

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK

Wednesday, June 18, 2025 - 10:00 am
Wofford College, Spartanburg, SC

The South Carolina Conservation Bank Board (SCCB) held its quarterly meeting on Wednesday, June 18, 2025, at 10:00 am at the Chandler Building, Wofford College, Spartanburg, 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 Peter King, Charles Lane, Jared Thompson, Richmond Wilhoit, Jr.; and Ex Officio members Russell Hubright for Dr. Walt McPhail, SC Forestry Commission, Shannon Bobertz for Mark Hartley, SC Department of Natural Resources, Joy Raintree for Duane Parrish, SC Parks Recreation & Tourism, Secretary Justin Powell, SC Department of Transportation, and Jennifer Druce for Harry Lightsey, SC Department of Commerce. Board Members absent were Thomas Lavender, Rob Howell, and Ex Officio member 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 Wofford College for providing meeting space and refreshments. Chairman McShane invited Laura Stille to introduce Wofford President Dr. Nayef Samhat, who welcomed the Board and delivered information about Wofford College and its Environmental Studies program. Chairman McShane presented a copy of Rice and Ducks to Dr. Samhat in appreciation for Wofford's hospitality.

2) ROLL CALL

Chairman McShane called the roll, and a quorum was established with 5 Board Members and 5 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. 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 Final FY 2026 Appropriations Bill. 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. Finally, Chairman McShane asked Board members to join him in sending condolences to Tommy Lavender on the passing of his mother

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. Carlton Owen addressed the Board regarding South Carolina's broad conservation goals and the ways the Bank Board can contribute to conservation acceleration, particularly by helping South Carolina counties establish county greenbelt programs. 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 03/19/2025 Quarterly Meeting and 04/23/2025 Special Purpose Board 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 03/19/2025 meeting minutes. There being none, Mr. Lane made a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. King seconded, and the motion unanimously passed. The Chairman asked for any additions, deletions, or corrections to the 04/23/2025 Special

Purpose 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) Director's Update

Director West opened his update by commending Spartanburg County and its citizens for their collective and remarkable efforts in revitalization. He further acknowledged their steadfast commitment to preserving the distinctive character and heritage that make Spartanburg County unique. Next, Director West provided an update on the recent hearing held before the House Government Efficiency and Legislative Oversight Audit Committee. He noted that the hearing was well-received, with considerable positive feedback. The Committee anticipates releasing its report of findings and recommendations later this summer. Director West affirmed his commitment to keeping the Board informed as the process moves forward. Finally, Director West presented a request from Naturaland Trust to transfer title on the River Road project to SC Department of Resources. After a brief discussion, Mr. Lane made a motion to accept the transfer of the River Road from Naturaland to SCDNR, Mr. Thompson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Bank staff will make a note to the River Road project file to record this decision.

b) Project Updates

Director West distributed a list of projects and updated Board members on their status. As of 06/17/2025, 55 projects totaling over \$55 million and protecting over 22,000 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 awaiting either federal grants, partner funding, or other reasonable extenuating circumstances. Mr. Lane made a motion to extend the closing deadline for projects approved on or before the June 2024 Board meeting to the December Board meeting. Dr. King 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 05/29/ 2025, the Bank has \$10,580,604 million in its Standard Grants Program, \$0 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. Applicants were asked to provide an update on their reimbursement timeline to Bank staff. Director West pointed out that the exhausted Working Ag Lands fund is exhausted to fund 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 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.

Maxcy Farm Nature Preserve

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Lane recused himself from discussion or voting on this project. Edisto Island Open Land Trust applied for a \$400,000 grant to acquire 52 acres in fee simple in Charleston County. John Giraud spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #1 and a funding level of \$400,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

The Knight Tract

Lowcountry Land Trust applied for a \$800,000 grant to acquire 266 acres in fee simple in Dorchester County. David Ray of Lowcountry Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #2 and a funding level of \$800,000 conditioned on the applicant bringing the project

back to the Board prior to closing if the purchase price exceeds the final Fair Market Value. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Broad River Conservation @ Alston

Palmetto Trail (also known as Palmetto Conservation Foundation PCF) applied for a \$725,000 grant to acquire 109 acres in fee simple in Fairfield County. Mary Roe and Buddy Jenkins of the Palmetto Trail spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #3 and a funding level of \$725,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Boyd Pond Park Addition

Aiken Land Conservancy applied for a \$220,000 grant to acquire 25 acres in fee simple in Aiken County. Peter Kleinhenz spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #4 and a funding level of \$220,000 with an expected reimbursement of \$110,000. As a qualifying SHEP property, this project will be completed with SHEP funds. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Coakley Chapel Park

Lowcountry Land Trust applied for a \$300,000 grant to acquire 6 acres in fee simple in Charleston County. David Ray of Lowcountry Land Trust and Myra Richardson of the Hamlin Beach Community spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #5 and a funding level of \$300,000, contingent upon the long-term takeout agency providing evidence of its legal ability to take title and the expertise and resources to manage the site. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

McCoy Farm

Lowcountry Land Trust applied for a \$435,000 grant for a 1,089-acre conservation easement in Orangeburg County. David Ray of Lowcountry Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #6 and a funding level of \$435,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Carter Farms

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$265,150 grant from the Working Ag Lands fund for a 302-acre conservation easement in Richland County. Stuart White of Congaree Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #7 and a funding level of \$265,150 from Standard Program funds. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Sasquatch Ridge

Naturaland Trust applied for a \$1,150,000 grant to acquire 103 acres in fee simple in Pickens County. Mac Stone of Naturaland Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #8 and a funding level of \$1,150,000 with an expected reimbursement of \$550,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Caesars Headwaters

Naturaland Trust applied for a \$820,000 grant to acquire 26 acres in fee simple in Greenville County. Mac Stone of Naturaland Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #9 and a funding level of \$820,000 with an expected reimbursement of \$500,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Maxcy Farm Conservation Easement

Edisto Island Open Land Trust applied for a \$185,000 grant for a 48-acre conservation easement in Charleston County. John Giraud of Edisto Island Open Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #10 and a funding level of \$185,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Keese Family Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$812,000 grant for a 557-acre conservation easement in Oconee County. Richard Carr of SC Farm Bureau Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #11 and a funding level of \$812,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Old Schoolhouse Farm

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$216,000 grant for a 193-acre conservation easement in Kershaw County. Stuart White of Congaree Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #12 and a funding level of \$216,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Moore Farm at Horsepen Creek

Upstate Forever applied for a \$780,000 grant for a 111-acre conservation easement in Greenville County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever, Simpsonville Mayor Paul Shoemaker, and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #13 and a funding level of \$780,000, conditioned on the location of all future residences protecting the viewshed. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Boyd Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$438,000 grant for a 219-acre conservation easement in York County. The applicant withdrew this grant application prior to the Board meeting.

Thomason Farm

Upstate Forever applied for a \$386,000 grant for a 221-acre conservation easement in Laurens County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #14 and a funding level of \$378,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Echols Farm

Upstate Forever applied for a \$175,000 grant for a 73-acre conservation easement in Anderson County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #15 and a funding level of \$175,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Cold Hill

Congaree Land Trust applied for a \$72,000 grant for a 278-acre conservation easement in Williamsburg County. Stuart White of Congaree Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #16 and a funding level of \$72,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Gillian Farms - Bodie Rd

Upper Savannah Land Trust applied for a \$256,000 grant from the Working Ag Lands fund for a 171-acre conservation easement in Saluda County. Becky Brown of Upper Savannah Land Trust and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #17 and a funding level of \$256,000 from the Standard Grants Program. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Bishop Branch Farm

SC Farm Bureau Land Trust applied for a \$280,000 grant for a 123-acre conservation easement in Anderson County. Richard Carr of SC Farm Bureau Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review

Committee recommended a rank of #18 and a funding level of \$280,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Santuc Farm

Upstate Forever applied for a \$340,800 grant for a 387-acre conservation easement in Union County. Scott Park of Upstate Forever spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #19 and a funding level of \$340,800. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Kirkwood Farm

Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$288,600 grant for a 409-acre conservation easement in Kershaw County. Lyles Cooper of Pee Dee Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #20 and a funding level of \$288,600. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Cedar Hill Farm

Spartanburg Area Conservancy applied for a \$300,000 grant for a 313-acre conservation easement in Spartanburg County. Sam Parrott of Spartanburg Area Conservancy spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #21 and a funding level of \$300,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Red Fern

Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$264,000 grant for a 302-acre conservation easement in Kershaw County. Lyles Cooper of Pee Dee Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #22 and a funding level of \$264,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Meadow Woods Farm

Spartanburg Area Conservancy applied for a \$160,000 grant for a 124-acre conservation easement in Spartanburg County. Sam Parrott of Spartanburg Area Conservancy spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #23 and a funding level of \$160,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Gillian Farms - J.Paul Rd

Upper Savannah Land Trust applied for a \$95,000 grant from the Working Ag Lands fund for a 42-acre conservation easement in Saluda County. Becky Brown of Upper Savannah Land Trust and the landowner spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #24 and a funding level of \$95,000 from the Standard Grants Program fund. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Evergreen - Little Lynchies River Tract

Pee Dee Land Trust applied for a \$138,450 grant for a 151-acre conservation easement in Kershaw County. Lyles Cooper spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #25 and a funding level of \$138,450. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Reedy Cove at Twin Falls

Naturaland Trust applied for a \$20,000 grant to acquire 3 acres in fee simple in Pickens County. Mac Stone of Naturaland Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #26 and a funding level of \$20,000. The Board unanimously approved the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

7) 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. Mr. Thompson underscored the importance of improving landowners' understanding regarding the nature and function of conservation easements. Chairman McShane extended thanks to the ex officio members in attendance and expressed gratitude for their ongoing collaboration with the Board. He then recognized Kate Schaefer of the Open Land Trust and Dale Threat Taylor of The Nature Conservancy to offer congratulations on recent conservation achievements in Jasper County. Chairman McShane also noted the current vacancies on the Board and affirmed that leadership is actively engaged in recommending qualified candidates to the appropriate appointing authorities.

8) TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The Chairman stated dates for future Board meetings:

FY26 Cycle 1: 09/17/2025, Board Meeting, Harbison State Forest (GRC 09/03/2025)

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)

9) ADJOURN

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