

Minutes  
Board of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
Rembert C. Dennis Building, RM 325  
1000 Assembly Street  
Columbia, SC  
March 22, 2024 10:00 am

The regular meeting of the Board of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources was held at 10:00 a.m., March 22, 2024 in room 325 of the Rembert C. Dennis Building, 1000 Assembly Street, Columbia, SC. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was posted and mailed to the news media. Vice Chairman Mike Hutchins presided at the meeting. Board members present included Dr. Mark Hartley, Jerry Lee, Carlisle Oxner and Duane Swygert. Board Chairman Norman Pulliam and Board Member Jake Rasor, Jr.'s absences were excused. Director Boyles and staff members of the Department of Natural Resources were present at the meeting.

1. **Call to Order**

Vice Chairman Mike Hutchins called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Invocation**

Chaplain Dave Tafaoa, SCLEAP, offered the invocation.

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Lee led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. **Introduction of Guests**

Shannon Bobertz, Chief of Staff, introduced Chief Louie Chavis, Beaver Creek Indian Tribe; Chip Sharpe, SCDNR retiree; Alex Shuford, Open Land Trust, Beaufort; Ross Nelson, SC Mitigation Association; Tara Auden, SC Mitigation Association; Annie Wilson, SC Mitigation Association; and Scott Whitaker, Coastal Conservation Association.

5. **Constituent Comments**

Alex Shuford, Open Land Trust, Beaufort, spoke in favor of the Property Acquisition in Beaufort County.

Ross Nelson, SC Mitigation Association, spoke on the mitigation process.

Chief Louie Chavis, Beaver Creek Indian Tribe, spoke in favor of the Conservation Easement Acceptance and Dedication of Green Hill Mound in Richland County.

Chip Sharpe, SCDNR retiree, also spoke in favor of the Conservation Easement Acceptance and Dedication of Green Hill Mound in Richland County.

6. **Approval of Minutes**

Vice Chairman Hutchins asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the minutes of the January 18, 2024 and February 15, 2024 Board meetings. *Dr. Hartley made a motion that the minutes of the January 18, 2024 and February 15, 2024 Board meetings be approved as submitted. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

## **7. Agency Reports/Updates**

### **Commendations**

Noteworthy accomplishments of the agency: Celebrating 70 years of SC Wildlife magazine, 50 years of the Heritage Trust Program and 45 years of Sea Turtle Conservation.

Director Boyles commended Business and Finance, Customer Service and Information Technology staff for their hard work which was recognized at a recent SC Auditors, Treasurers and Tax Collectors (SCATT) Academy meeting. SCDNR was praised not only from the podium as well as from the floor during the meeting and commended on our willingness to answer questions and help with any problems they were having with the invoice portal and the boat and outboard motor titling files, which are used by the counties to collect personal property taxes.

Director Boyles commended Melissa Griffin, Assistant State Climatologist, of Land, Water and Conservation on her work in coordinating Governor Henry McMaster's Proclamation declaring March 17-23, 2024, as South Carolina Citizen Weather Observer Week throughout the state and encouraging all South Carolinians to join the Governor in celebrating these volunteers for their efforts in contributing data that stands as the cornerstone of our state and nation's weather history.

Director Boyles commended Law Enforcement Region 1 Conservation Officer Eli Owen who was recognized by the American Legion Post 120 in Seneca as their Officer of the Year for Oconee County and presented with his award at their annual Joseph Earl "Jake" Robinson Law Enforcement Dinner.

Director Boyles commended Law Enforcement Region 2 PFC Grant Polson who was recognized in an email to the Director from a constituent who owns property in Marlboro County and commended Officer Polson for his assistance in a poaching case. He noted that he "kept me informed throughout the process and I felt my case was a top priority." "I am pleased to know that SCDNR has such dedicated officers."

Director Boyles commended Law Enforcement Region 2 L/CPL Jeremy Shannon who was recognized in an email to the Colonel from a landowner in Ridgeway who was very appreciative of his response to her call about an illegal deer stand on her property and near her walking trail.

Director Boyles commended Kip Petty of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries on his selection as the Wildlife Technician of the Year.

Dewey "Kip" Petty is one of these outstanding individuals who possess many traits that contribute to the successes at SCDNR each day. He possesses leadership skills that provide smooth and timely task completion. Kip is dependable in all aspects of his duties. He always completes tasks at the highest level achievable. Dove field management is a large portion of our workload. Kip understands the importance of working to accomplish agricultural tasks when the opportunity is at hand. Whether the task is planting a dove field before the rain or working a 16-hour lane reversal shift, he will complete the task. Kip takes pride and ownership of his work and demonstrates a high level of skill and ability in all that he does. He serves as a role model to his fellow technicians and coworkers.

Kip is also highly respected in the community and in the counties in which he works. He always presents a positive image of our department. Kip is also a retired soldier from the Army National Guard where he served twenty-eight years through multiple deployments. The dedication and values of an American soldier are evident in his work at SCDNR each day. He is a natural leader in any project that comes his way while managing to keep morale at a high level among his co-workers. This technician exhibits a professional attitude in every aspect of his work. Among all these, he is a loving and dedicated husband and father.

Director Boyles commended Gary Stephens, Adam Rex, Thomas Kiker and Travis Bennett of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries for their outstanding work at Belfast which was commended by an email from a constituent who lives in Kentucky and traveled to Newberry for a quail hunt and toured Indian Creek and also the Belfast WMA. He commended Indian Creek for its “Absolutely beautiful habitat,” and Belfast for the hard work being done on the new section added. “The team is doing a great job.”

Director Boyles commended Ashleigh Nelson and Achi Treptow of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries for their hard work at the Santee Coastal Reserve which was commended by an email from a constituent who along with two hunting companions were selected for the Cape hunt at Santee Coastal Reserve. They were impressed with the abundance and variety of ducks while hunting and said, “We had one of the best days of duck hunting of our lives,” and “This program is a shining example of a state wildlife agency providing equal opportunity to hunters to experience wildlife management at its very best.”

Director Boyles reminded Board members that their Statement of Economic Interest Forms are due by March 30, 2024.

Duncan Crotwell, Director of Government Affairs, gave a brief legislative update.

Scott Speares, Chief Budget and Finance Officer, gave a brief budget update.

Director Boyles gave a headquarters update.

Emily Cope, Deputy Director for Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, gave an update on the Tega Cay depredation permit.

Mrs. Cope also shared a video on Category 1 Waterfowl Management Areas.

## **8. Advisory Committee Reports**

### **A. Heritage Trust**

Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director for Land, Water and Conservation, reported that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board met February 8, 2024 at Congaree Bluffs. The Advisory Board received a community outreach presentation by the Archeology Section. The Advisory Board approved property acquisitions that the Board will consider later today.

### **B. Waterfowl**

Billy Dukes, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, reported that the Waterfowl Advisory Committee met February 13, 2024 at the McKenzie Field Station at

Bennett's Point. The Advisory Committee received a summary of the 2023-2024 season. The Advisory Committee received an update on Category 1 Waterfowl Management Areas. The Advisory Committee received the results of the Duck Hunter Season Preference Survey.

C. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

Mrs. Cope reported that the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee met February 29, 2024 in the Styx Classroom. The Advisory Committee received a presentation on the Seasonal Distribution and Summer Habitat use of Striped Bass in the Edisto River. The Advisory Committee received the results of the Duck Hunter Season Preference. The Advisory Committee approved staff recommendations for the 2024-2025 Migratory Bird Seasons.

D. Law Enforcement

COL Chisolm Frampton, Deputy Director for Law Enforcement, reported that the Law Enforcement Advisory Committee met March 4-5, 2024 at Webb Center. The Advisory Committee received updates on budget, new hires and Smart Cop. The Advisory Committee received a presentation on Region 4 activities.

9. Items for Board Information

Climate Update

Dr. Mizzell provided rainfall totals, precipitation percentiles, streamflow, lake levels, groundwater monitoring wells around the state, precipitation forecast and temperature forecast.

10. Items for Board Action

A. Approval of Expenditure of Funds for Board Room and Director's Office Furniture

David Tarrant, Chief Operations Officer, reviewed the proposal for the expenditure of state funds for furniture for the Board Room and the Executive Office, as included in the meeting packet. *Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board, pursuant to §11-35-450 of the SC Code of Laws, approve the staff recommendation to expend the proposed state funds for Board Room and Executive Office furniture. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

B. Ratification of 2023 SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Annual Report

*Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon recommendation of the GCBS Advisory Board, approve the 2023 GCBS Annual Report as provided. Dr. Hartley seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

C. Approval of 2024-2025 Migratory Bird Season Recommendations

Billy Dukes, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, reviewed the recommendations for the 2024-25 Migratory Bird Seasons, as included in the meeting packet. *Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board approve the 2024-25 Migratory Bird Seasons for South Carolina as recommended by SCDNR staff and approved by the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**D. Conservation Easement Acceptance and Dedication: Green Hill Mound, Richland County**

Lorianne Riffin, Director, Office of Environmental Programs, reviewed the proposed Conservation Easement Acceptance and Dedication for Green Hill Mound, Richland County, as included in the meeting packet. *Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, approve the acceptance and execution of a conservation easement on the Green Hill Mound site, contingent upon any additional approvals by the Department of Administration. Additionally, that the property also be dedicated, as recommended, as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust Program. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**E. Update of Board Policy 400.01 (Requests to Use or Acquire Real Property Under the Jurisdiction of SCDNR)**

Catherine Hart, Assistant General Counsel, reviewed the proposed changes to Board Policy 400.01 (Requests to Use or Acquire Real Property Under the Jurisdiction of SCDNR), as included in the meeting packet. *Dr. Hartley made a motion that the SCDNR Board approve the proposed amendments to the Request to Use or Acquire Real Property Under the Jurisdiction of SCDNR Policy as recommended by SCDNR staff. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**F. License Agreement to Construct a New Radio Tower at Sassafras Mountain, Pickens County**

Fran Varacalli, Office of Environmental Programs, reviewed the License Agreement to Construct a New Radio Tower at Sassafras Mountain, as included in the meeting packet. *Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of SCDNR staff, grant approval to Pickens County, specifically the Pickens County Emergency Management Services for the construction of a new radio communication tower located at Sassafras Mountain, Pickens County, that will provide critical public safety communications for first responders to support search and rescue efforts in the area. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**11. Executive Session**

*Mr. Swygert made a motion that the SCDNR Board go into executive session pursuant to SC Code Section 30-4-70(A)(2) to discuss contractual matters related to Item(s) for Board Action G, H, I and J. Dr. Hartley seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**12. Open Session**

*Mr. Swygert made a motion that the SCDNR Board return to open session, noting that no action was taken during executive session. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**13. Item(s) for Board Action**

**G. Property Acquisition in Pickens County**

*Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff and the Director, subject to standard due diligence, and grant final approval to acquire approximately 1,072 acres in Pickens County as a new Wildlife*

*Management Area with the expenditure of \$7,000,000 in state appropriated funds. Dr. Hartley seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**H. Property Acquisition in Lancaster County**

*Mr. Swygert made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation by the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, subject to standard due diligence, and grant final approval to acquire approximately 73 acres, for \$286,500.00, adjoining Forty Acre Rock Heritage Preserve/WMA in Lancaster County, that will be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**I. Property Acquisition in Oconee County**

*Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation by the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, subject to standard due diligence, and grant final approval to acquire approximately 17 acres adjoining Stumphouse Mountain Heritage Preserve/WMA in Oconee County, that will be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of \$150,000 in Heritage Trust funds. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**J. Property Acquisition in Beaufort County**

*Dr. Hartley made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation by the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, subject to standard due diligence, and grant final approval to acquire approximately 127 acres in Beaufort County, that will be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the corpus of the SC Heritage Trust, and the expenditure of \$505,000 in Heritage Trust funds. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**14. Time and Location of Next Board Meeting**

The Board meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2024.

**15. Adjournment**

*Mr. Oxner made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Dr. Hartley seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*