



## NEWS RELEASE

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# ***Two Charleston County Parks named Sites of Conscience***

## ***McLeod Plantation Historic Site and Caw Caw Interpretive Center received international honor for groundbreaking interpretation and social engagement***

(CHARLESTON COUNTY) – The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission’s (CCPRC) McLeod Plantation Historic Site on James Island and Caw Caw Interpretive Center in Ravenel were recently honored as “Sites of Conscience.” This designation places the two park sites among an international coalition of museums, historic sites and memorials that confront both the history of what happened at the site and lasting impacts.

McLeod and Caw Caw are the first two historic sites in South Carolina to be accepted into the organization. The honor was recently granted by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a worldwide network of 230 sites in 55 countries. By their definition, Sites of Conscience “face all aspects of history and also activate the historical perspective with dynamic public dialogue on related issues we face today and what we can do about them.” Sites of Conscience are places that interpret history, engage the public in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues, share opportunities for public involvement and positive action on the issues raised at the site, and promote justice and universal cultures of human rights.

In a letter to CCPRC about the designation for the two parks, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience Executive Director Elizabeth Silkes said, “You have done great work already reimagining the historic plantation experience and we are eager to be a part of your continued journey.”

“Since 2000, Charleston County Parks has been leading the way with its conscientious interpretation of slavery and African Americans’ ongoing quest for equality,” said Shawn Halifax, CCPRC’s cultural history interpretation coordinator. “Recognition of this work resulted in the park system’s on-going collaboration with the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture to deliver training designed to prepare museums and historic sites around the nation to ethically interpret slavery and its legacy.”

CCPRC opened McLeod Plantation as a public county park and historic site in 2015. Located on James Island, McLeod Plantation Historic Site is a former sea island cotton plantation and an important 37-acre Gullah-Geechee heritage site carefully preserved in recognition of its cultural and historical significance. After years of careful research and restoration, the historic site today is a living tribute to the men and women who persevered in their efforts to achieve freedom, equality and justice. Visitors are invited to embark upon an in-depth exploration of the lives of those people whose stories are essential to understanding Charleston’s complex past and helped shape who we, as a nation, are today.

Caw Caw Interpretive Center, which opened in 2000, explores the impact of people from the rice-growing regions of Africa on the landscape, history and culture of the Lowcountry region. The site was once part of several rice plantations and home to enslaved Africans who applied their technology and skills in agriculture to carve the series of rice fields out of cypress swamps. It is a site of the 1739 Stono Slave Rebellion, the largest uprising of enslaved people in English North America. Visitors to Caw Caw investigate the origins of Gullah-Geechee culture and the profound influence of Africa on the Lowcountry and Charleston. Caw Caw is currently undergoing evaluation for listing as a National Historic Landmark and inclusion as a central feature of Charleston’s application for World Heritage Site designation.

Other regional Sites of Conscience include the Museum of Education at the University of South Carolina, the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Virginia, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and many others throughout the country and nation.

For more information on McLeod Plantation Historic Site or Caw Caw Interpretive Center, visit [CharlestonCountyParks.com/McLeod](http://CharlestonCountyParks.com/McLeod) or call 843-795-4386.

The mission of CCPRC is to improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs and services. The large park system features over 11,000 acres of property and includes six land parks, three beach parks, four seasonally-lifeguarded beach areas, three dog parks, two landmark fishing piers, a historic plantation site, three waterparks, 19 boat landings, a climbing wall, a challenge course, an interpretive center, an equestrian center, cottages, a campground, a marina, as well as wedding, meeting and event facilities. The park system also offers a wide variety of recreational services - festivals, camps, classes, programs, volunteer opportunities, and more. For more information on CCPRC, call 843-795-4386, download Charleston County Parks’ mobile app, or visit [charlestoncountyparks.com](http://charlestoncountyparks.com).