

SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK
Grants Review Committee
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday September 3, 2025 - 10:00 am
2711 Middleburg Dr., Columbia, SC 29204

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Grants Review Committee (GRC) was called to order by Committee Acting Chairman Mike McShane at 10:00 am on September 3, 2025. Chairman McShane stated that a notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2) ROLL CALL

Committee members present included GRC Acting Chairman Mike McShane, Rob Howell, Peter King, Richie Wilhoit, James Douglas for SC Forestry Commission, and Sean Connolly for the SC Department of Transportation. Member absent was Tommy Lavender.

3) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. McShane welcomed guests Sterling Busbee of Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd and new Board members Wes Carter, West Cox, and Melanie Shull. 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. McShane stated that the GRC was given a draft copy of the 06/04/2025 GRC meeting minutes to review. The Chairman asked for any additions, deletions, or corrections to the minutes. There being none, Mr. McShane asked for a motion to adopt the minutes of the meeting as distributed. Mr. Wilhoit made the motion, Dr. King seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5) PROJECT UPDATES

Mr. McShane distributed a list of closed and outstanding projects for FY26 year-to-date. Director Raleigh West stated that 9 projects totaling \$6.4 million and protecting 2,172 acres have closed year to date. Next, Director West reported on the withdrawal of prior approved projects: Culler 3 & Sasquatch Ridge. Director West stated that the majority of the 38 outstanding projects are on track to close without issue. Next, Director West presented the committee with an Aiken Land Conservancy request to modify the reimbursable portion of the Boyd Pond Park project from \$110,000 to \$90,000. Following discussion, Dr. King made a motion to recommend amending the Boyd Pond Park project's reimbursement to \$90,000, to be received by the end of the calendar year. Mr. Howell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Bank staff will provide a full update of outstanding projects at the next Board meeting. Finally, Director West updated the committee on outstanding reimbursements.

Next, Mr. McShane described the budget request process and asked Board members to refer to the worksheet outlining the Bank's planned FY27 budget submission, which was within the meeting packet. The request includes recurring requests of \$75,000 in Operations, \$6 million in the standard grants program, and \$6 million in Working Ag Lands fund; non-recurring requests of \$25 million in the standard program and \$10 million in Working Ag Lands fund. Mr. McShane requested a motion that the committee adopt this budget request as a recommendation to the full Board. Mr. Wilhoit made the motion, Dr. King seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

6) FINANCIAL REPORT

Director West distributed the financial update and pointed out that the Bank has nearly \$40 million in its program dollars available for grants: \$31.5 million in Standard Grants, \$4 in Working Ags, and \$4.7 million in SHEP funds. In addition, the SC Office of Resilience has committed \$16 million to certain projects that support its mission.

7) EXECUTIVE SESSION (*PROPOSED CONTRACTUAL MATTERS*)

Mr. McShane 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 of the committee to stay for Executive Session. Mr. Howell made the motion, Mr. Wilhoit seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. McShane 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, Mr. Howell made the motion to return to regular session. Mr. Wilhoit seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Once in open session, Mr. McShane stated that no action was taken during Executive Session. Mr. Howell 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 3: Duck Ponds amend recommendation to condition release of funds on staff approval of management plan with sufficient public access.

Item 6: Buckwalter Conservation Project Amend recommendation to a funding amount of \$146,660.

Items 10 & 11: Pipsissewa Passage II and III Amend recommendation to include a condition that reimbursements are received within 12 months of project funding date.

Item 24: Felker Farms amend recommendation to fund at \$225,000

Item 28: The Pond CE change Threat of Conversion score from 1 to 3 (Total = 54.1) and fund at \$16,500

Item 31: The Mayadina-in-the-Pines change scores as follows: Historical & Cultural from 0 to 3, Unique Opportunity from 5 to 7 (Total = 54.3) and fund at \$34,825

Item 34: Ulmer Farms 2 change scores as follows: Threat of Conversion from 1 to 3, Historical & Cultural from 1 to 3, Unique Opportunity from 5 to 7 (Total = 55) and fund at \$148,000

Item 34: Ulmer Farms 1 change scores as follows: Threat of Conversion from 1 to 3, Historical & Cultural from 1 to 3, Unique Opportunity from 5 to 7, (Total = 54.4) and fund at \$186,000

Dr. King seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. McShane stated that the Grants Review Committee will make these recommendations to the full Board at the next scheduled Board meeting.

Director West noted that several applications were voluntarily withdrawn or deferred due to incomplete applications. These applications will be completed for consideration in a future round.

7) ADJOURN

Mr. McShane called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wilhoit made the motion, Mr. Howell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.