system features 25 trails, over 235 miles of waterways

BY ANDREW MILLER  
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MONCK'S CORNER — Andrew Oxner grew up in Mount Pleasant and did his share of kayaking and canoeing around the Lowcountry in his youth.

But it wasn't until Oxner, 33, got married that he realized how much he'd been missing on the rivers, lakes and tributaries in nearby Berkeley County. Whitney, Oxner's wife, introduced him to the Berkeley County Blueways, where he quickly discovered a world he didn't know existed.

The Blueways paddling trail system features 25 trails and more than 235 miles of total waterways within the county. The Berkeley Soil and Water Conservation District, along with the county government, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources have served as coordinating agencies with the Blueways organization that was founded more than a decade ago.

"I lived 15 minutes away from the Francis Marion forest and never knew they had these boat landings and kayaking trails," Oxner said. "It's been there all along, right in my backyard, and I never knew these places were out there to explore."

Oxner isn't alone.



The Berkeley Soil and Water Conservation District, along with the county government, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, have served as coordinating agencies with the Blueways organization.

Scott Lynch, the coordinating director for Berkeley Blueways, is hoping to change that. "Berkeley County has more miles of paddle trails than any county not only in South Carolina but in the Southeastern United States," Lynch said. "The problem is that very few people know about the trails. We have this tremendous natural resource right here in Berkeley County and it's not being utilized."

Lynch said even seasoned kayakers and paddlers who have explored the waters of the county for decades know little about the

organization or the trail system it created.

"There are people who have been kayaking for most of their lives that don't know about the Berkeley Blueways," Lynch said.

Three years ago, the Blueways published a 135-page guidebook that detailed the original 23 trails and 175 miles of waterways to help spread the word about the program. The guidebook was recently updated to add two additional trails and 60 more miles

Please see **BLUEWAYS**, Page A4

## Little River resident indicted in Capitol riot

Man faces 7 counts, to remain in custody in Jan. 6 violence

BY RICHARD CAINES  
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LITTLE RIVER — The Little River man accused of storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 has been indicted by a federal grand jury, according to court documents.

Nicholas Languerand, 26, was arrested by the FBI on April 15 on multiple charges in connection with the U.S. Capitol riot that led to five deaths, numerous injuries and questions about security around one of the country's most storied government buildings.



Languerand

Languerand, who lives in the community north of Myrtle Beach, is one of at least six South Carolinians charged with direct or indirect involvement in the riot.

Court records said a grand jury found enough evidence to formally charge Languerand with seven counts including: civil disorder; assaulting or resisting officers using a dangerous weapon; and engaging in an act of physical violence in the Capitol grounds or buildings.

Federal Magistrate Judge Thomas Rogers III ordered Languerand last month to remain in custody due to the weight of evidence against him, history of violence and his use of alcohol or substance abuse.

FBI agents searching Languerand's Little River home found tactical gear, drugs and weapons — including an AR-15 assault weapon with a 60-round capacity.

Rogers' order accused Languerand

Please see **INDICT**, Page A8

## Broadband to expand in mountains

Utilities plan \$150M, 5-year service rollout

BY ANNA B. MITCHELL  
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PICKENS — During a 30-minute Zoom conference to talk about their new broadband internet partnership, executives with Blue Ridge Electric Co-op found the computer screen frozen in their Pickens office.

Zach Hinton, vice president for support services, rejoined the meeting with the rest of his team a few minutes later from his phone, with the video turned off.

"Sorry. We had to jump on my phone. It's, uh, believe it or not, we're having internet issues," Hinton said. "Our facility is not served by our partnership right now. So we're working on it."

It was perhaps the best demonstration of the need for their announcement.

On May 18, Blue Ridge joined with Abbeville-based West Carolina Telephone Cooperative to announce a five-year, \$150 million rollout of broadband internet service throughout Blue

Please see **BROADBAND**, Page A6

## Treehouse retreat that sparked dispute on sale for \$1.75M

One of the Bolt Farm treehouses on Wadmalaw Island. The property that includes four treehouses is up for sale.

FILE/LAUREN PETRACCA/STAFF



BY CHLOE JOHNSON  
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WADMALAW — A controversial property that includes four Instagram-ready treehouses on this rural barrier island is up for sale, four years after the current owners bought it and worked to transform it into an AirBnB destination.

The Bolt Farm Treehouse property, a 35-acre parcel with four "treehouse" cabins raised on stilts, is owned by Seth Bolt, bassist in the band Needtobreathe, and his wife Tori. The

couple originally said they planned to use the site as a retreat for the band and for family, but eventually sought the right to rent out the cabins for short-term stays.

That ignited fierce opposition on Wadmalaw, where many residents prefer seclusion and the zoning is some of the most restrictive in Charleston County. Amid an outpouring of public opposition, the Bolts withdrew their request for year-round rentals in October 2019.

Please see **TREEHOUSE**, Page A8

### Inside

#### SPORTS

2021 PGA Championship adds to rich Charleston golf history. **C1**

#### LOCAL

Wilson says she's committed to full investigation in Sutherland death. **A7**

#### SPORTS

Joyner 'confident' and 'prepared' to be USC's top receiver. **C1**

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Crossword .....B6, C6  
Editorials .....A12  
Food .....D1  
Movies .....B3

Obituaries .....B4  
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Sudoku .....B3  
Television .....B3







PHOTOGRAPHS BY SCOTT LYNCH/BERKELEY COUNTY BLUEWAYS/PROVIDED

The two dozen trails that make up the Blueways vary from easy family-rated trails to half-day excursions and even camping trails for more adventurous explorers.

# Blueways offer history, adventure, a quiet escape

BLUEWAYS, from A1

of waterways. “We want the world to know about us,” Lynch said.

## ‘Paddling through history’

The trails and routes that make up the Blueways system are the same rivers and streams that have been used for millennia.

Long before the first Europeans set foot in North America, Native Americans made these waterways and banks their homes. Archaeologists have found artifacts along the Cooper and Santee rivers that date back 8,000 years to the early Archaic period.

Before there were interstate roads or even dirt roads, Europeans used the waterways in the county to move produce and goods by canoe and pole boats. They explored the Cooper and Santee rivers and their tributaries, and almost immediately recognized the financial potential of having navigable waterways. For the next 300 years, the pioneers used the waterways as their highway system.

In 1800, a newly constructed, 22-mile-long, 10-lock canal connected the Santee and Cooper. This canal allowed goods from the plantations to be delivered from the midlands to Charleston. The Old Santee Canal was the first in the Americas to join two separate bodies of water.

Revolutionary War patriot Francis Marion earned his “Swamp Fox” moniker using his knowledge of the county’s waterways to fight and defeat his British counterparts in the country’s fight for independence. The Confederates used Battery Warren to keep the federal Navy from ascending the



There are 25 trails and 235 miles of waterways that make up the Berkeley County Blueways.

Santee River and destroying the vital Northeastern Railroad bridge during the Civil War.

The most significant change to the county’s waterways came in 1941 when the Santee River was dammed, and Lake Moultrie and Lake Marion were created. Over 42 miles of dams and dikes were built. At the time of construction, it was the most extensive land-clearing project in U.S. history at approximately 175,000 acres, with most of the clearing being done by hand.

“You think about all the history of the county and a lot of it is tied to the rivers, tributaries and lakes that make up the

Blueways trails system,” Lynch said. “It’s like you are paddling your way through history.”

## ‘A family adventure’

The two dozen trails that make up the Blueways vary from easy family-friendly runs to half-day excursions and even overnight camping trails for the more adventurous explorers.

“There’s something out there for everyone of every ability and experience,” Lynch said. “We like to think of the trails

as a family adventure for everyone.”

Like many, the Oxners were introduced to the Blueways trails during a guided tour. It didn’t take long before the couple was hooked on the sport.

“I grew up hiking,” said Whitney Oxner, who was raised in Florence. “I knew about hiking trails but wasn’t sure about kayaking trails. I wasn’t sure they were marked, but they are and it’s easy to follow them.”

“You get to leave the world behind and explore places you’ve never seen,” Whitney Oxner said.

Echaw Creek, near Jamestown, has become Lynch’s go-to paddle. The blackwater creek was an old-growth forest with massive cypress trees. “Every time I go there I see something new,” said Lynch, who has been kayaking for more than two decades.

One of the most common questions Lynch gets is about alligators. There are plenty of gators to be found in the waters, but that should not be a deterrent from exploring the waterways, he said.

“If you see one, count yourself lucky because they are as afraid of you as you are of them,” Lynch said. “We’ve paddled thousands of miles and they are not a concern.”

Blueways has published an online guidebook that paddlers can call up on their smartphones. It’s available at [berkeleyblueways.com](http://berkeleyblueways.com). The internal GPS can pinpoint a kayaker’s exact location on any of the 25 trails.

“There are places you can only get to in a kayak,” Andrew Oxner said. “A lot of the places we’ve seen have been untouched by man and that’s just really cool.”

Reach **Andrew Miller** at 843-937-5599. Follow him on Twitter @APMILLER\_PandC

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