

- A self-reliant African American (Gullah) community on the coast of Georgia from 1865 to 1942. Seventy-five Harris Neck families prosper as farmers and fishermen on 2,687 acres located in northeast corner of McIntosh County, 40 miles south of Savannah.
- All this land is taken by the federal government, via Eminent Domain, in the summer of 1942 to build an Army airfield.
- Government promises to return the land to the people at the end of World War II.
- The land is condemned, via Eminent Domain, and the community is destroyed. The community's rights to Due Process are violated in numerous ways.
- 1948: Instead of being returned to the former residents as promised, the land is given to McIntosh County by the War Assets Administration for use as a county airport
- 1948-1961: McIntosh County violates its contract with federal government in numerous ways. Federal government takes back the land in 1961.
- 1961-1962: Title transfers within the federal government, eventually going to the Department of Interior, which turns the land into a National Wildlife Refuge in 1962.
- 1962-Present: Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, operated by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).
- 1979-1980: Efforts by former community members and their descendants to reclaim their land (the First Movement).
- 1980: Federal Judge Avant Edenfield rules against the return of the land to the former community, saying Statute of Limitations has expired and that there is no remedy available through the courts – only Congress can return the land.
- 1980: A legislative bill is written for the return of Harris Neck, but the bill never even makes in out of Congressional committee, and the first movement to affect the return of the land ends.
- 1992: \$1.6 billion settlement for 80,000 Japanese American families for injustices they suffered during World War II.
- 2005: Return of more than 15,000 acres to the Colorado River Indian Tribes for land taken from them by Executive Order of President Woodrow Wilson in 1915.
- 2005: The Harris Neck Justice Movement, the second attempt to have Harris Neck returned to its rightful owners is initiated. The Harris Neck Land Trust was formed. The Trust is the organization at the center of this new movement to reclaim Harris Neck for former community members and their descendants.
- 2006: Family Representatives of each of the surviving families from the former Harris Neck community are chosen.

- 2007 (January): A Harris Neck Resolution is passed, unanimously, by the McIntosh County Board of Commissioners, acknowledging wrongful conduct and conspiracy by County officials in 1940s and announcing support of the Harris Neck Justice Movement.

- 2007: Environmental and Cultural Site Assessments of Harris Neck are completed.

- 2007: Community Development Plan is developed and adopted by the Trust.

- 2007: Meetings with key members of Congress begin.

- 2008: Legislation to affect the return of Harris Neck is written.

- 2009: Sponsorship of the Bill (Harris Neck Recovery Act) is being worked out.

- 2010 (spring): National media campaign is launched

- 2010: Discussions continue with key members of Congress.

- 2011 (spring): A Mock Hearing to prepare for the actual hearing before the Congressional Committee on Natural Resources is sponsored by and held at Emory University in Atlanta.

- 2011: (December): Oversight hearing is held by the Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs, the committee that has jurisdiction over USFWS. The next step is the introduction of legislation.

- 2012: (March): The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission passes a resolution in support of the Harris Neck Land Trust's efforts to reclaim the land for its rightful owners.

- 2012: (March): Holland & Knight, one of the largest and most prestigious law firms in America, signs a letter of agreement with the Trust and joins its efforts (Pro Bono) to reclaim the land.

- 2013: (Spring): Confronted by the realities of a dysfunctional Congress, the Trust, with the advice of Holland & Knight and Congressman Jack Kingston, decides to change strategies. Instead of

pursuing title to all 2,687 acres of Harris Neck, it is decided that a long-term, renewable lease of a small portion of the Harris Neck Refuge will better serve the Trust's mission and objectives.

- 2013: (May): The Trust and several officials from USFWS and Interior meet in the Atlanta offices of Holland & Knight to discuss the proposal of a long-term lease.

- 2013: (Summer): A follow-up meeting to the May meeting is held, with many of the same people in attendance, in Harris Neck.

- 2014: (June): Members of the Trust and an attorney from Holland & Knight meet with Sally Jewell, Secretary of Interior, in Harris Neck to brief her on the history of Harris Neck, this movement for justice, and the lease that the Trust is now requesting. Ms. Jewell asks the Trust to develop a Site Plan, indicating what the people want the new Harris Neck community to look like.
- 2015: (February): The Trust submits a Special Use Permit Application and a Preliminary Site Plan to the Secretary of Interior and USFWS. The application requests a long-term, renewable lease to the extreme eastern portion of the Refuge. The Site Plan depicts and describes the cultural, residential, and commercial components of the proposed new community.
- 2015: FWS denies the Trust's lease application, then opens a door to and a discussion on the possibility of a land transfer and on the Trust being able to prove the uniqueness of everything that has happened in Harris Neck since 1942.
- 2016: (May): After the Trust submits a Uniqueness document, proving the uniqueness of all that has happened in Harris Neck since 1942, FWS's Director closes the door on the uniqueness path to resolution without any explanation.
- 2017: (July): Members of the Trust and lead attorney meet in DC with Special Advisor to President Trump and Special Advisor to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to discuss new paths forward, including a Cooperative Agreement.
- 2018: (December): The Trust submits a draft Cooperative Agreement to FWS, asking for a 25-year, renewable lease of a fraction of the Harris Neck homeland to create a Living Museum and some supporting elements.
- 2019: US Representative Buddy Carter (GA - District 1) hosts two meetings in Savannah for Harris Neck stakeholders to try to facilitate a path toward a resolution.

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Harris Neck Land Trust

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