

Promoting Responsible Development Through Reforestation

QTS partners with Southern Conservation Trust to support reforestation efforts in South Metro ATL

As the leader in digital infrastructure, QTS is rapidly expanding to keep up with the growing demand. Every minute there are 5.9 million Google searches, 3,472,222 YouTube videos viewed, 18.8 million text messages sent, 1.5 million credit card transactions and over 1,200 calls for Emergency Medical Services made to 911, highlighting the urgent need for data centers to support our increasingly connected world. Serving as a steward of the environment and the communities we call home, QTS is mindful of the local impact of its data centers, making a long-term commitment to do its part to protect the environment and enrich communities.

QTS developed a Tree Replacement Program to help offset the environmental impact of its data center development to introduce environmental, health and recreational benefits to neighboring areas.

QTS Tree Replacement Program

The QTS Tree Replacement Program is a go-forward, industry-leading initiative designed to help protect and restore natural ecosystems by replanting more trees than cleared during QTS's data center construction. In collaboration with a local conservation partner, QTS provides funding to purchase and plant trees, while SCT staff handle the planning, monitoring, and care of the plantings to ensure the project's success. QTS provides the conservation partner with the minimum number of trees to be replanted, leveraging the organization's expertise to develop and implement a reforestation plan in the local region.



As part of the plan, the conservation partner identifies a local planting site, chooses the mixture of native tree species, coordinates planting and other logistics, and performs the necessary interventions to foster the best chance for successful reforestation.

Fayetteville Data Center Development Spurs Local Reforestation Efforts

QTS's Fayetteville, GA data center campus offered the first opportunity for QTS to implement its Tree Replacement Program. QTS chose to partner with Southern Conservation Trust (SCT), a Georgia-based 501(c)(3) public charity dedicated to conserving natural resources and green space, with an impact spanning 13 states across the Southeastern United States.

Through the program, QTS funded the purchase and planting of at least 7,000 trees locally, representing the number of trees cleared during the first phase of construction. SCT provided all planning

for the reforestation effort, including identifying suitable planting sites, selecting a mix of native tree species, and coordinating planting logistics. SCT continues to work with partner organizations to provide the monitoring and care necessary to give the plantings the best chance for long-term success as they mature.

"We are grateful to work with SCT to support and sustain shared resources in our local communities and surrounding environments," said Tag Greason, Chief Growth Officer at QTS. "Sustainable practices are a key component of our business operations, and this initiative is just the start of how we hope to positively contribute to the Fayetteville area."

RE-ENVISIONING HENDERSON FARMS

SCT chose a 23-acre field site within Henderson Farms, a 403-acre nature preserve in adjacent Henry County, Georgia. Owned by SCT, the property was previously used for cattle rearing. The QTS Tree Replacement Program allows SCT

to plant regionally native trees to direct it towards its pre-agricultural biodiversity as closely as possible, while also protecting it from residential development.

To promote ecological restoration, SCT identified a mix of 21 native tree species that mirror the tree varieties that historically would have populated the property. In late 2024, SCT partnered with Core Ecology Group, an organization specializing in native tree reforestation, to plant a nearly equal number of one gallon container trees and bare root seedlings. While the original plan proposed a minimum of 7,000 trees, SCT was able to plant 12,140 trees at the site, flagging each planting to monitor success and growth of the trees.

Each tree species offers a different environmental benefit, working together to provide natural habitats, food sources and other ecological services that cultivate long-term environmental health. Oak trees are the predominant tree genus in the project with seven different types. These trees support more life than any other North American tree genus. Serviceberry, plum, and American crabapple trees offer edible fruits for a variety of wildlife and nectar for pollinators. Shorter statured evergreens, such as American Holly, can grow in the shade of larger trees and are known to attract foraging native bee species to boost pollination. The diversity of tree species also minimizes the likelihood of a single disease or natural incident affecting the entire forest.



“Creating a forest with this variety of tree species is exceptional,” said Chris Doane, President & CEO, of the Southern Conservation Trust. “Many reforestation projects are economically motivated and incorporate a single tree species that is good for lumber harvesting. Having a corporate partner like QTS allows us to protect this land and support the long-term viability of the forest and its ecosystem for the greater good.”

Lasting Conservation Requires Lasting Investment

In spring 2025, with the planning and tree planting stages complete, SCT focused its efforts on the next steps of reforestation: providing the plantings with the support needed to thrive and studying the plantings and their natural ecosystem to improve future environmental mitigation efforts.

ONGOING OBSERVATION TO FOSTER SUCCESSFUL REFORESTATION

To promote the viability and longevity of the forest, SCT devised a long-term care strategy through which it tracks the health and progress of the trees. These efforts address the challenges posed by the natural ecosystem, safeguarding new plantings from invasive threats, animals

and drought conditions that can impede their growth and sabotage their health.

SCT is working with the University of Georgia (UGA) Horticultural Department to control nonnative grasses and aggressive pioneer species—including tall fescue that still blankets the land from its agricultural days—by applying management treatments and mowing around maturing trees to ensure unwanted growth does not overtake new plantings. SCT and UGA scientists and graduate students are also working together to curtail herbivores, such as white-tail deer, from overgrazing on growing trees or damaging young trees by rubbing their antlers against them. By addressing these issues early, SCT helps nurture a healthy forest and biodiverse ecosystem.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The reforestation efforts of the QTS Tree Replacement Program provide a living laboratory for extended ecological research. Collaborating with UGA, SCT has been conducting a longitudinal study of tree survival and growth across 576 trees of 22 species in four random research plots within the 23-acre site. During its first season, the team has gathered baseline data to support science-driven approach to on ecosystem re-establishment. The studies will allow SCT and UGA to monitor key plant health growth indicators, such as tip branch length, stem diameter, canopy size, pigment content, and photosynthetic capacity across tree species, to evaluate the success of different treatments. Studies will also track changes in the forest ecosystem, compare the success rates of bare root versus container plantings, study soil biodiversity and its impact on tree health, and identify which trees provide the greatest ecological value. We hope that our findings will inform sound

An acre of mature trees can provide enough oxygen for 18 people.¹

1. <https://treepeople.org/22-benefits-of-trees>

management strategies for reforestation success in the future.

As the forest matures, SCT envisions additional opportunities to scale its scientific research with other academic and conservation partners, continuing to collect and publish scientific data to help conservationists, private landowners, government agencies and environmental practitioners like Core Ecology advance restoration efforts.

Building a Sustainable Legacy

While the restoration enabled by the QTS Tree Replacement Program occurs on a specific site, its benefits extend well beyond it, delivering important environmental, social and health benefits to the local region.

PROMOTING ECOLOGICAL BIODIVERSITY

By re-establishing forest land, the QTS Tree Replacement Program boosts biodiversity and strengthens overall ecosystem resilience, providing shelter and a bigger, more diverse food chain. In the longer term, SCT envisions opportunities to introduce perennial and herbaceous layers that can attract additional species, such as planting milkweed to attract monarch butterflies.

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

Trees also improve air quality by absorbing an average of 22 pounds of carbon dioxide from the air yearly, filtering pollutants and releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere. These natural processes can also reduce ambient heat levels to help mitigate climate change.

A mature tree can absorb an average of 22 lbs. of carbon dioxide per year.²

MINIMIZING EROSION AND WATER POLLUTION

Tree canopies help control rainwater runoff, softening the direct force of rain as it hits the ground to limit soil erosion. Trees also help the ground absorb water to reduce erosion, flooding, landslides and the number of pollutants that flow into water bodies. With a mile of the Towaliga River running through Henderson Farms, this reforestation is poised to positively impact the river by improving water quality and rebuilding native habitats.

COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

As the forest recovers, it will also offer space for community engagement activities, including bird watching, nature exploration, environmental education and hiking. In addition to its reforestation efforts, QTS also generously donates to educational programming and improvements at SCT's Fayette Environmental Education Center and volunteers on multiple SCT initiatives that help protect public nature areas.

"Our goal is always to connect people with nature," said Tori Betsill. "The more they experience it, the more they want to protect it. QTS's partnership and sponsorship allows us to move forward our vision of elevating

nature through exceptional stewardship. We are grateful for QTS's strong environmental advocacy and culture of giving and service."

The Power of Corporate Environmental Responsibility

The QTS Tree Replacement Program is just one way the data center operator serves as a trusted community partner and responsible neighbor.

"The QTS Tree Replacement Program is a model for how corporations, nonprofits, scientists and government agencies can work together to promote high-integrity conservation," said Gerald Holland. "Together with forward-thinking partners like QTS, who integrate environmental stewardship into their core business strategies, we can restore natural environments and improve long-term environmental health and resilience."

As QTS continues to expand its footprint to support digital demands, it will continue to leverage its Tree Replacement Program, partnering with conservation partners in other data center markets to balance its greenfield data center development with opportunities for ecological restoration, research and public benefit to help drive value for current and future generations. ▼

2. One Tree Planted

About QTS Data Centers

QTS is a global data center leader with unrivaled access to scalable infrastructure across North America and Europe. Powered by people and driven by purpose, QTS provides state-of-the-art data center solutions, robust connectivity and premium customer service to leading hyperscale technology companies, enterprises and government entities. QTS is a Blackstone portfolio company.

Let's connect: qtsdatacenters.com // 877.QTS.DATA

About Southern Conservation Trust

At Southern Conservation Trust, we are passionate about elevating nature through exceptional stewardship. Based in Georgia, our 501(c)(3) public charity has successfully conserved over 65,000 acres of land across the Southeast, including five public nature areas in Fayette County and the Fayette Environmental Education Center. We believe that protecting our natural spaces is just the beginning; everyone should have equal access to enjoy the beauty of the outdoors. Join us in our mission to foster a deeper connection between people and nature. Learn more at www.sctlandtrust.org.