

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK

Wednesday, March 19, 2025 - 10:00 am
Harbison State Forest Environmental Education Center, Columbia, SC

The South Carolina Conservation Bank Board (SCCB) held its quarterly meeting on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at 10:00 am at the Harbison State Forest Environmental Education Center, 5600 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC. Notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting was posted and mailed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act to the persons, organizations, and news media that have requested such notification. Chairman Michael McShane presided at the meeting and members present included Rob Howell, Peter King, Charles Lane, Thomas Lavender, Richmond Wilhoit, Jr.; and Ex-Officio members Russell Hubright for Dr. Walt McPhail, SC Forestry Commission, Ken Prosser for SC Department of Natural Resources, Paul McCormack for Duane Parrish, SC Parks Recreation & Tourism, Cristina Key for Commissioner Hugh Weathers, SC Department of Agriculture, Chad Long for Secretary Justin Powell, SC Department of Transportation. Board Members absent were Jared Thompson and Ex-Officio member Harry Lightsey, SC Department of Commerce.

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McShane called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and thanked them for their attendance. He then recognized and expressed gratitude to Russell Hubright and the Forestry Commission for hosting the day's proceedings. Chairman McShane then recognized and welcomed Terry Hurley from the SC Office of Resilience.

2) ROLL CALL

Chairman McShane called roll, and a quorum was established with 6 Board Members and 5 Ex-Officio members in attendance. He also welcomed Terry Hurley of the SC Office of Resilience as a special guest of the meeting. Mr. McShane stated that proper public notice had been given for the meeting. He further reminded Board members to state any conflicts of interest during the meeting and recuse themselves from discussion or voting on those matters by completing the recusal form in their board member packets.

3) CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman McShane provided several updates and acknowledgments during his comments. He provided an update on the FY 2026 Appropriations Bill and reminded members to complete their State Ethics Commission (SEI) filings. He reported that a Special Purpose Board meeting will be held in April to review staff recommendations for updates to agency policies and procedures. The Chairman also announced the forthcoming establishment of a Conservation Acceleration Task Force to support strategic initiatives. He welcomed retiring State Parks Director Paul McCormack, who introduced his successor, Joy Raintree. Mr. McCormack was recognized for his dedicated service to South Carolina State Parks, and the Board expressed its gratitude and offered well wishes as he transitions to his next role. Finally, the Chairman welcomed Cody Simpson of the South Carolina Governor's Office to the meeting.

4) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. McShane opened the floor to anyone who'd submitted a request to speak during the Public Comments portion of the meeting. Jennifer Howard of the SC Land Trust Network addressed the Board with an update on SC Land Trust Network (SCLTN) activities, including total acres protected, and discussed how the SCLTN provides support to the Bank. There being no other comments, Mr. McShane called for the next agenda item.

5) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. McShane stated that the Board was sent a draft copy of the 12/18/2024 Quarterly Meeting minutes prior to the meeting for their review, and copies were within the Board Member meeting materials. The Chairman asked for any

additions, deletions, or corrections to the meeting minutes. There being none, Mr. Lane made a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. King seconded the motion, and it was unanimously passed.

6) NEW BUSINESS

a) Director's Update

Director West informed Board members that the Bank's proposed regulation for the Procurement of Appraisal Services is progressing through standard review and has been approved by the House Regulations Administrative Procedures, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Committee. The regulation next moves to review by the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee. Next, Director West presented two requests for sponsorship of applications to Coastal Wetlands Grants. Lowcountry Land Trust requested that the Bank authorize a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Application for the Dill Sanctuary property in Charleston County. After discussion, Mr. Lane made a motion to authorize the Bank to sponsor the application, Mr. Howell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Open Space Institute Land Trust requested that the Bank authorize a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Bank Grant application for the Blessing property in Berkeley County. After discussion, Mr. Land made a motion to authorize the Bank to sponsor the application, Dr. King seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

b) Project Updates

Director West distributed a list of projects and updated Board members on their status. As of 03/17/2025, 31 projects totaling over \$44.5 million and protecting more than 16,600 acres have closed so far during FY25. Director West informed Board Members that all outstanding projects are scheduled to close in a timely manner and are waiting on either federal grants, partner funding, or other reasonable extenuating circumstances. Next, Director West discussed the SCOR-Waites Island reimbursements and presented their request to accept \$7 million in reimbursement as final from the Waites Island projects. Mr. Lane made a motion to amend the grant to accept \$7 million in reimbursement from SCOR related to the Waites Island complex of projects. Mr. Lavender seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. Finally, Director West requested that the Board consider extending the closing deadline to June 18, 2025, for projects approved on or before March 2024. Mr. Wilhoit made a motion to extend the closing deadline for projects approved on or before the March 2024 Board meeting to the next Board meeting (06/18/2025). Mr. Lavender seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

c) Financial Report

A summary of the Bank's financial position was included in the Board members' handouts. Director West reported that as of February 28, 2025, the Bank has \$6.98 million in its Standard Grants Program, \$97,500 in the Working Ag Lands Fund, and \$4.7 million in SHEP Funds, all of which are unobligated and available for new grants. Mr. West also reminded the Board that as reimbursable grants close, the Bank will, in turn, have those funds available for new grant applications. Director West pointed out that the Working Ag Lands balance of \$97.500 does not cover the amount requested in qualifying Working Ag Lands applications. The Board discussed using the unobligated funds in the Standard Grants program to cover the difference.

d) Grants Review Committee Recommendations

Chairman McShane yielded the floor to Mr. Lavender and Director West to present a review of pending applications and the Grants Review Committee's funding recommendations for the current cycle. Chairman McShane reminded Board members to complete the Recusal Form if they need to recuse themselves from any project discussions due to potential conflicts of interest.

North Widgeon

Chairman McShane disclosed that he serves as Chairman of the Beaufort County Greenspace Advisory Board, a participant in this project. Open Land Trust applied for a \$250,000 grant to acquire 9 acres in fee simple in Beaufort County. Kate Schaefer of Open Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #1 and a funding level of \$250,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Saluda Grade Trail

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Howell recused himself from discussion or voting on this project. PAL: Play. Advocate. Live Well. (PAL) and the Saluda Grade Conservancy applied for a \$750,000 grant to acquire 374 acres in fee simple in Spartanburg/Greenville Counties. Laura Ringo of PAL spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #2 and a funding level of \$750,000, conditioned on 1) a review appraisal confirming the appraisal meets industry standards and is satisfactory to the Bank; 2) proceeds from the sale of materials must be used for site development costs; 3) satisfactory policy between Grantee, Bank, and any long-term steward of land regarding existing structures and future development within right-of-way; 4) Joint Bond Review Committee approval of due diligence; 5) bifurcate real estate transaction between South Carolina and North Carolina so Bank grant only attaches to real property in SC; and 6) staff approval of Phase One Environmental hazard assessment. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Broad Arrow Landing

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Chairman McShane recused himself from discussion or voting on this project. Ducks Unlimited applied for a \$800,000 grant for a 904-acre conservation easement in Williamsburg County. Emily Purcell of Ducks Unlimited spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #3 and a funding level of \$800,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Ninety Six Creek

Upstate Forever applied for a \$78,000 grant for a 70-acre conservation easement in Greenwood County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #4 and a funding level of \$78,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Stevenson Century Farm

Upstate Forever applied for a \$200,000 grant for a 127-acre conservation easement in Anderson/Oconee Counties. Scott Park of Upstate Forever spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #5 and a funding level of \$200,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

KAFA Lynches River Tract

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$35,250 grant for a 130-acre conservation easement in Lee County. Stuart White of Congaree Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #6 and a funding level of \$35,250. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Dean Acres

Upper Savannah Land Trust applied for a \$112,000 grant for a 141-acre conservation easement in Greenwood County. Wade Harrison of Upper Savannah Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #7 and a funding level of \$112,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

The Freeman-Anderson CE

Kiawah Island Conservancy applied for a \$25,000 grant for a 2-acre conservation easement in Charleston County. Colie Farrah of Kiawah Island Conservancy and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #8 and a funding level of \$25,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Lemaster Grain and Cattle

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$860,000 grant for a 379-acre conservation easement in Cherokee County. Richard Carr of SC Farm Bureau Land Trust and the landowners spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #9 and a funding level of \$860,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Lever Farms

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$187,500 Working Ag Lands grant for a 116-acre conservation easement in Newberry County. Richard Carr of SC Farm Bureau Land Trust and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #10 and a funding level of \$187,500 (consisting of the remaining unobligated \$97,500 Working Ag Lands fund and the balance of \$90,000 from the Standard Grants Program). The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Wilson Ridge Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$640,000 Working Ag Lands grant for a 424-acre conservation easement in Chester County. Richard Carr of SC Farm Bureau Land Trust and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #11 and a funding level of \$640,000, to be paid from the Standard Grants Program as all Working Ag Lands funds are fully obligated. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Table Rock State Park - Hutto Tract

SC Parks Recreation and Tourism applied for a \$128,000 grant to acquire 5 acres in fee simple in Pickens County. spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #12 and a funding level of \$128,000, with a reimbursement of \$50,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

7) BOARD MEMBER OPEN DISCUSSION

Board members expressed their gratitude to Board leadership and Bank staff, grant applicants, and landowners. Chairman McShane thanked the ex-officio members in attendance and stated appreciation for their continued collaboration. The Chairman mentioned the vacancies on the Board and said that Board leadership is working to recommend qualified members to the appropriate appointing authorities.

8) TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The Chairman stated dates for future Board meetings:

Special Purpose Meeting via Teams April 9 or 22

FY25 Cycle 4: 06/18/2025, Board Meeting, Spartanburg, SC (GRC 06/04/2025)

FY26 Cycle 1: 09/17/2025, Board Meeting, Location TBD (GRC 09/03/2025)

FY26 Cycle 2: 12/10/2025, Board Meeting, Columbia, SC (GRC 12/03/2025)

9) ADJOURN

The Chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lavender made the motion, Mr. Lane seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.