

## A 5,600-Acre Swath of Southwest Georgia Hits the Market for \$42 Million



**Nancy A. Ruhling**

**S**outhlands, a storied 5,653-acre Georgia sporting ranch that once played host to late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia among other lawmakers, is being offered for sale publicly for the first time in nearly 90 years. The asking price is \$42.5 million.

“Southlands, one of the South’s top sporting ranches and one of the largest of all the quail plantations, is the land ownership equivalent to owning an NFL team,” said Jon Kohler, who co-listed it on Saturday with colleague Walter Hatchett of Jon Kohler & Associates.

The seller, Brian Philpot, the CEO and principal owner of AgAmerica Lending, which deals in agricultural loans, bought the Decatur County

property in 2023, according to the listing agent.

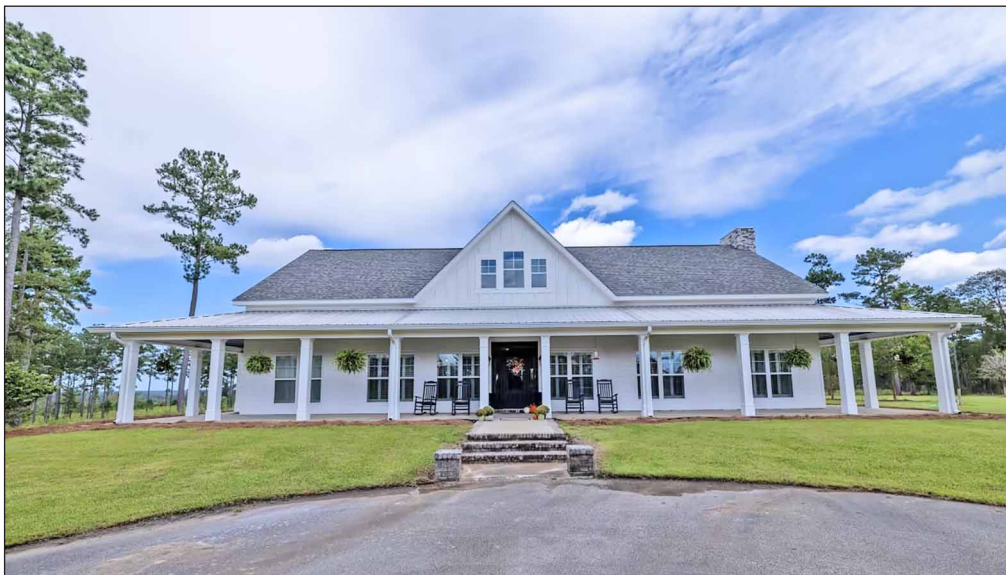
Southlands has only changed hands five times. The original 26,000 acres was assembled by pioneering 20th-century conservationist Herbert Stoddard, the co-founder of the land stewardship nonprofit Tall Timbers.

Houghton Metcalf, a U.S. senator and wealthy industrialist from Rhode Island, bought the property from Stoddard in 1937, built the original lodge on a 200-foot bluff in the 1940s and transformed the compound into a sportsman’s paradise.

Eventually, pulp and paper giant International Paper acquired the property in the late 1950s and made it the headquarters for the company’s 12-million-acre empire. It also served as a teaching

forest.

In 2010, Southlands got its next owner. Philanthropist Jim Dahl, the founder of the Florida-based investment firm Rock Creek Capital, bought 160,000 acres of the property that spanned 10 states from International Paper that included what has become the 5,653-acre Southlands property.



Thanksgiving bird: the Eastern, Rio Grande, Merriam's and Osceola. (Scalia, an avid sportsman, died in 2016 while on a hunting trip in Texas at the age of 79.)

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The property, which includes 4.5 acres of

frontage on Lake Seminole and an elevation change of 230 feet, is less than 3% wetlands. It has a 20-acre stocked lake, a 30-acre duck pond, a 60-acre irrigated field and 5 miles of spring creeks with three- and four-foot waterfalls, plus additional feeder creeks.

“As you come through the private entrance and begin the three-mile private drive, you will be blown away,” said Hatchett, the co-listing agent.

The main lodge, which is 4,884 square feet and has eight bedrooms and 5.5 bathrooms, has been completely remodeled.

Southlands also has a new four-stall horse barn for horseback quail hunts. Other outbuildings include a new manager's house, the old manager's house that's been remodeled, a remodeled guest house, a shop, a pavilion, an equipment shed and a cooler building for deer cleaning among other amenities.

Southlands is 8 miles from Bainbridge, which was named the 2024 Georgia Downtown of the Year by the Georgia Downtown Association. Noting that it has “true Southern charm,” Watchett said that “the character and atmosphere of the shopping and dining are very appealing.”

Dahl had to buy the huge swath of acreage to entice International Paper to sell the ranch, where wild quail and trophy white-tail deer abound, Kohler said, adding that he immediately sold 140,000 acres in a deal that totaled \$142 million, which held the title as the largest timberland sale in the South for a decade. “After all the dust settled, we resold most of the balance,” said Kohler, who was involved in the



benchmark transaction.

It was Dahl, he added, who embraced modern wildlife management techniques and “implemented them on a huge scale.”

When Dahl started talking about selling, word got out among those in his inner circle, and the current seller bought it before it ever made it to market. It could not be determined how much Philpot, the current owner, paid for property last year. He could not be immediately reached for comment.

Through the years, Southlands has hosted scores of notable guests, including Scalia, who completed the Georgia leg of his Turkey Grand Slam there by bagging the four most common subspecies of the

