

**Heritage Trust Advisory Board  
Horse Creek Heritage Preserve  
200 Red Bud Lane, Trenton, SC 29847  
Thursday, November 9, 2023 – 11:00 a.m.**

**Members Present**

Brad Sauls (for Eric Emerson)  
Campbell Coxe (Chairman)  
Chisolm Beckham (for Scott Philips)  
Clarke Thompson (for Harry Lightsey)  
Emily Cope (for Robert Boyles)  
Dr. Julia Krebs  
Ken Rentiers  
Rob Keck  
Terry Hurley (for Duane Parrish)  
Jake Rasor (non-voting member)

**Members Absent**

Amy Bartow-Melia  
Jonathan Leader  
Julien Springs  
Kevin Hunter  
Sonny King

**Others Present**

Abel Tobias  
Allison Morris  
Anna Chastain  
Barry Kesler  
Billy Dukes  
Brian Long  
Catherine Hart  
Csilla Czako  
Dawn Beaver  
Duncan Crotwell  
Eric Ungberg  
Fran Varacalli  
Hunter Young  
Joe Lemeris  
Jordan Baker  
Julie Binz  
Justin Hancock  
Keith Bradley  
Ken Prosser  
Kevin Ryan  
Lelia Rice  
Meg Gaillard  
Roger Hux  
Sam Tessel  
Sean Taylor  
Shannon Bobertz  
Susan Porter

**Call to Order**

Chairman Coxe called the meeting to order.

**Welcome and Introduction**

Chairman Coxe warmly welcomed the Board and thanked everyone for attending.

### **Roll Call of Attendance**

Jordan Baker gave a roll call and asked participants to reply “here” when called.

### **Public Comment Period**

Chairman Coxe asked if anyone wanted to speak during this time. No comments were made.

### **Approval of minutes from August 10, 2023**

Chairman Coxe noted that the minutes from the previous meeting had been sent to the Board Members. *Mr. Keck made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board approve the minutes from the August 10, 2023, meeting as submitted. Dr. Krebs seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

### **Items for Board Information**

**A) Outreach on the Coastal Heritage Preserves:** *Julie Binz, Director for Coastal Reserves and Outreach, Marine Resources Division, SCDNR*

At the last meeting, the Board expressed interest in what type of outreach different programs and divisions were doing, so Julie Binz spoke to the board about the different types of outreach Marine Resources Division of SCDNR does. In Marine Resources, there are several islands the public can visit and explore. George E. Campsen Jr. Caper’s Island Heritage Preserve has overnight camping by permit only; this helps bring in a lot of visitors. St. Helena Sound Heritage Preserve is made up of several islands; they have educational kiosks throughout this Heritage Preserve, and they receive a ton of visitors. Some other public outreach they do are birding tours, beach walks, and fishing clinics. A lot of their Heritage Preserves have volunteers who come to help with shoreline clean up, turtle nests, and hawk watches. There are over 200 volunteers per year. Many students also come to the Heritage Preserves for field trips and different learning opportunities. The Edisto Learning Center is another great place for students to learn more about Marine Resources. They also offer online information for outreach.

**B) Project Updates on Region 3 Natural Heritage Preserves:** *Hunter Young, Wildlife Biologist, Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries, SCDNR*

Hunter Young spoke to the Board about the many Heritage Preserves in Region 3 and all their updates. In Aiken, the Gopher Branch Heritage Preserve had some prescribed burns done. The burns were positive to the site and promoted new growth. They continue to work on the site, making more room for new Gopher Tortoises. Ditch Pond Heritage Preserve is also in Aiken; the pond level is low currently, but that has allowed them access to different spots on the property to do more clean up. They have also built a new bridge on the boardwalk. This site is good for horseback riding, archery hunting, and bird watching. Another site in Aiken is Henderson Heritage Preserve; they are looking to add

more acres to the site soon. This site has a lot of woodpeckers and has proven to be a good habitat for them. The last site in Aiken is the Janet Harrison High Pond Heritage Preserve. It is a smaller site. They have not had many prescribed burns, but they are prepping the site for them. One concern about prescribed fires is how close the site is to the interstate. This is a challenge they are trying to figure out. Lastly is Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserves in Calhoun County. Renovations were recently done to the house on the site. Mr. Young showed the Board “before and after” photos to show how big the progress was. Because of these renovations they are hosting more youth hunts, more school visits, and more visitors in general. The county has been extremely supportive of this site, and Mr. Young hopes that the Board can make a visit to see it.

**C) Botany Program: Forward Thinking, A Strategic Discussion with the Heritage Trust Advisory Board:** *Keith Bradley, Botanist, Heritage Trust-Botany, SCDNR*

At the last meeting, the Board wanted more information on outreach throughout the divisions and programs, so Keith Bradley took the time to have an open conversation with the Board about what they would like to see and what he is doing already with his team. Mr. Bradley started with the Botany Program in 2020 and has been building an outstanding team to support their work within the program. A lot of their work has been surveying different sites, identifying types of species, including rare, endangered, invasive, and some new. On some sites they do reintroduction of plant species. His team consists of Eric Ungberg and Sam Tessel, two botanists, and Csilla Czako, who is the botany data specialist. Mr. Bradley also has two part-time employees, Avery Browning and Hannah Berberich, who are helping with the botany data. This year, they provided training to different Heritage Preserve workers on how to help spot different plant species and what to do with them. Mr. Bradley would love to share more with the public about rare and invasive plant species. He has been working more with the SCDNR media team to help showcase some of their work on SCDNR’s social media accounts. Some future goals include books for the public to help them in their own backyard or for when visiting different property sites to be able to spot different plant species. The app iNaturalist is another way they have been working with the public. This app allows the person to take a photo, upload it to the app, and then the plant can be identified; this data is sent to Mr. Bradley and his team. Mr. Bradley then asked the Board what they would like to see from them in the future. The Board was very impressed with his work and looked forward to working more with him.

**D) Proviso 117.182 FY2023-24 Appropriations Act:** *Fran Varacalli, Conservation Property Coordinator, Office of Environmental Programs, SCDNR*

Fran Varacalli, recently hired as SCDNR’s Conservation Property Coordinator, spoke to the Board to introduce herself and some of the work she will be doing with them. She is looking forward to working with them more in the future.

**E) Amendment to FY2024 Heritage Trust Budget:** *Sean Taylor, Senior Archaeologist, Heritage Trust-Archaeology, SCDNR*

Sean Taylor spoke to the Board about a change in the budget and wanted to add an amendment that would simply move some of their money around to adjust salaries for different employees.

*Dr. Krebs made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board allow the amendment of the Heritage Trust Budget. Mr. Sauls seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Potential Conflict of Interest Statement**

Chairman Coxe read the “Potential Conflict of Interest Statement” before going into Executive Session. No comments were made.

**Motion to Enter Executive Session**

*Dr. Krebs made a motion that the Board go into Executive Session pursuant to S.C. Code Section 30-4-70(A)(2) to discuss a property acquisition related to Action Items A through and including G. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Motion to Close Executive Session and Return to Public Session**

*Mr. Keck made a motion that the Board return to open session, and let the record reflect that no action was taken in Executive Session. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Motions on Action Items**

**A) Potential Property Acquisition Project: Preliminary approval to investigate the acceptance of a donation of approximately 97 acres in Lancaster County.**

*Dr. Krebs made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation from SCDNR staff and the Director, recommend the SCDNR Board grant preliminary approval to investigate the acceptance of a donation of approximately 97 acres in Lancaster County that would be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of up to \$20,000 in Heritage Trust funds to conduct due diligence activities. Mr. Beckham seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**B) Potential Property Acquisition Project: Preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 262 acres in Aiken and Edgefield Counties.**

*Mr. Keck made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation from SCDNR staff and the Director, recommend the SCDNR Board grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 262 acres in Aiken & Edgefield Counties that would be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and*

*placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of up to \$20,000 in Heritage Trust funds to conduct due diligence activities. Dr. Krebs seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**C) Potential Property Acquisition Project: Preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 300 acres in Aiken County.**

*Mr. Thompson made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation from SCDNR staff, and the Director, recommend the SCDNR Board grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 300 acres in Aiken County that would be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of up to \$20,000 in Heritage Trust funds to conduct due diligence activities. Mr. Keck seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**D) Potential Property Acquisition Project: Preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 228 acres in Greenville County.**

*Mr. Beckham made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation from SCDNR staff and the Director, recommend the SCDNR Board grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of two parcels of approximately 228 acres in Greenville County that would be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of up to \$20,000 in Heritage Trust funds to conduct due diligence activities. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.*

**E) Property Acquisition Project: Final approval to acquire approximately 116 acres in Jasper County.**

*Dr. Krebs made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation of SCDNR staff and subject to standard due diligence, recommend that the SCDNR Board grant final approval of the acquisition of approximately 116 acres adjoining Tillman Sand Ridge Heritage Preserve/WMA in Jasper County that would be dedicated as a heritage preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of \$531,000 in Heritage Trust funds. Mr. Sauls seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**F) Property Acquisition Project: Final approval to purchase approximately 288 acres in Greenville County.**

*Mr. Sauls made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation of SCDNR staff and subject to standard due diligence, recommend that the SCDNR Board grant final approval of the acquisition of approximately 288 acres adjoining Poinsett Bridge Heritage Preserve in Greenville County to be dedicated as a*

*heritage preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of \$700,000 in Heritage Trust funds. Dr. Krebs seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**G) Property Acquisition Project: Preliminary approval to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 1.55 acres in Lexington County.**

*Ms. Hurley made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board recommend that the SCDNR Board grant preliminary approval to investigate a potential property acquisition of approximately 1.5 acres adjoining SCDNR's Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve in Lexington County and the expenditure of up to \$20,000 of Heritage Trust funds to conduct due diligence activities. Mr. Keck seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**Updates and Comments**

Mr. Rentiers informed everyone that Jordan Baker, the Administrative Assistant for the Land, Water, and Conservation Division of SCDNR, will no longer be assisting with the Heritage Trust Advisory Board. She has taken on the new role of the Administrative Assistant for Conservation Districts in the Land, Water, and Conservation Division of SCDNR. Mr. Rentiers wished her luck in this new chapter. Mr. Rentiers also mentioned that Board member Terry Hurley will be retiring; the entire Board wished her well. Mr. Rentiers also thanked his staff for their hard work and dedication.

**Time and Place of the Next Board Meeting**

The next Heritage Trust Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 8, 2024. The next location of the meeting will be determined at a later date.

**Adjournment**

*Having no further business to discuss, Chairman Coxe made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board be adjourned. Dr. Krebs seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Jordan Baker  
Administrative Assistant  
SC Department of Natural Resources  
Land, Water, and Conservation Division*