

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK

Wednesday, September 17, 2025 - 10:00 am
Harbison State Forest, Columbia, SC

The South Carolina Conservation Bank Board (SCCB) held its quarterly meeting on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at 10:00 am at 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 Vice-Chairman Tommy Lavender, Wes Carter, West Cox, Rob Howell, Peter King, Charles Lane, Melanie Shull, Jared Thompson, Richmond Wilhoit, Jr.; and Ex Officio members Russell Hubright & Dr. Walt McPhail, SC Forestry Commission, Mark Hartley, SC Department of Natural Resources, Joy Raintree for Duane Parrish, SC Parks Recreation & Tourism, Chad Long for Secretary Justin Powell, SC Department of Transportation, and Jennifer Druce for Harry Lightsey, SC Department of Commerce, and Alden Dalton for Hugh Weathers, SC Department of Agriculture.

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McShane called the meeting to order, welcomed, and thanked everyone for their attendance. He then recognized and expressed gratitude to SC Forestry Commission and Harbison State Forest for hosting the meeting, energy, and passion for what we do.

2) ROLL CALL

Chairman McShane called roll, and a quorum was established with 10 Board Members and 6 Ex-Officio members in attendance. He also welcomed Eric Fosmire 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.

3) CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman McShane provided several updates and acknowledgments during his comments. First, he introduced and welcomed new Board members Wes Carter, West Cox, and Melanie Shull. He then recognized former Bank Chairman Doug Harper and expressed appreciation for his attendance. 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. Chairman McShane announced that Agenda Item 8, *Executive Session*, would not be needed for this meeting.

4) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. McShane Introduced Matt Williams, new Executive Director of Lowcountry Land Trust. He then opened the floor to anyone who'd submitted a request to speak during the Public Comments portion of the meeting. Jennifer Howard of SCLTN and Kellee Melton, NRCS Acting State Conservationist, addressed the Board. There being no other public 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 06/18/2025 Quarterly Meeting minutes prior to the meeting for their review, and a copy was 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, and the motion unanimously passed.

6) NEW BUSINESS

- a) **Proviso 47.16 (DNR: Matching Grant Program)** Chairman McShane informed the Board about a request from SCDNR to update the language of SCDNR Proviso 47.16. SCDNR stated that this proviso change is needed to

update the name of the USFWS grant program from Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration to “Office of Conservation Investment” (OCI) and to allow the use of Conservation Bank funds as the state match for additional conservation grant programs offered by OCI. Following the discussion, Mr. Howell made a motion to accept the proviso language, Mr. Thompson 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 09/08/2025, 11 projects totaling over \$7.3 million and protecting over 2,500 acres have closed so far during FY26. Two projects were withdrawn due to unavoidable circumstances: Sasquatch Ridge & Culler 3. Director West informed Board Members that all other outstanding projects are scheduled to close in a timely manner and are awaiting either federal grants, partner funding, or other reasonable extenuating circumstances. Four projects—Big Garvin Creek Farm, Ashley River Barry Tract, Back Swamp, and Carolina Seafood—have reached the end of their grant periods. Following updates from the respective applicants, Mr. Lane moved to extend the grant period for these projects, approved on or before the September 2024 Board meeting, through the December Board meeting. Dr. King seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. 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. Mr. Lane recommended amending the Boyd Pond Park project’s reimbursement to \$90,000, to be received by the end of the calendar year. Mr. Wilhoit seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Director West updated the committee on other outstanding reimbursements. Bank staff will monitor these pending reimbursements and will update the Board at the next quarterly meeting.

c) Financial Report

A summary of the Bank’s financial position was included in the Board members' handouts. Director West reported that as of 08/31/2025, the Bank holds \$17,418,982 million in its Standard Grants Program, \$4,000,000 in the Working Ag Lands Fund, and \$4,480,000 in SHEP Funds, all of which are unobligated and available for new grants. In addition, SCOR has committed \$16 million to certain projects that advance its mission. Mr. West also reminded the Board that as reimbursable grants close, the Bank will, in turn, have those funds available for new grant applications. Applicants with outstanding reimbursements were asked to provide an update on their reimbursement timeline to Bank staff.

d) Grants Review Committee Recommendations

Chairman McShane asked Director West to begin the 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.

Pocotaligo Station (Buckfield)

Open Space Institute Land Trust applied for a \$4,597,600 grant to acquire 1,656 acres in fee simple in Beaufort County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #1 and a funding level of \$4,597,600 with an expected reimbursement of \$4,597,600. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Twickenham Plantation

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. McShane recused himself from discussion or voting on this project. Ducks Unlimited applied for a \$850,000 grant for a 1,852-acre conservation easement in Beaufort County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #2 and a funding level of \$850,000, contingent on approval by the Joint Bond Review Committee. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Duck Ponds

Open Space Institute Land Trust applied for a \$19,000,000 grant to acquire 8,354 acres in fee simple in Darlington & Florence Counties. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #3 and a funding

level of \$16,000,000, with an expected reimbursement of \$15,500,000 and contingent on approval by the Joint Bond Review Committee. Additionally, the release of grant funds is conditioned on staff approval of a management plan with sufficient public access. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Blessing

Open Space Institute Land Trust applied for a \$7,600,000 grant to acquire 634 acres in fee simple in Berkeley County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #4 and a funding level of \$7,400,000 with an expected reimbursement of \$1,950,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Bigbee (Coosawhatchie)

The Nature Conservancy applied for a \$1,700,000 grant to acquire 625 acres in fee simple in Jasper County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #5 and a funding level of \$1,700,000 with an expected reimbursement of \$1,700,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Buckwalter Conservation Project

The Town of Bluffton applied for a \$746,666 grant to acquire 239 acres in fee simple in Beaufort County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #6 and a funding level of \$146,660. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Beneventum

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Wilhoit recused himself from discussion or voting on this project. Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$342,000 grant for a 190-acre conservation easement in Georgetown County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #7 and a funding level of \$342,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Walnut Grove Plantation

Lord Berkeley Conservation Trust applied for a \$1,305,500 grant for a 779-acre conservation easement in Orangeburg County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #8 and a funding level of \$1,305,500, contingent on approval by the Joint Bond Review Committee. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Duck Haven

Upstate Forever applied for a \$250,000 grant for a 147-acre conservation easement in Pickens County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #9 and a funding level of \$250,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Pipsissewa Passage III

Naturaland Trust applied for a \$25,000 grant to acquire 8 acres in fee simple in Greenville County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #10 and a funding level of \$150,000, with an expected reimbursement of \$25,000 within 12 months from the release of grant funds. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Pipsissewa Passage II

Naturaland Trust applied for a \$350,000 grant to acquire 15 acres in fee simple in Greenville County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #11 and a funding level of \$350,000, with an expected reimbursement of \$75,000 within 12 months from the release of grant funds. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Edisto Island Museum

Edisto Island Open Land Trust applied for a \$40,000 grant for a 10-acre conservation easement in Charleston County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #12 and a funding level of \$40,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Duck Creek - Saluda Bluffs

Naturaland Trust applied for a \$400,000 grant to acquire 28 acres in fee simple in Pickens County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #13 and a funding level of \$400,000, with an expected reimbursement of \$400,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Sellers Tract

Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$20,500 grant for a 22-acre conservation easement in Chesterfield County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #14 and a funding level of \$20,500. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Blue Lake Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$888,000 grant for a 887-acre conservation easement in Chester County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #15 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Eidson Family Timberland

Upper Savannah Land Trust applied for a \$175,000 grant for a 682-acre conservation easement in Saluda County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #16 and a funding level of \$175,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Lone Star Plantation

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$2,000,000 grant for a 2,010-acre conservation easement in Calhoun County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #17 and a funding level of \$2,000,000, contingent on approval by the Joint Bond Review Committee. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Betsy Kerrison Nature Trail Phase V

Kiawah Island Conservancy applied for a \$600,000 grant to acquire 11 acres in fee simple in Charleston County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #18 and a funding level to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

Wheeler Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$744,000 grant for a 887-acre conservation easement in Cherokee County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #19 and a funding level of \$744,000, contingent on approval by the Joint Bond Review Committee. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

AM-PM Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$1,500,000 grant for a 419-acre conservation easement in Laurens County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #20 and a funding level of \$1,500,000, contingent on approval by the Joint Bond Review Committee. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

H & H Farm

Open Land Trust applied for a \$444,000 grant for a 534-acre conservation easement in Colleton County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #21 and a funding level of \$444,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

RML Timber

Upstate Forever applied for a \$872,625 grant for a 1,219-acre conservation easement in Laurens County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #22 and a funding level of \$872,625, contingent on approval by the Joint Bond Review Committee. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Deer Hill Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$675,000 grant for a 672-acre conservation easement in Lexington County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #23 and a funding level of \$675,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Felker Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$225,000 grant for a 248-acre conservation easement in Newberry County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #24 and a funding level of \$225,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Ulmer Farms 2

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$148,000 grant for a 205-acre conservation easement in Bamberg County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #25 and a funding level of \$148,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Ulmer Farms 1

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$186,000 grant for a 361-acre conservation easement in Colleton County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #26 and a funding level of \$186,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Mayadinya-in-the-Pines CE

Aiken Land Conservancy applied for a \$34,825 grant for a 76-acre conservation easement in Aiken County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #27 and a funding level of \$34,825. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

The Pond CE

Aiken Land Conservancy applied for a \$16,500 grant for a 30-acre conservation easement in Aiken County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #28 and a funding level of \$16,500. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Union of Brothers

Upstate Forever applied for a \$115,200 grant for a 302-acre conservation easement in Union County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #29 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Ayer Tract

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Carter recused himself from discussion or voting on this project. Lowcountry Land Trust applied for a \$275,000 grant for a 871-acre conservation easement in Colleton and Hampton Counties. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #30 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Winbush Family Farm

Upstate Forever applied for a \$100,000 grant for a 32-acre conservation easement in Anderson County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #31 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Lost Creek

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$1,413,000 grant to acquire 72 acres in fee simple in Richland County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #32 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Choestoea Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$1,020,000 grant for a 727-acre conservation easement in Oconee County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #33 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Mary Burns Tract

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$185,000 grant for a 339-acre conservation easement in Kershaw County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #34 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Whiten Farms

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$375,000 grant for a 156-acre conservation easement in Oconee County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #35 and a funding level of \$375,000 . The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Mims Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$475,000 grant for a 338-acre conservation easement in Sumter County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #36 and a funding level of \$475,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Winkles Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$340,000 grant for a 338-acre conservation easement in Sumter County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #37 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Tindal Farm - Georges & Roberts

Lord Berkeley Conservation Trust applied for a \$200,000 grant for a 165-acre conservation easement in Clarendon and Sumter Counties. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #38 and a funding level of \$200,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Tindal Farm - Mooneyham

Lord Berkeley Conservation Trust applied for a \$230,000 grant for a 179-acre conservation easement in Clarendon County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #39 and a funding level of \$230,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Tindal Farm - Hodges Corner

Lord Berkeley Conservation Trust applied for a \$200,000 grant for a 156-acre conservation easement in Sumter County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #40 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Tindal Farm - Home Place

Lord Berkeley Conservation Trust applied for a \$510,000 grant for a 412-acre conservation easement in Clarendon County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #41 and to defer funding without prejudice at this time. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee’s recommendation.

7) FY27 BUDGET SUBMISSION

Chairman McShane presented the proposed FY27 Budget Submission. A table outlining the proposal was included in the Board packet. Following the discussion, Mr. Howell moved to adopt the staff recommendations as presented:

- **Recurring additions to base funding:**
 \$75,000 for Operations
 \$6 million for the Standard Grants Program
 \$6 million for Working Ag funds
- **Non-recurring requests:**
 \$25 million for the Standard Grants Program
 \$10 million for Working Ag funds
 \$150 million for the State Resource Agency Strategic Land Acquisition Fund

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

8) BOARD MEMBER OPEN DISCUSSION

During the open discussion period, Board members conveyed their appreciation to the Board leadership and SC Conservation Bank staff, as well as to grant applicants and landowners for their collective efforts in advancing conservation goals. Chairman McShane reminded Board members of Board officer elections at the December Board meeting. Any interested parties should contact Chairman McShane prior to the December meeting.

9) TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The Chairman stated dates for future Board meetings:
FY26 Cycle 2: 12/10/2025, Board Meeting, Columbia, SC (GRC 12/03/2025)
FY26 Cycle 3: 03/18/2026, Board Meeting Location TBD (GRC 03/04/2026)
FY26 Cycle 4: 06/17/2026, Board Meeting, Location TBD (GRC 06/03/2026)

10) ADJOURN

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