

**SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK**  
**Grants Review Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday March 5, 2025 - 10:00 am  
Virtual Via Teams

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Grants Review Committee (GRC) was called to order by Committee Acting Chairman Tommy Lavender at 10:00 am on March 5, 2025. Chairman Lavender stated that a notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. The meeting was originally scheduled as an in-person meeting but was shifted to Teams due to dangerous weather and travel advisories. A notice was posted on the meeting room door to inform and invite the public to participate virtually via Teams.

2) ROLL CALL

Committee members present included GRC Acting Chairman Tommy Lavender, Peter King, Richie Wilhoit, Sean Connolly for SC Department of Transportation, and ex-officio member Mike McShane. Members absent were Chairman Rob Howell and Russell Hubright for the SC Forestry Commission.

3) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Lavender welcomed guests Bank independent counsel Sterling Busbee and Roland Franklin, legal advisor to the House Efficiency and Legislative Oversight Committee. He then opened the floor to anyone interested in making public comments. There being no one, the Committee moved to the next agenda item.

4) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. Lavender stated that the GRC was given a draft copy of the 12/04/2024 GRC meeting minutes to review. The Chairman asked for any additions, deletions, or corrections to the minutes. There being none, Mr. Lavender asked for a motion to adopt the minutes of the meeting as distributed. Dr. King made the motion, Mr. Wilhoit seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5) PROJECT UPDATES

Mr. Lavender distributed a list of closed and outstanding projects for FY25 year-to-date. Director Raleigh West stated that 31 projects totaling \$41 million and protecting 15,262 acres have closed this year. Of the 38 outstanding projects, most are on track to close without issue before fiscal year end. Bank staff will provide a full update of outstanding projects at the next Board meeting.

6) FINANCIAL REPORT

Director West distributed the financial update and pointed out that the Bank has just over \$11.7 million available for grants: \$6.9 million in Standard Grants, \$97,500 in Working Ags, and \$4.7 million in SHEP funds. The Bank has expected reimbursements of \$12 million, and \$9 million in reimbursements, which will go back to SCOR.

7) EXECUTIVE SESSION (*PROPOSED CONTRACTUAL MATTERS*)

Mr. Lavender called for a motion to enter Executive Session for the purposes of discussing proposed contractual matters in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act *Section 30-4-70 (a) (2)* and to

invite guests Roland Franklin, Sterling Busbee, and Bank staff to stay for Executive Session. Dr. King made the motion, Mr. Connolly seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Lavender noted that action may thereafter be taken on items discussed during Executive Session and requested that committee members recuse themselves as appropriate.

At the conclusion of Executive Session, Dr. King made the motion to return to regular session. Mr. Wilhoit seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Once in open session, Mr. Lavender stated that no action was taken during Executive Session. Dr. King made a motion to approve the recommendations of Bank staff and subject to the availability of funding by the Board with the following exceptions:

**Item 2 Saluda Grade Trail:** The release of grant funds includes the following conditions: a review appraisal confirming the Appraisal meets industry standards, proceeds from the sale of materials used for site development, and a satisfactory policy established by Spartanburg County regarding existing structures and future development within the right-of-way.

**Item 12 Table Rock State Park - Hutto Tract** conditioned on SCPRT reimbursing \$50K

Mr. Wilhoit seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Next, Director West presented requests for sponsorship of two applications to the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (NCWCGP): Open Space Institute Land Trust requested Bank sponsorship of a \$1 million NCWCGP application for Blessing Plantation in Berkeley County, and Lowcountry Land Trust requested Bank sponsorship of a \$1 million NCWGP application for Dill Sanctuary in Charleston County. Following the discussion, Chairman Lavender clarified that this sponsorship should not be interpreted as an endorsement or guarantee of additional funding from the SC Conservation Bank's Trust Fund. Any request for additional funding from the Bank must work through normal processes. Dr. King made a motion to send this matter to the full Board with the GRC's recommendation of approval of these two sponsorship requests. Mr. Connolly seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Director West then presented a request regarding the Waites Island projects from the SC Office of Resilience (SCOR) to amend the grant reimbursement terms to accept a total reimbursement of \$7 million (\$1 million for Waites-Becky Work, \$4 million for Waites-Merrill Boyce, and \$2 million for Waites-Olivia Boyce). Dr. King made a motion for GRC to recommend the reduction of adjusting Waites Island SCOR funding to accept \$7 million as the final reimbursement amount for these Waites Island projects. Mr. Wilhoit seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Lavender stated that the Grants Review Committee will make these recommendations to the full Board at the next scheduled Board meeting.

## 7) ADJOURN

Mr. Lavender called for a motion to adjourn. Dr. King made the motion, Mr. Wilhoit seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.