

Minutes
Board of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
SCDNR Headquarters
260 D Epting Lane
West Columbia, SC
March 28, 2025 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 28, 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, Mike Hutchins, Jerry Lee, Carlisle Oxner, Jake Rasor, Jr. (by phone) and Duane Swygert. 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 and welcomed newly appointed Board member Hope Blackley to her first meeting.

2. **Invocation**

Rev. Eric Skidmore, SC Law Enforcement Assistance Program, offered the invocation.

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

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

4. **Board Resolution Emeritus Appointment**

Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the SCDNR Board approve the Board Resolution appointing Mr. Norman Pulliam as Chairman Emeritus. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

5. **Introduction of Guests**

Shannon Bobertz, Chief of Staff, introduced Scott Whitaker, Coastal Conservation Association; Sara Green, SC Wildlife Federation; and Davy Hite.

6. **Constituent Comments**

Mrs. Bobertz stated that there were no requests for constituent comment.

7. **Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Hartley asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the minutes of the February 20, 2025 meeting. *Mr. Swygert made a motion that the minutes of the February 20, 2025 meeting be approved as submitted. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

8. **Agency Reports/Updates**

Commendations:

Director Mullikin commended Law Enforcement Region 1 Captain D.J. Riley and his officers who were commended in an email from SLED Captain Kindley who expressed his appreciation for assistance provided at Table Rock State Park during the search for a missing camper. He said that "Captain Riley kept in constant contact with me and local officials, and this collaborative effort was invaluable in the search of very difficult and dangerous terrain."

Director Mullikin commended Law Enforcement Officer Cameron Smith for winning the

Outstanding Dedication to Boating Under the Influence (BUI) Enforcement Award at the SC Mothers Against Drunk Driving Annual Awards Ceremony on March 7. Also commend all our officers nominated for this prestigious award: Region 1 Private First-Class Joseph Dickerson and Region 4 Private First-Class Onezean Ravanell. Region 1 Private First-Class Joey Santiago was nominated for his work in drug recognition. We are incredibly proud of our dedicated team who continue working hard to combat BUI through enforcement and education.

Director Mullikin commended Law Enforcement officers across Florence County who were recognized on the floor of the SC Statehouse, Senate and House in honor of First Responders Day. SCDNR Private First-Class Austin Spell was among those celebrated for being selected as his unit's Officer of the Year in 2024.

Director Mullikin commended Officer Cary Davis for his commendation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. TFO Cary Davis was part of a coordinated effort to expose a plot to kill eight US persons. Through coordination with local law enforcement and school officials, they were able to identify and place the suspect in Emergency Protective Custody pending further charges. Their actions resulted in the disruption of an ISIS-inspired plot to kill US persons and undoubtedly saved the lives of numerous individuals.

Director Mullikin commended Assistant General Counsel Shari Driggers for her nomination for the "Barry Barnette DUI Prosecutor of the Year Award" for her work prosecuting BUIs on behalf of DNR. This award recognizes prosecutors who dedicate a significant portion of their time to impaired driving cases and was presented at the Mothers Against Drunk Driving SC Law Enforcement Recognition Dinner. We are forever grateful to all our first responders.

Director Mullikin commended agency staff and volunteers who assisted with the 2025 Legislative Reception on February 26th at the National Guard Armory. It was a wonderful evening and opportunity for General Assembly members, their staff, and other special guests to learn what SCDNR is all about. We had 11 members of the Senate, 35 members of the House of Representatives, 114 special guests including staff members and many of our partner organizations in the private sector join us for a fantastic evening made possible by staff and volunteers from across the agency and our partners including the Hampton Wildlife Fund.

Director Mullikin commended Heritage Trust staff for their hard work and efforts involved in the agency's publications: Fort Frederick: A SCDNR Heritage Preserve and the World it Changed and Skull Creek Chronicles: Stepping into the Past at Green's Shell Enclosure Heritage Preserve. These publications were both winners of the 2024 Notable State Documents Awards by the S.C. State Library and were recognized at their 2024 Notable State Documents Awards Ceremony on March 19th.

Director Mullikin commended agency's Customer Service Staff who were commended in an email from a constituent and friend of former Representative Chip Huggins who contacted the Director asking for help in completing boat title forms for two boats registered in her deceased husband's name. We were able to put her in contact with staff who were able to assist her. She responded back that she "got a call from a very nice lady at DNR. She was so very helpful. I think I finally got it."

Director Mullikin commended Marine Resources Division staff and volunteers for the hard work on the MRD Open House held on Saturday, March 22, with 2,061 visitors, and many comments about such a wonderful and successful event. Commend members of the MRD Open House planning committee: Maia Ingle, Julie Binz, Olivia Bueno, Rachel Milan, Kattie McMillan, Tim Snoots, Rustin Gasperson, Paulette Mikell, Tanya Darden, Peter Kingsley-Smith, Courtney Wigfall, Ben Dyar, Erica Hardy, Kathryn Johnson, Beck Buchannon and all involved.

Director Updates

Director Mullikin gave the Board brief updates on the Lake Paul Wallace clean-up day, his meeting with Governor McMaster and meetings with members of the South Carolina Congressional Delegation.

Emily Cope, Deputy Director for Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, gave the Board an overview of the Lewis Ocean Bay wildfire response and impacts.

Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director for Land, Water and Conservation, gave the Board a brief overview of the drought tabletop exercise.

Blaik Keppler, Deputy Director for Marine Resources, gave the Board a briefing on the recently held Open House.

9. Advisory Committee Reports

A. Marine

Mr. Swygert reported that the Marine Advisory Committee held a virtual meeting February 28, 2025. The Advisory Committee received a Red Drum Status Update and a presentation on *Winter Marine Cold Spells in South Carolina: Their History and the Preliminary Impacts of the January 2025 Event*.

B. Governor's Cup Billfishing Series

Ms. Keppler reported that the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board held a virtual meeting March 12, 2025. The Advisory Board reviewed and approved the SC Memorial Reef Project and the Fishing Guidelines Changes.

C. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

Mr. Hutchins reported that the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee held a virtual meeting March 18, 2025. The Advisory Committee approved the 2025-2026 Migratory Bird Season Recommendations.

10. Item(s) for Board Action

A. Election of Vice Chairman

Mr. Lee made a motion to nominate Duane Swygert to serve as Vice Chairman. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

B. 2025-2026 Migratory Bird Seasons

Billy Dukes, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, reviewed the proposed 2025-2026 Migratory Bird Seasons, as included in the meeting packet. *Mr. Hutchins made a motion SCDNR Board approve the 2025-26 Migratory Bird Seasons for South Carolina as recommended by DNR staff and approved by the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

C. Approval of 2024 Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Annual Report

Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon recommendation of the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board, approve the 2024 Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Annual Report as provided. Mr. Hutchins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

11. Executive Session

Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the SCDNR Board go into executive session pursuant to SC Code Section 30-4-70(A)(1) to discuss personnel matters related to Item for Board Action E and SC Code Section 30-4-70(A)(2) to discuss contractual matters related to Item for Board Action F. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

12. 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.

13. Item(s) for Board Action

E. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee Appointment

Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation DNR staff and Advisory Board Chairman Mike Hutchins, appoint John B. Butler, III to the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Board for a term of service from April 1, 2025 through March 31, 2029. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

F. Ratification of the 2025 Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Contractual Agreement

Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board, ratify the updates to the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Contractual Agreement to reflect the proposed changes to clarify language, and to update points awarded, documentation requirements, and the appeals procedure. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

14. Comments

Chairman Hartley made the following Advisory Board Appointments:

Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries – Mr. Hutchins, Marine – Mr. Lee, Law Enforcement – Mr. Swygert serving as Chairman, Governor's Cup Billfishing Series – Mr. Oxner, Heritage Trust – Dr. Hartley, Waterfowl – Dr. Hartley, Land, Water and Conservation – Ms. Blackley, and Saltwater Recreational Fisheries – Mr. Hite (contingent on confirmed Board appointment).

15. Time and Location of Next Board Meeting

The Board will hold a Board Orientation April 17, 2025.

16. Adjournment

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