

Minutes
Board of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
SCDNR Headquarters
260 D Epting Lane
West Columbia, SC
August 21, 2025 10:30 am

The regular meeting of the Board of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources was held at 10:30 a.m., August 21, 2025 at the SCDNR Headquarters, 260 D Epting Lane, West Columbia, SC. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was posted and mailed to the news media. Chairman Mark Hartley presided at the meeting. Board members present included Hope Blackley (by phone), Davy Hite (by phone), Mike Hutchins, Jerry Lee, and Duane Swygert. Board member Carlisle Oxner's absence was excused. Director Mullikin and staff members of the Department of Natural Resources were present at the meeting.

1. **Call to Order**

Chairman Hartley called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Invocation**

Dave Tafaoa, SC Law Enforcement Assistance Program, offered the invocation.

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Vice Chairman Swygert led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. **Introduction of Guests**

Kevin Ryan, Chief External Affairs Officer, introduced BeBe Dalton Harrison, Hampton Wildlife Fund; Sara Green, SC Wildlife Federation; and Allison Bugarin, SC Wildlife Federation.

5. **Constituent Comments**

Mr. Ryan stated that Ms. Dalton Harrison requested to make comments.

Ms. Dalton Harrison introduced herself as the newly hired Executive Director for the Hampton Wildlife Fund.

6. **Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Hartley asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the minutes of the May 15, 2025 and July 11, 2025 meetings. *Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the minutes of the May 15, 2025 meeting and July 11, 2025 orientation be approved as submitted. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

7. **Agency Reports/Updates**

Presentations

The Meritorious Award was presented to LT William "Brady" Branham, FSGT Jeremy T. Cooper and FSGT Willis Bowers.

Commendations

Director Mullikin commended the following SCDNR Employees, named as divisional Employees of the Year: Brian Johnson-Executive; Anna Smith-Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries; Dawn Beaver-Land, Water and Conservation; Gerard Givens-Law Enforcement; and Pearce Webster-Marine Resources with Anna Smith of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries named the overall Employee of the Year.

Director Mullikin commended CPT Charlotte McKee for her efforts in bringing awareness to Safe Boating Week (May 17-23, 2025), by launching the “Wear Your Life Jacket to Work” campaign.

Director Mullikin commended the SCDNR team of Director Mullikin, Chief of Staff Shannon Bobertz, Deputy Director Blaik Keppler and Dr. Tanya Darden (MRD-MRRI) for their partnership and significant contributions to the 2025 Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) Ocean and Climate Outreach Series. This science-driven approach enhances the ability to make long term coastal management decisions to protect South Carolina and the nation’s natural resources.

Director Mullikin commended Lieutenant William “Brady” Branham for successful completion of the FBI National Academy on June 5, 2025.

Director Mullikin commended SGT Ray Lewis and LT Philip Robertson for providing outstanding service and leadership in the DNR’s Basic Handgun Education Class held in Clemson, SC.

Director Mullikin commended Officer Tyler Urquhart for his heroic actions when responding to a vehicle accident on May 20, 2025. Officer Urquhart has been praised by the Florence County Sheriff’s Office for his quick actions in performing lifesaving CPR on a fellow deputy in distress until emergency personnel arrived on the scene.

Director Mullikin commended Anna Smith of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries for exceptional work and contributions to the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) as recognized by the SECAS.

Director Mullikin commended Dan DuPre of the Executive Office for his outstanding work in coordinating and leading Camp Wildwood, providing meaningful outdoor experiences to 87 campers in June 2025.

Director Mullikin commended Csilla Czako of Heritage Trust for discovering the Catawba River Button lichen, one of the rarest lichens in the world known only from the Catawba River in North Carolina until Ms. Czako discovered the lichen in the Lower Saluda River. It was last seen in South Carolina in 1887.

Director Mullikin commended the Law Enforcement team that assisted the City of Myrtle Beach, SC in maintaining order during Memorial Day weekend 2025. Through their partnership with the City of Myrtle Beach Police Department, they ensured a safe environment for residents and visitors.

Director Mullikin commended the following SCDNR officers for their quick actions, steady resolve and valuable assistance during the Atlantic Beach Black Pearl Cultural Heritage and Bike Festival in Myrtle Beach where several fights erupted resulting in injuries and casualties. The State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) recognizes these officers as pivotal in de-escalating the situation and returning order to the area: Adrian Priester, Jason Davis, Stewart James, Matthew Beckett, Cory Hemingway, Kaylee Ethridge, Taylor Moore, George Cadell, Barrett Breland, Ryan Bennett, Cory Dantzler, Joey Santiago, Aukeem Ruff, Brittany Thorson, David Gaskins, Brandon Henry, Matthew Chatfield, Sean Proner, Josh Walters, Garrett Schultz.

Director Mullikin commended the following Law Enforcement team for their commitment to and support of the National Archery in School Program (NASP) 2025 Championship: Gabriel Gilmore, Craig Bowers, Mark Ferrell, Brandon Gardner, Bert Luper, Elise Wels Still, Jim Shelton, Trey Byars, Jonathon Scogin, Zachary Tatum, Preston Gardner, Mackenzie Gallien, Samantha Thornton, Holly Downey, Frances Bissell, Vince Busha, Britny Washington, Ray Lewis, Andre Thompson, Ken Cope, Dale Gibson, Gilmore Stephens, Ray Forrester, Eric Quinn and Robby Barnes.

Director Mullikin commended the Law Enforcement team that partnered with Georgetown County and the nonprofit organization Wounded Nature – Working Veterans to remove 12 abandoned and sunken vessels from Georgetown Harbor and resulted in more than 100,000 pounds of debris being cleared from local waterways. The vessels were dismantled and transported to a local landfill for proper disposal, preventing potential environmental hazards from contaminating sensitive habitats.

Director Mullikin commended the following individuals for their acceptance into the 2027 Cohort for the Certified Public Manager Program Michelle Hallmon of Business and Finance, Terlicia Hampton of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and Amy Tegeler of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries.

Director Mullikin commended the following individuals for their acceptance into the 2026 Associate Public Manager (APM) cohort: PFC Courtney Angotti-Smith and L/CPL Kevin Collins.

Director Mullikin commended Sarah Pesi of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries for her successful selection for The Wildlife Society (TWS) Leadership Institute class of 2025.

Director Mullikin commended Wildlife biologist Andy Kreig of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries for receiving the National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative's Firebird Award.

Director Mullikin commended Jay Cantrell for his promotion to Assistant Chief of Wildlife-Statewide and for his acceptance into the 2025 National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI).

Director Mullikin commended Billy Dukes, Chief of Wildlife, for induction into the National Bobwhite and Grassland Initiative Technical Committee Hall of Fame for his years of dedicated service and promotion of quail management.

Director Mullikin commended James Vant, Audits Manager, for the successful completion of the Associate Program Managers (APM) Program through the Department of Administration.

Director Mullikin commended L/CPL Kevin Collins for his heroic actions in rescuing a 19-year-old female from a burning vehicle in Cameron, SC.

Director Mullikin commended Investigator Willis Bowers and the SCDNR dive team for their prompt response and successful recovery of lost equipment during the cleaning of the turbine trash racks on Lake Greenwood's Buzzards Roost Hydroelectric facility allowing for the continuation of services without interruption.

Director Report / Updates

Director Mullikin traveled to Washington DC with Chief of Staff Bobertz, Deputy Director Keppler, Colonel Frampton and visited with Senator Scott, Senator Graham's staff and Congressman Clyburn, as well as the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) staff. We plan to return to DC in November to meet with the new US Fish and Wildlife Service Secretary as well as other senior leadership in the administration.

Director Mullikin traveled to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in June with Chief of Staff Bobertz, DD Keppler, and Dr. Tanya Darden to meet with their senior leadership about possible collaborations, and Chief of Staff Bobertz and Dr. Darden gave a panel discussion with members of WHOI. Also met with the Yawkey Foundation about further collaboration and strengthening our relationship with the Foundation. We plan to attend a Yawkey Board meeting in the winter in Boston.

Director Mullikin informed the Board that multiple Boots on the Ground filmings have been completed and there have been meetings with SCETV about a partnership to highlight SCDNR staff and the work they do.

Director Mullikin announced that the Torpedo boat has been removed.

Director Mullikin commended the Department for an exceptional level of coordination, participation, and leadership during the SC7 exhibition. The Department deserves significant commendation for this outstanding collective effort that aligns perfectly with our stewardship mission while actively building public engagement with South Carolina's natural treasures.

Director Mullikin called on Cheyenne Twilley for a brief SC7 presentation.

8. Advisory Committee Reports

A. Marine Resources

Mr. Lee reported that the Marine Advisory Committee met June 20, 2025 at Ft. Johnson. The Advisory Committee received an overview of the Marine Turtle Conservation Program and an update on Red Drum. The Advisor Committee approved the Management Target for Red Drum.

B. Law Enforcement

Mr. Swygert reported that the Law Enforcement Advisory Committee met July 8, 2025 in West Columbia. The Advisory Committee received an overview of Law Enforcement and a tour of the De-Escalation Room.

C. Waterfowl

Billy Dukes, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division reported that the Waterfowl Advisory Committee met August 5, 2025 at the SC Waterfowl Association in Pinewood. The Advisory Committee received an update on Category 1 mid-season habitat. The Advisory Committee received a presentation on Santee Cooper winter drawdown and held a brief discussion.

D. Heritage Trust

Chairman Hartley reported that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board met August 14, 2025 in West Columbia. The Advisory Board approved the FY2026 Heritage Trust Amended Budget and the FY2027 Heritage Trust Budget, that are before the Board for consideration. The Advisory Board approved several property

acquisition projects, that are before the Board for consideration.

9. Item(s) for Board Action

A. Approval of Amended FY 2025-2026 Heritage Trust Budget

Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director for Land, Water and Conservation, briefly reviewed the Amended FY 2025-2026 Heritage Trust Budget, as included in the meeting packet. Mr. Lee made a motion *that the SCDNR Board, acting as the Board of Trustees for the Heritage Land Trust, accept the recommendation of the SC Heritage Trust Advisory Board, the Director and SCDNR Staff, and approve the FY2026 Heritage Trust amended budget.* Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of FY 2026-2027 Heritage Trust Budget

Mr. Rentiers reviewed the FY 2026-2027 Heritage Trust Budget, as included in the meeting packet. Mr. Swygert made a motion *that the SCDNR Board, acting as the Board of Trustees for the Heritage Land Trust, accept the recommendation of the SC Heritage Trust Advisory Board, the Director and SCDNR Staff, and approve the FY2027 Heritage Trust budget.* Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Request to Release Funds from SHEP Mitigation Trust Fund - Savannah River Sturgeon Monitoring

Ross Self, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, reviewed the Request to Release Funds from SHEP Mitigation Trust Fund – Savannah River Sturgeon Monitoring, as included in the meeting packet. Mr. Hutchins made a motion *that the SCDNR Board, as trustees for the South Carolina Mitigation Trust Fund, accept the recommendation of the Director and SCDNR Staff, and approve the distribution of SHEP Mitigation Trust Funds in the amount of \$212,000.00 for the purpose of continued monitoring and research of Atlantic and Shortnose Sturgeon and their habitat in the estuaries of the Savannah River, pursuant to SC Code of Laws §50-1-310.* Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

10. 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 Items for Board Action D through N and to receive legal update related to Item O. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

11. Open Session

Mr. Hutchins 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.

12. Item(s) for Board Action

D. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Colleton County

Mr. Swygert made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff, the Director, and the Heritage Trust Advisory Board and grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 17 acres in Colleton County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

- E. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Calhoun County
Mr. Swygert made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff, the Director, and the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, and grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 482 acres in Calhoun County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- F. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County
Mr. Lee made motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff, the Director, and the Heritage Trust Advisory Board and grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 232 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- G. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County
Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff, the Director, and the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, and grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 595 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- H. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County
Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff, the Director, and the Heritage Trust Advisory Board and grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential acquisition of approximately 4,006 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus pf the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- I. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Hampton County
Mr. Swygert made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff and the Director, subject to standard due diligence, and grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 35 acres in Hampton County. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- J. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Pickens County
Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the SCDNR Board accept the recommendation of SCDNR staff and the Director, subject to standard due diligence, and grant preliminary approval to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 3 acres in Pickens County. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- K. Final Approval of Property Purchase in Marion 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 491 acres in Marion County. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

L. Final Approval of Property Purchase in Lee/Sumter Counties

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 774 acres in Lee and Sumter Counties. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

M. Approval of the Sale of Property in Lexington County

Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of SCDNR staff and the Director, approve the sale of approximately 0.031 acres at the intersection of Fish Hatchery Road and Wildlife Lane within the SCDNR's Cohen Campbell Fish Hatchery and Styx Compound in Lexington County. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

N. Request for Use – License and Easement – Savannah River Bluffs Heritage Preserve

Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the DNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Director, SCDNR staff and the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, grant approval to the SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism for a License to support the design and construction of a waterline within the existing Georgia Power clearance easement and an easement for the operation and maintenance of the waterline at Savannah Bluffs Heritage Preserve in Aiken County. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

13. Time and Location of Next Board Meeting

The Board's next meeting will be held Thursday, October 23, 2025 in West Columbia.

14. Adjournment

Mr. Lee made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.