

**MINUTES
HERITAGE TRUST ADVISORY BOARD
FEBRUARY 17, 2009
SOUTH CAROLINA ARCHIVES & HISTORY
RICHLAND COUNTY**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Campbell Coxe (Chair)
Julia Krebs
Henry Fair
Jake Rasor
Rodger Stroup
Irvin Pitts (for Chad Prosser)
States Clawson (for Joe Taylor)
Breck Carmichael (for Mike McShane)
Jon Leader

OTHERS PRESENT

Barry Beasley
Caroline Pinckney
Kay Daniels
Julie Holling
Herrick Brown
Kathy Boyle
Bert Pittman
Tim Ivey
Ken Prosser
Marvin Davant
Elizabeth Johnson
Deanna Ruth
Amanda Londo
Billy Cate
Sean Taylor
Brian Long
Joey Holloman
Brett Moule

MEMBERS ABSENT

John Frampton
Sonny King
Beth Grace
Fritz Hamer (for William Calloway)
Joel Felder (for Gene Kodama)
Ken Rentiers

Call to Order

Campbell Coxe called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and requested they introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Coxe asked if there were any changes to the amended minutes from the August 7, 2008, meeting or the minutes from the November 5, 2008, meeting of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board (HTAB). There were none and a motion was made by Mr. Clawson to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stroup and approved unanimously.

Comments from the Director

Dr. Beasley introduced Caroline Pinckney. She has joined the Heritage Trust staff as Ken Prosser's replacement. Caroline came from the Senate Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee. Dr. Beasley also reported that on February 2, 2009, Ken Rentiers became the Deputy Director of the Land, Water and Conservation Division. Mr. Rentiers worked for 10 years in Washington, D. C., in Senator Thurmond's office and then the Farm Services Administration in South Carolina. Unfortunately, he was unable to be at the meeting today but we are all looking forward to working with him.

Dr. Beasley also stated that John Frampton had sent a letter stating that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) opposes the proposed coal plant on the Pee Dee River. The DNR has concerns about the ash ponds that are to be built on the bluffs. Mercury is another issue that is of great concern to DNR.

Sean Taylor has made good progress at Poinsett Bridge. The Greenville County Recreation Commission is seeking grant dollars to complete a parking area and make the bridge more accessible for visitors. The Lighthouse Inlet project on Folly Island is about to conclude. The Kolb site Public Day will be held on Saturday, March 14, 2009. The dig will be held March 9-20, 2009. All volunteers are welcome.

The DNR's budget has had a 31% cut since July 1, 2008. While difficult, the agency managed to make the necessary cuts.

A bill was introduced to the General Assembly to limit the taking of turtles to ten. This legislation was introduced due to the large number of turtles being taken out of the state's rivers and being shipped to Asia.

New DNR Lands Website

Amanda Londo reported on the DNR's new website that should "go live" in April of this year. The website will be kept up-to-date. A great addition to the website will be that the property managers will be able to change information on their own pages, add events schedule, start and end dates of prescribed burns, etc., and any other information they choose to inform the public about. The website will have over 400 pages of information that can be viewed by the public which will include maps, hours of operation, directions to properties and other useful information for the public.

Congaree Land Trust

Billy Cate, the Executive Director of the Congaree Land Trust, reported that the land trust was founded in 1992, has four staff members, has protected land in 11 counties in the state, and holds 70 easements on approximately 23,000 acres. Their focus is on larger tracts, of 200 acres or more, but they do have easements on smaller parcels. They like to protect working farms and forests. Traditional uses of these properties are encouraged, i.e., agricultural, forestry, hunting and fishing, and horseback riding. The COWASEE Basin is the pet project of the Congaree Land Trust. This area is in the middle of the 11 county areas that is the focus of the land trust and it encompasses roughly 215,000 acres. It is anchored by the Congaree National Park. Presently about 42%, or 90,000 acres, is protected in one form or another, public or private. It is ecologically significant but the historical significance in this area is huge. Timing is very important on this project. COWASEE is a collaborative effort with the SC DNR, Congaree Land Trust, Ducks Limited, Friends of the Congaree, National Resource Conservation Service, Conservation Fund, and interested landowners up and down the rivers.

Midlands Area Joint Installation Consortium (MAJIC) is another important project for the land trust. The MAJIC Project includes the Midland's military installations, regional councils of governments, local governments, conservation organizations, the SCDNR and other interested parties. A primary goal of this group is to work together to buffer lands around military installations.

Overview of the Dungannon HP and Victoria Bluff HP Management Plans

Deanna Ruth, Region 4 biologist, updated the HTAB members on the Dungannon revised management plan. The property, 640 acres, was purchased in 1995. A boardwalk was added in 2007 that goes out into the middle of the impoundment. Dungannon has only been burned one time, in one unit. It is in need of fire and bobcat work removing undergrowth and the plowing of firebreaks. The management objective are to continue to control aquatic weeds in the impoundment, continue prescribed fire, mid-store control in loblolly pine stands, put barricades around the graves, and continue working with the neighbors with hog farms.

The Victoria Bluff management plan has been revised also. It is in Bluffton in Beaufort County and is surrounded now by development. A new parking area was added last year, as well as a new sign erected, and a new kiosk is in the works. The property was recently surveyed for the first time since taking possession of the property in 1979. The property was a gift from the South Carolina Ports Authority. The management objectives are timber harvest, prescribed fire, and to avoid future impacts of development. This year 1,462 acres have been burned of which 300 acres had never been burned. Long leaf pine seedlings have been planted on 100 acres.

Lewis Ocean Bay Lawsuits Update

Deanna Ruth reported that a letter was sent to Paul League from General Vaught's attorney stating he would give \$5,000 to restore approximately 800 feet of Telephone Road that had been widened without the DNR's permission. If the department accepted the money, then all parties

would consider the matter settled. Ms. Ruth said the DNR spent \$7,000 to restore 800 feet of Telephone and it still needs gravel. There was no information in the letter regarding restoration of the pitcher plants and other wetland species that were destroyed. After reviewing the offer, the DNR declined it. Ms. Ruth said she will be meeting with contractors soon to obtain a final estimate on the remaining repairs to the road. Estimates could reach \$30,000 or more.

Next, Ms. Ruth reported that the department is in negotiations with property owners on Target Road who encroached on department property and destroyed an access road into the preserve. She stated timber needs to be harvested from the area, but will be difficult to remove without an access point. Ms. Ruth said she is in the process of obtaining a cost estimate for construction of a new road into the preserve.

Status of the Conservation Bank

Marvin Davant reported that the Conservation Bank is treading water at this point. The accomplishments of the Conservation Bank thus far are worthwhile. They have protected 152,000 acres statewide with 132 projects in 39 counties. The DNR is the biggest partner with the Conservation Bank in the four year since it began with \$22 million in projects. The Budget Recession Act took \$7 million that the Conservation Bank had left and gave it to the Department of Education. The bank was able to pay five of its previous commitments but 22 were left unpaid. Efforts are continuing to provide funding for the Bank that would continue to keep the office open until funding is again available to fund conservation projects.

Budget Update and Review

Barry Beasley reviewed the budget with the Board. Dr. Beasley stated that revenues were dropping due to the overall economic decline but the Heritage Land Trust Fund (HLTF) was still healthy and all obligations are being met. The cash balance in the HLTF as of January 31, 2009, was \$8,290,794. Current obligations are \$4,878,026. If all pending expenditures were paid today, there would be \$3,412,768 remaining in the HLTF. There are still four months of revenue coming into the fund prior to the end of the fiscal year. A key thing to watch regarding HLTF revenue is whether revenue increases in April, May and June as it has in past years.

Mr. Ivey gave an update on the Preserve Management budget to date. Mr. Taylor did the same for the Cultural Areas budget.

Project Update

Hopefully Lighthouse Inlet will be concluded soon. The management plan has been updated and as soon as the last pieces of legal work are completed this property will be dedicated. Also work is continuing on an acquisition in Barnwell County.

Executive Session

At this time, Dr. Krebs made a motion that the Board hold an executive session to discuss contractual and legal matters. Mr. Fair seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Return to Regular Session

Mr. Rasor made a motion that the Board return to regular session. Mr. Leader seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

No action was taken during the executive session.

Other Business

The next meeting will be held on May 7, 2009 at Camp Gravatt or Barnwell State Park. Dr. Beasley stated that he may arrange a field trip on May 6 to visit Craig Pond, Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve, Tillman Sand Ridge or Hitchcock Woods.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be brought before the Heritage Trust Advisory Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned.