

Tree Canopy Assessment Town of Awendaw



Key Stats



Current Tree Canopy is 75%



Potential Planting Area is 848 acres



31,746 more small trees (20 ft diameter crowns) can be planted



42,440 more large trees (40 ft diameter crowns) can be planted



Potential Tree Canopy could be 87%



The Town's goal is to maintain at least a 60% canopy cover over the next 10 years.

Key Strategies

- Collaborate with the Francis Marion National Forest to minimize land use conflicts.
- Ensure new regulations do not conflict with forestry practices of small landowners.
- Integrate tree canopy data into the comprehensive plan update.
- Develop an Urban Forest Master Plan for the town.
- Review existing zoning codes and ordinances related to trees.
- Host tree giveaways for residents to plant on private property.

December 2022



Executive Summary

The Town of Awendaw is a small rural coastal community less than an hour north of the greater Charleston metropolitan area. Due to its proximity to Charleston, the town is experiencing suburban development pressure as people move further away from the metro area. This influx of new development is coming into conflict with other rural landowners such as the Francis Marion National Forest which maintains forest land surrounding the town. Residents relocating to new developments in Awendaw are often unfamiliar with historic land management practices such as logging and prescribed fire. To avoid conflicts, new arrivals should be educated about expected land management activities of the National Forest and other rural landowners. An important step is to educate new arrivals about what it means to live next door to a National Forest. The town is also aware that greater collaboration with the National Forest is needed to reduce conflicts from land development and help safeguard residents from impacts. Managing growth and development will be key strategies to maintaining a balance between healthy forests, new housing and local economies.

The Town's goal is to maintain at least 60% tree canopy cover over the next 10 years.

Awendaw is starting to update their comprehensive plan.



The town is planting trees at the new Town of Awendaw Park and Lake currently under construction.



Awendaw is surrounded by Francis Marion National Forest. The town recognizes it is important to collaborate with forest managers to minimize the impacts of future development.

Tree canopy data will inform the goals and objectives within the natural resources and resiliency elements of the plan. The town anticipates reviewing and updating its zoning codes and regulations related to tree protection and preservation after the comprehensive plan process is complete. The current zoning code's focus on rural land uses is outdated. Development pressure requires more robust regulations to minimize suburban sprawl, maintain tree canopy, and protect rural character and native land cover. Awendaw's coastal forested wetlands provide numerous environmental benefits such as flood storage and wildlife habitat. The town plans to achieve these objectives without compromising the ability of small landowners to practice forestry on their properties. The town maintains a partnership with the Center for Heirs Properties, a nonprofit who specializes in helping landowners manage their natural resource assets.

The town's rural character is part of the appeal for new residents moving to the area. Engaging new residents in voluntary tree planting campaigns on private property through tree giveaways is a strategy that will support the town's canopy goal. Many other green infrastructure assets exist in the area such as the East Coast Greenway and the Palmetto Trail, along with a new municipal park under construction, Awendaw Park and Lake. The town is planting thousands of new trees as part of restoration efforts but also to create a more enjoyable greenspace for the community.

Strategies for the Urban Canopy

Collaboratively manage the local tree canopy.

Strategy 1: Collaborate with the Francis Marion National Forest to minimize land management conflicts between silviculture and new developments.

Strategy 2: Ensure new zoning codes and regulations do not conflict with forestry for small landowners.

Strategy 3: Integrate tree canopy data, goals and strategies into the comprehensive plan update.

Strategy 4: Develop an Urban Forest Master Plan for the town.

Strategy 5: Educate developers and new residents on ways to mitigate land use conflicts. A few examples include Firewise design principles, forest buffers and public notices for prescribed fire operations.

Enhance protections for trees and forest cover through new code.

Strategy 1: Review existing zoning codes and ordinances related to trees and identify updates or new ways to better protect trees or minimize development impacts.

Strategy 2: Incentivize developers to practice conservation subdivision design principles for new development.

Strategy 3: Require minimum open space percentages (25% or greater) for new subdivisions.

Strategy 4: Require the survey and protection of existing trees of a certain size (trunk diameter) on site prior to development.

Increase tree plantings in the community.

Strategy 1: The town is planting thousands of trees during the construction of a new municipal park.

Strategy 2: Host tree giveaways for residents to plant on private property.

Strategy 3: Regulate the remediation of dirt mining sites back to forest cover.



The town supports the forest management practices of small forest landowners and wants to be sure new regulations do not infringe on their ability to manage their forest land.



Trees on private property are an important part of the urban forest. Strategies that protect trees or programs to encourage tree planting on private property will be key to maintaining a healthy canopy into the future.

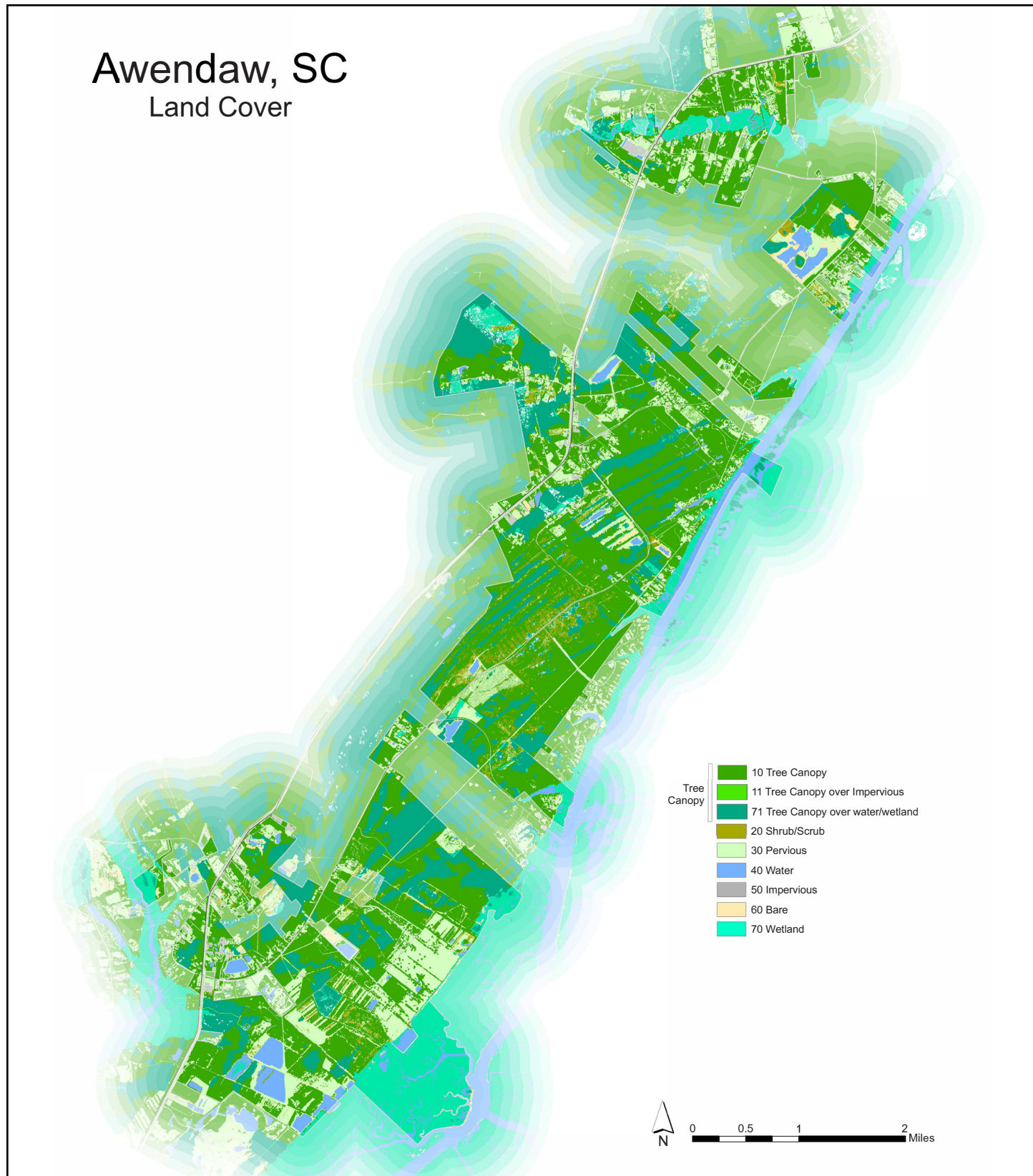


Figure-1: A map of land cover (2021) in Awendaw.

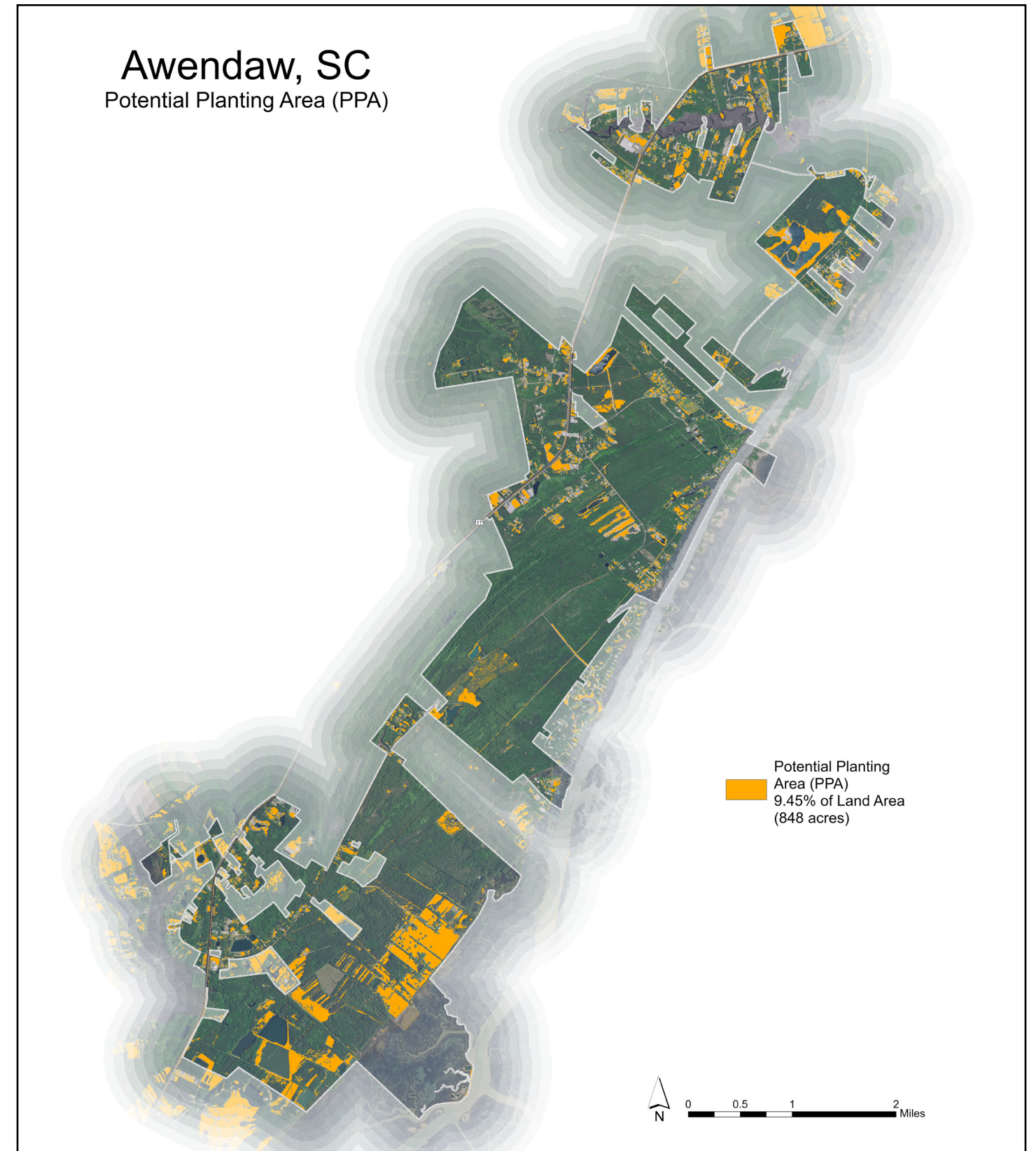


Figure-2: A map of Potential Planting Areas (PPA) in Awendaw.

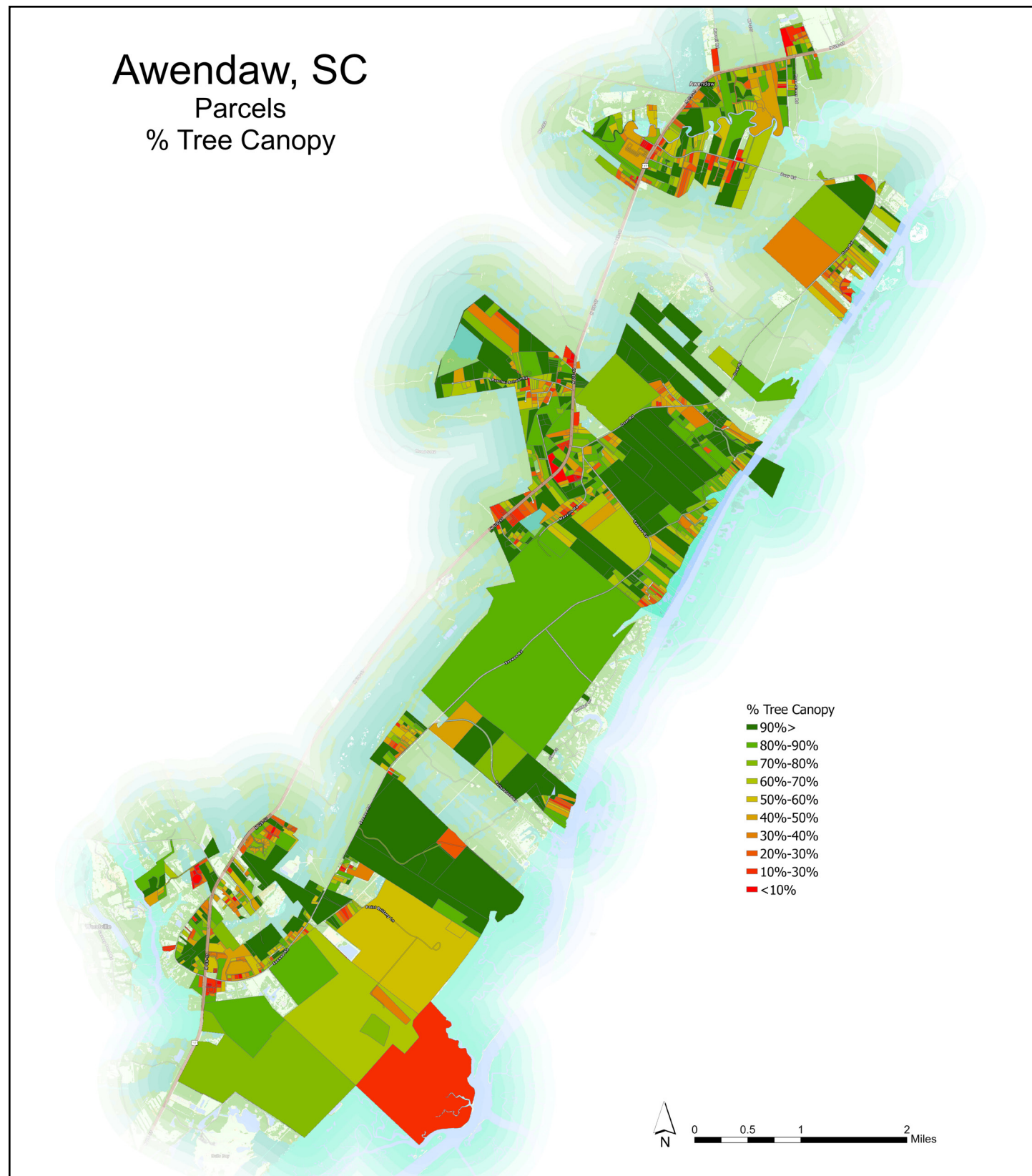


Figure-3: A map of percent tree canopy by parcels in Awendaw.

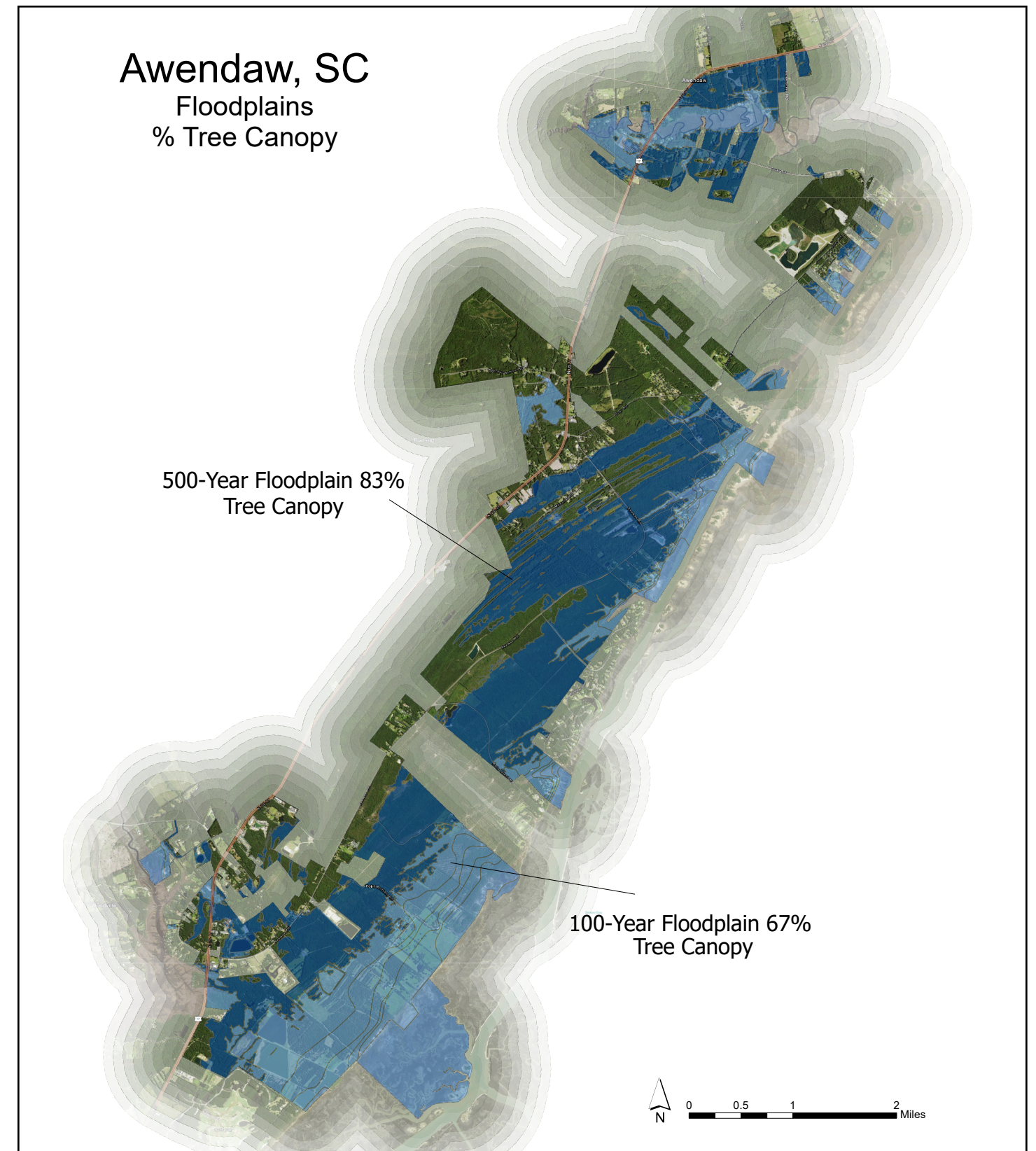


Figure-4: A map of percent tree canopy by the 100-year and 500-year floodplains in Awendaw.

Awendaw, SC

Catchments
% Tree Canopy

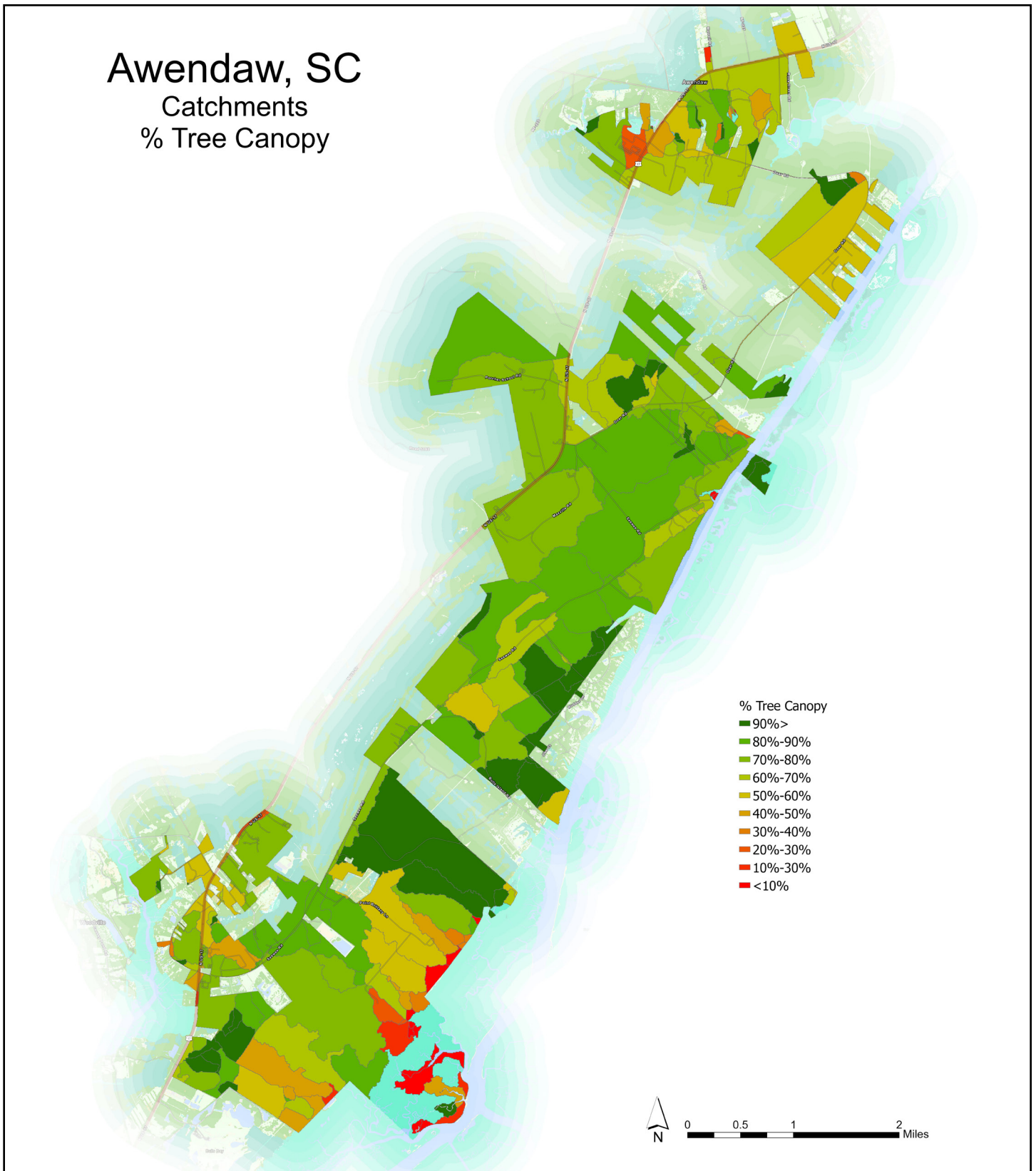


Figure-2: A map of percent canopy by drainage catchments in Awendaw.