

MINUTES
HERITAGE TRUST ADVISORY BOARD
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Rembert C. Dennis Building, Room 335
1000 Assembly Street
Columbia, SC
February 3, 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT

Campbell Coxe (Chair)
Henry Fair (Vice Chair)
John Frampton
Sonny King
Jake Rasor
Eric Emerson
Phil Gaines (for Chad Prosser)
Jim Hill (for Joe Taylor)
Ken Prosser (for Mike McShane)
Fritz Hamer (for William Calloway)
Ken Rentiers
Jonathan Leader

OTHERS PRESENT

Sean Taylor
Kay Daniels
Julie Holling
Randy Wilgis
Herrick Brown
Tim Ivey
Deanna Ruth
Kathy Boyle
Bert Pittman
Bob Perry
Emily Cope
Charles Ruth
Jay Butfiloski
Vivianne Vejdani

MEMBERS ABSENT

Julia Krebs
Beth Grace
Joel Felder (for Gene Kodama)

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, additions or deletions to the minutes from the November 4, 2010, meeting of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board. *Dr. King made a motion that the Board approve the minutes of the November 4, 2010, meeting, as submitted. Mr. Fair seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.*

Updates and Comments

DNR Director John Frampton stated he is consistently meeting with legislators about the budget and hopes the agency can avoid a reduction-in-force on July 1. He noted that the workload of many staff members has doubled and there have been no salary increases in the last four years. Mr. Frampton said that the vacancy rate in the agency is at an all time high and there is a current freeze on hiring.

Mr. Frampton briefly commented about Sassafras Mountain, a mountain property owned by DNR that is the highest point in South Carolina. He said the vision for the site is to acquire additional lands adjoining it and to build an observation platform on the pinnacle similar to the one at Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina. Mr. Frampton said the agency is researching alternatives to fund all associated costs and the board will be updated as the project evolves.

Ken Rentiers reported that the agency is operating at a 1985 funding level and is preparing for a 20% budget cut beginning July 1, 2011. He noted this will take the agency to an \$11.5 million cut, which is a 60% reduction in operating funds.

Property Acquisition Update

Mr. Rentiers reported that two property acquisitions had been completed since the last meeting. The first was a 20-acre addition to the Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve in which a wetland area adjoining the northeast side of the preserve was acquired to help mitigate wetland impacts at DNR's Cohen Campbell Fish Hatchery. Mr. Rentiers explained that part of the mitigation agreement involves planting Atlantic white cedar on five acres of the site.

Mr. Rentiers said the second acquisition consisted of a three-acre donation at Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve. He explained that the transaction was part of a settlement agreement in 2006 between the Corps of Engineers, The State Historic Preservation Office, and SCANA Corporation for the disturbance of archaeological resources during construction of SCANA facilities in Cayce.

Mr. Rentiers stated that approval of a proposed lease agreement between the City of Cayce and DNR has been postponed by the Budget and Control Board until their April meeting. He said the lease will allow expansion of the Cayce Riverwalk through Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve.

Deer Management Status

Charles Ruth, DNR Deer and Turkey Project Supervisor, distributed copies of recent news releases concerning the agency's recommendations for a new deer management program and copies of a 2010 survey on deer harvest limits and tagging. He reported that a telephone survey of randomly selected resident deer hunters was conducted along with an internet survey that involved notification to over 80,000 licensees. Mr. Ruth said public meetings discussing proposed changes began in 2003 and the results of all inquiries have shown that deer hunters want a change in the current system. He noted that 70% of hunters support a reasonable limit on bucks and the implementation of a tagging program. Mr. Ruth said they also support paying a modest fee to implement these change as long as the funds are used to administer the program and conduct deer research and management. In summary, he stated that a public awareness campaign is underway and that any changes to the current deer hunting laws would require action by the South Carolina General Assembly.

2010 Alligator Season Results

Jay Butfiloski, DNR Furbearer and Alligator Coordinator, conducted a presentation on the results of the 2010 public alligator hunting season. He stated that 1,200 tags were allocated for the season (300 per hunt unit), which was an increase of 200 tags from the previous year. Mr. Butfiloski reported that new legislation increased the non-resident fee an additional \$200 for an alligator tag. He noted that the fee is in line with the State of Georgia for a non-resident. Mr. Butfiloski stated that over 350 alligators were harvested during the season, with the largest measuring 13.8 feet and weighing approximately 1,025 pounds. He added that the harvests were highest in Georgetown and Berkeley Counties.

Project Updates

Ken Rentiers reported the January/February 2011 issue of SC Wildlife is entirely about the Heritage Trust Program. He distributed copies and expressed his appreciation to the Board for all the significant work that has been accomplished in habitat protection.

Mr. Rentiers reported that a Climate Change Technical Working Group has been formed within DNR under the leadership of Bob Perry and Hope Mizzell. He said the group is comprised of staff from all divisions, who will study and report on the issue. Mr. Rentiers added that an intranet web site on climate change is being created and will be operational soon.

Mr. Rentiers stated that the highest priority in the Land & Water Division is updating the state water plan. He stated that the first advisory council, the Savannah Water Basin, has been established and contains 25 stakeholders. Mr. Rentiers said a draft planning document should be completed within the next 6-12 months.

Mr. Rentiers commended Heritage Trust staff for their diligent work.

Chairman Coxe mentioned that the Board received a letter from a member of the public about establishing a local oversight group for Lewis Ocean Bay Heritage Preserve. He requested that

staff review the letter, research the issue, and present information on an appropriate response at the next meeting.

Budget Overview

Mr. Rentiers reported that the annual Kolb archaeological project at Great Pee Dee Heritage Preserve may not receive agency funding this year and staff are exploring alternatives. Fritz Hamer commented that the project is a very significant for DNR, as well as Heritage Trust. He added that although the budget is tight, the project is worthwhile and should receive some funding from the agency. Mr. Rentiers said he would further explore the matter.

Mr. Rentiers distributed an updated revenue chart for the Heritage Land Trust Fund and noted that the numbers are disappointing, but comes as no surprise due to the sluggish economy.

Executive Session

At this time, Dr. Leader made a motion that the Board hold an Executive Session to discuss contractual and legal matters. Dr. King seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Return to Regular Session

Dr. King made a motion that the Board return to regular session. Mr. Fair seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Dr. King made a motion that Heritage Trust staff explore the possibilities of using Heritage Trust lands for mitigation projects. Dr. Leader seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board will be held Thursday, May 5, 2011, at 10:00 a.m. at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia.

Adjourn

There being no further business to be brought before the Board at this time, Dr. King made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Emerson seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

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