

Heritage Trust Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
The Turnure House - Waddell Mariculture Center
211 Sawmill Creek Road
Bluffton, SC 29910

Thursday, May 8th, 2025 - 11:00 a.m.

Members Present

Campbell Coxe, Chairman
Kevin Hunter (via Teams)
Rob Keck (via phone)
Dr. Oswald H. King, III (via phone)
Julien Springs (via Teams)
Dr. Eric Emerson (via Teams)
Clarke Thompson (for Harry Lightsey, via Teams)
Ken Rentiers
Dr. Thomas S. Mullikin
Dr. Mark Hartley

Others Present

Allison Morris
Anna Smith
Barry Kesler
Bill Marshall
Csilla Czako
Elizabeth Miller
Erin Levesque
Fran Varacalli
Hunter Young
Johnny Stowe
Julie Binz
Dr. Karen Smith
Keith Bradley
Ken Prosser
Leroy Humphries
Lorianne Riggins
Luke Allen
Sam Chappellear
Sean Taylor
Susan Porter (via Teams)
Tanya Darden
Walter Dargan

Call to Order

Chairman Campbell Coxe called the meeting to order and provided the Freedom of Information Statement.

Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Coxe gave a welcome to the Board and everyone attending and confirmed the meeting had reached quorum.

Public Comment Period

Chairman Coxe asked if anyone wanted to speak during this time. Mr. Walter Dargan's comments were regarding the work being done at the Great Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve in Darlington County, the community group that was formed regarding the work, and the community's collaboration with SCDNR on this matter. Mr. Dargan provided a brochure to the Board. Chairman Coxe noted the importance of working with the public in managing properties and thanked Mr. Dargan for his comments.

Approval of Minutes from November 14th, 2024 Meeting

Mr. Daniel Gambrell made a motion that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board approve the minutes from the February 13th, 2025 meeting as submitted. Chairman Campbell Coxe seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Items for Board Information

A) Bottomland Hardwood Ecology and Restoration, and Public Access on the Great Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve: *Johnny Stowe, Region 2 Heritage Preserve Manager, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, SCDNR*

Mr. Johnny Stowe presented on the process of bottomland hardwood ecology and restoration and its role in the work at the Great Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve in Darlington County. He noted that restoring the bottomland hardwoods allows for diversity in flora and fauna, including rare plant species that are endangered in our state.

B) Lewis Ocean Bay Wildfire and Response: *Leroy Humphries, Region 4 Heritage Preserve Manager, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, SCDNR*

Mr. Leroy Humphries provided the Board with an update regarding the recent wildfires at Lewis Ocean Bay Heritage Preserve in Horry County. He reviewed the timeline of the prescribed burning versus the wildfire, methods utilized to fight the wildfire, and the current regrowth of various vegetation, specifically Venus fly traps, on the Heritage Preserve due to the fires. Mr. Humphries also commended the many multiple state, national, and local agencies, divisions of SCDNR, and the local community for their support and assistance in this matter.

C) Stock Enhancement of Marine Fish: *Erin Levesque, Biologist/Manager of Waddell Mariculture Center, Marine Resources Division, SCDNR*

Ms. Erin Levesque detailed the history, work, and research of the stock enhancement program at the Marine Resources Division's Waddell Mariculture Center and how this influences our knowledge of biology in the wild. She said SCDNR Biologists developed stock enhancement technology as a responsible approach. Located on the Colleton River in Beaufort County, the center currently stocks three species of fish: red drum, cobia, and southern flounder. By using stock enhancement technology, they are able to quantify the species' measure of success and plan out rearing practices for genetic management. Ms. Levesque noted the stock enhancement program has significantly increased the number of fish released into the wild since 2015, with 2.4 million fish released in 2024.

D) Recent Excavations at Pockoy Island Ring 2 and Green's Shell Enclosure: *Dr. Karen Smith, Heritage Trust Archaeologist, Cultural Heritage Trust Program, SCDNR*

Dr. Karen Smith presented an overview of the archaeological excavation work the Cultural Heritage Trust team undertook in the spring of 2025 at Green's Shell Enclosure

Heritage Preserve in Hilton Head, SC and Pockoy Island Ring 2 at Botany Bay Plantation Heritage Preserve/WMA in Edisto Island, SC.

Dr. Smith reviewed various archaeological survey and excavation methods, the history of each site, and important findings from each. She detailed how archaeologists interpret these things to inform the cultural preservation of these Heritage Preserves. She also espoused on the importance of the archaeological work that SCDNR does for cultural resources, like at the Pockoy Island Ring 2 site which is subject to severe ocean erosion. She pointed out that archaeological sites cannot be restored once they are gone.

Dr. Mark Hartley requested clarification on whether the ocean would breach the Pockoy Island Ring 2 archaeological site in two years based on the shoreline measurement data, or if it would overtake the site completely. Dr. Smith said she believed the ocean would overtake the site completely like it did with Pockoy Island Ring 1, scouring away the artifacts and leaving no site intact. She reiterated the importance of mitigating the loss through excavation and research.

Potential Conflict of Interest Statement

Chairman Coxe read the “Potential Conflict of Interest Statement”. No Statement was made.

Motion to Enter Executive Session

Dr. Mark Hartley 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 Item A and a request for use related to Action Item B. Dr. Thomas S. Mullikin seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Close Executive Session

Chairman Coxe made a motion that the Board return to open session, and that the record reflect that no action was taken in Executive Session. Mr. Daniel Gambrell seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion on Action Items

A) Property Acquisition Project: Final approval to purchase approximately 304 acres, Aiken County (Gopher Tortoise-Korn Tract):

Mr. Daniel Gambrell moved that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation from SCDNR staff and the Director, recommend that the SCDNR Board grant final approval and \$1,000,000 in Heritage Trust Funds to purchase approximately 304 acres in Aiken County that would be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. Dr. Mark Hartley seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

B) Request for Use: St. Helena Sound HP/WMA – Ashe Island:

Mr. Julien Springs moved that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board, upon the recommendation of SCDNR staff, grant approval to Marine Air Corps Station Beaufort for the temporary use for permanent placement of dredged material on the three existing

dredged material containment areas on Ashe Island, a portion of the St. Helena Sound Heritage Preserve & Wildlife Management Area. Dr. Sonny King seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Other Items

Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director of the Land, Water and Conservation Division, thanked Chairman Coxe and welcomed new Board members, Dr. Thomas S. Mullikin, SCDNR Director, and Dr. Mark Hartley, Chair of the SCDNR Board, to the Heritage Trust Advisory Board and thanked them for their support of the program. He provided commendations to staff, including to retiring Deputy Director of Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries, Emily Cope, on her 28-year career with SCDNR and thanked her for her huge contributions to the Heritage Trust Advisory Board and the program as a whole. He noted that the program is progressing its use of technology, such as with Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) equipment for the Geology program and drones for the Botany program.

Mr. Rentiers noted that 122 acres were dedicated into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust Program as the Coosaw Sea Island Cotton Heritage Preserve in the month of April. He also mentioned that invites would be sent soon for the ceremony for the property acquisition at Lewis Ocean Bay Heritage Preserve.

Lastly, Mr. Rentiers mentioned that the November 14th, 2025 meeting of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board would be moved to October 16th to accommodate the SCDNR Board. Location options for the next meeting were discussed.

Time and Place of the Next Board Meeting

The next meeting of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board was noted as August 14th, 2025. The location of the next meeting will be determined at a later date.

Adjournment

Having no further business to discuss, Dr. Sonny King moved that this meeting of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board be adjourned. Mr. Julien Springs seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison Morris

Heritage Trust Advisory Board Administrative Assistant

Land, Water and Conservation Division

S.C. Department of Natural Resources