

Minutes  
Board of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
SCDNR Headquarters  
260 D Epting Lane  
West Columbia, SC  
October 23, 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., October 23, 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, Davy Hite, Mike Hutchins, Jerry Lee, Carlisle Oxner 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.

**2. Invocation**

Kevin Thompson, 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**

Shannon Bobertz, Chief of Staff, introduced Chief Justice John Kittredge.

Chief Justice Kittredge presented Director Mullikin the Chief Justice's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ms. Connie Rouse presented Director Mullikin with congratulatory recognition on behalf of Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter.

Mrs. Bobertz introduced Rick Counts, Hunters for the Hungry, BeBe Dalton Harrison, Hampton Wildlife Fund and Scott Whitaker, Coastal Conservation Association SC.

**5. Constituent Comments**

Mrs. Bobertz stated that Mr. Whitaker requested to make comments.

Mr. Whitaker recognized Baik Keppler, Deputy Director for Marine Resources, and the Marine Resources Division team for their work for fisheries.

**6. Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Hartley asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the minutes of the August 21, 2025. *Mr. Swygert made a motion that the minutes of the August 21, 2025 meeting be approved as submitted. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

**7. Agency Reports/Updates  
Commendations**

Chairman Hartley commended Director Mullikin for his successful completion of the Class1 Law Enforcement Officer Certification.

Director Mullikin commended Felicia Sanders, SCDNR Wildlife Biologist, for earning the American Ornithological Society Conservation Practitioner Award for 2025.

Director Mullikin commended Amy Tegeler for her acceptance into the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow program.

Director Mullikin commended the SCDNR online registration renewal staff for their efficiency in processing and issuing renewal decals in an expedient manner. This commendation is presented by Mayor Patrick O'Neil of Sullivan's Island through Senator Chip Campsen.

Director Mullikin commended the SCDNR dive team and L/CPL Tommy Buckhannon for their coordination of and support of the Darlington Swim Instruction event per Representative Robert Williams of Darlington County.

Director Mullikin commended Dean Nettles, Emily Kearse, April Atkinson, and the rest of the Webb Center staff for their professionalism, enthusiasm, and dedication to wildlife management objectives when coordinating the antlerless deer hunt resulting in a memorable and successful experience for all participants as noted by David Jones, General Counsel of the SC Forestry Commission.

Director Mullikin commended the SCDNR Law Enforcement Education Section Wildlife Division and the Wildlife Freshwater Fisheries Division on the successful planning and execution of the Love Shooting Sports Complex grand opening.

Director Mullikin commended Jessica Egan of the Conservation Districts Section in the Land, Water and Conservation Division for winning the Clemson University, College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences - 2025 Young Alumni Award. This award recognizes young alumni for their 'ever loyal' dedication to Clemson and the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences and their impacts in business, leadership, community, educational, and/ philanthropic endeavors.

Director Mullikin commended for his successful completion of a fellowship with the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT). First Sergeant Cary Davis, Law Enforcement, demonstrated exceptional enthusiasm, professionalism, courage, and confidence throughout the process. His commitment and numerous contributions significantly benefited JCAT and the national security mission.

Director Mullikin commended for their outstanding customer service, professionalism, and commitment to constituents, Jamie Funchess, Allison Anderson, and the staff at Boat Titling & Registration in Charleston, have earned recognition from the community for their valuable contributions.

Director Mullikin commended for exemplary management of Santee Preserve WMA and outstanding leadership of the preserve team, Achi Trepow, Project Leader, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the success of multiple projects and programs that benefit the community.

#### **Director Updates**

- Delivered 10 keynotes since last Board meeting and have 13 scheduled.
- South Carolina Conservation Leadership Book - December 31 target.

- Shannon, Blaik, Cheyenne, and Duncan went to DC to secure federal funding-FEMA (awarded since visit) and Boating Safety Grant (posted since visit) and discussed Red Snapper with delegation.
- Golden Trashcan Awarded to Region 4 in a celebration at May Forest.
- Opened Love Shooting Range.
- Shannon attended Commander's Brief to Governor McMaster and reported on torpedo boat removal from Bohicket Creek.
- Beidler Forest with Governor Mc Master.
- Conducted a Budget Retreat at Webb - meetings with legislators ongoing.
- Served as a hearing officer for a contested case for the Law Enforcement Training Council.
- Met with College of Charleston President and Provost with Shannon and Blaik regarding opportunities for partnership and new lab at Fort Johnson.
- Meeting with USC Beaufort Chancellor about opportunities for collaboration next week.
- Boots on the Ground - recorded bats, shark tagging, K-9 team, Sea Turtles and hope to get them on SCETV and Sinclair.

Director Mullikin called on Cheyenne Twilley to show Bat Video.

**8. Advisory Committee Reports**

**A. Land, Water and Conservation**

Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director for Land, Water and Conservation, reported that the Land, Water and Conservation Advisory Committee met virtually on August 26, 2025. The Advisory Committee approved Conservation District Commissioner Appointments and Reappointments, that the Board will consider later in the meeting.

**B. Governor's Cup Billfishing Series**

Blaik Keppler, Deputy Director for Marine Resources, reported that the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board met August 29, 2025 in Charleston. The Advisory Board approved the 2025 Series Winners, the 2026 Tournament Schedule, change to 2026 Series Tournament Contracts and potential changes to the 2026 Series Fishing Guidelines. The Advisory Board also approved a member reappointment, Chairman appointment and Vice Chairman appointment, that the Board will consider later in the meeting.

**C. Law Enforcement**

Mr. Swygert reported that the Law Enforcement Advisory Committee met September 4, 2025 at the LE Training Classroom in West Columbia. The Advisory Committee received overviews of the Styx Compound, hiring process for new officers, and Investigations. The Advisory Committee toured the various areas of the Styx Compound.

**D. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries**

Mr. Hutchins reported that the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee met September 11, 2025 at HQ. The Advisory Committee received updates of the 2025 turkey harvest, the Bat Program, Predicting Ovulation Time in Striped Bass using AI and legislation.

E. Marine

Mr. Lee reported that the Marine Advisory Committee met September 19, 2025 in Charleston. The Advisory Committee received an overview of the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series and the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative.

F. Heritage Trust

Chairman Hartley reported that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board met October 16, 2025 at HQ. The Advisory Board approved due diligence on 8 properties that the Board will consider later in the meeting.

G. Saltwater Recreational Fisheries

Mr. Hite reported that the Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee met virtually on October 21, 2025. The Advisory Committee received a review of estuarine finfish sampling, held a discussion on shorebased angler access and elected a new Vice Chairman.

**9. Item(s) for Board Information**

A. Climate Update

Hope Mizzell, Land, Water and Conservation Division, gave the Board a report on the 2025 Hurricane Season. Dr. Mizzell provided drought status, rainfall totals, precipitation percentiles, streamflow, lake levels, groundwater monitoring wells around the state, precipitation forecast and temperature forecast.

B. Mitigation Trust Fund Report

Scott Speares, Chief Budget and Finance Officer, gave the Board a brief Mitigation Trust Fund report.

C. Update of Bat Program

Jennifer Kindel, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, gave the Board a presentation on the Bat Program.

D. Personnel item – Director Annual Review

Chairman Hartley stated that this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

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

A. Approval of Revisions to SCDNR Policies

Chairman Hartley stated that this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

B. Approval of Expenditure from Mitigation Trust Fund – St. Stephen's Fish Lift Operations

Ross Self reviewed the request for the expenditure of \$418,753.00 from the St. Stephen's Mitigation Trust Fund, as included in the meeting packet.

*Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the Department of Natural Resources Board, acting as the Board of Trustees for the Mitigation Trust Fund, pursuant to S.C. Code Section 50-1-310, authorize the use of \$418,753 from the St. Stephen's Mitigation Trust Fund Rediversion Monitoring sub-fund, as requested by the Director and SCDNR Staff. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

C. Approval of Expenditure from the Broad River Mitigation Trust Fund – Stream Culvert Replacement within Lower Duncan Creek Sub-Watershed

Chairman Hartley stated that action on this item will be postponed until a future meeting.

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)(1) to discuss personnel matters related to Item for Board Information D and Items for Board Action A, D, E, F and G and pursuant to SC Code Section 30-4-70(A)(2) to discuss contractual matters related to Items for Board Action H, I, J, K, L, M and N and to receive legal update related to Item for Board Information F. Mr. Hutchins 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. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

13. Item(s) for Board Action

A. Approval of Revisions to SCDNR Policies

*Mr. Swygert made a motion that the Department of Natural Resources Board accept the recommendations of the Director and SCDNR Staff and approve the revisions to SCDNR Policies. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

D. Conservation District Commissioner Appointments, Reappointments and Commissioner Emeritus Appointment

*Ms. Blackley made a motion that the DNR Board accept the recommendation of the Land, Water and Conservation Advisory Committee and approve the following conservation district commissioner appointments for the following terms: Beverly O'Neal, Marlboro - 10/23/25 - 01/31/27; Brad Stowe, Calhoun - 10/23/25 - 01/31/27; Joseph Lee Holmes, Jr., Edgefield - 10/23/25 - 01/31/27; Malcolm Calhoun, Marlboro - 10/23/25 - 01/31/27; Morris Johnson, Georgetown - 10/23/25 - 04/29/25; Nicholas W. Yoder, Berkeley - 10/23/25 - 01/31/27; Ronnie Bozard, Calhoun - 10/23/25 - 03/03/30; and Samuel E. Felder, Orangeburg - 10/23/25 - 01/04/30. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

*Ms. Blackley made a motion that the DNR Board accept the recommendation of the Land, Water and Conservation Advisory Committee and approve the following Soll and Water Conservation District Commissioner reappointments for the following terms: C.M. Dantzler, Jasper - 10/04/22 - 10/03/30; Clarence Randell Ewing, Sr., Darlington - 07/25/25 - 07/24/29; Fred Gantt, Calhoun - 03/03/25 - 03/02/29; Jefferson Wilson, Chester - 07/01/25 - 06/30/29; Larry Nates, Lexington - 09/13/24 - 09/12/28; Mark Johnson, Georgetown - 06/26/24 - 06/25/29; Patrick T. Rodgers, Marlboro - 02/11/25 - 02/10/29; Susie K. New, Abbeville - 10/28/24 - 10/27/28; Thomas G. Stanley, Jr., Jasper - 10/04/22 - 10/03/30; and Van M. James, Anderson - 08/26/24 - 08/25/29. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

*Ms. Blackley made a motion that the DNR Board accept the recommendation of the Land, Water and Conservation Advisory Committee and approve Peggy Williams as*

*the Georgetown County Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner Emeritus. Mr. Lee seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

- E. Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board Reappointment  
*Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board, reappoint Mr. Robert Rodelseperger to serve a second three-year term beginning 1/1/2026 - 12/31/2028 on the Governor's Cup Advisory Board. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*
- F. Appointment of Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board Chairman  
*Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon recommendation of the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board, appoint Mr. Wesley S. Frierson Chairman of the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board, effective January 1, 2026. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*
- G. Appointment of Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board Vice Chairman  
*Mr. Oxner made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon recommendation of the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board, appoint Mr. Frederick Bergen Vice Chairman of the Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Advisory Board, effective January 1, 2026. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*
- H. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Aiken County  
*Mr. Hutchins made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, SCDNR Staff and the Director, grant preliminary approval and \$30,000 in Heritage Trust Funds to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 410 acres in Aileen 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.*
- I. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County  
*Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, SCDNR staff and the Director, grant preliminary approval and \$50,000 in Heritage Trust Funds to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 698 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program.*
- J. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County  
*Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, SCDNR staff and the Director, grant preliminary approval and \$50,000 in Heritage Trust Funds to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 2,330 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Oxner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*
- K. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County  
*Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, SCDNR staff and the Director, grant preliminary approval and \$50,000 in Heritage Trust Funds to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 524 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage*

*Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

L. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County

*Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, SCDNR staff and the Director, grant preliminary approval and \$50,000 in Heritage Trust Funds to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 1,766 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

M. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Horry County

*Mr. Lee made a motion that the SCDNR Board, upon the recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, the Director and SCDNR Staff, grant preliminary approval and \$30,000 in Heritage Trust Funds to investigate the potential purchase of approximately 410 acres in Horry County that may be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Mr. Swygert seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

N. Preliminary Approval of Property Purchase in Pickens County

*Mr. Hite 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 28 acres in Pickens 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, January 29, 2026 in West Columbia.

**14. Adjournment**

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