

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK

Wednesday, March 30, 2022 - 10:00 am
Harbison State Forest
Environmental Education Center
5600 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

The South Carolina Conservation Bank Board (SCCB) held its quarterly meeting on Wednesday, March 30, 2022 at 10:00 am at Harbison State Forest Environmental Education Center, 5600 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29204. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was posted and sent to interested parties in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. Chairman Michael McShane presided at the meeting and members present included Thomas Lavender, Vice-Chairman, Charles Lane, Curtis Spencer, Richmond Wilhoit, Jr., Keith Williamson, Larry Yonce; and Ex-Officio members Dr. Walt McPhail, SC Forestry Commission Chairman; and Brian Long for Norman F. Pulliam, Chairman SCDNR. Board Members absent were Elliott Close, Geordy Johnson, Dr. Brent McLaurin, Pamela S. Porter and Duane Parrish, Director SCPRT.

1) WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McShane called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for their attendance. Russell Hubright of SC Forestry Commission welcomed everyone to Harbison State Forest and gave a brief history of the property and facility.

2) ROLL CALL

Chairman McShane called roll and a quorum was established with 7 Board Members and 2 Ex-Officio members in attendance. Chairman McShane stated that proper public notice had been given for the meeting.

3) CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman McShane stated that applicants and Board members would have a chance to comment on each individual project as they are presented. Chairman McShane updated the Board on proposed legislation in front on the 124th session of the SC House and thanked April Donnelly and others for their work on advancing this legislation which is a win for the SC Conservation Bank and land conservation.

4) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. McShane opened the floor to anyone who would like to address the Board. Carlton Owen of the Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust spoke in appreciation of the partnership between the SCCB and the Trust and highlighted the importance of this organization in preserving historic structures, iconic mountains, natural areas, and farms in Greenville County. There being no other public comments, Mr. McShane called for the next agenda item.

5) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. McShane stated the Board was sent a draft copy of the December 1, 2021 Quarterly Meeting minutes prior to the meeting for their review and that 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. Mr. Lavender seconded, and the motion unanimously passed. The Chairman expressed condolences for the passing of Ginny Zemp, who graciously hosted the December 2021 Board meeting at Historic Camden.

6) NEW BUSINESS

a) Statement of Economic Interest

Chairman McShane informed the Board of their requirement to complete a Statement of Economic Interest and stated that Bank staff will send each board member a link to complete online form.

b) Director's Updates

Director Raleigh West stated that from time-to-time, a Board member must recuse themselves from voting due to potential conflicts of interest. Board members will be asked to complete a Statement of Recusal form each time this occurs.

c) Project Updates

Director West reported that 19 of the 32 grant projects approved during Cycle 1 of fiscal year 2021-22 have already closed. All remaining projects are on track to close by the end of the fiscal year.

Director West then advised the Board of an amendment to a pending application: Pee Dee Land Trust has advised that the owner of the Stillwell Homeplace Farm would like to remove 68 acres from the easement area. The project includes USDA funding, and the USDA has approved this amendment. Grants Review Committee ("GRC") Chairman Lavender stated that the GRC reviewed the request and recommends voting in favor of the amendment. Keith Williamson recused himself from discussion or voting due to a potential conflict of interest. The Board voted unanimously to approve the amendment.

d) Financial Report

Director West stated that the Bank currently has \$3.3 million available for projects. He updated the Board on two awards (Saluda Rivers Connector and Jones Gap Access Tract) approved in a prior fiscal year that were contingent on Naturaland Trust seeking federal reimbursements. Director West reported that the federal reimbursement for the Saluda River Connector project has been approved and the funds will be deposited into the Bank's account within the next few weeks. This action will increase available funding by approximately \$500,000 once the funds are in hand.

e) Grant Review Committee Recommendations

Chairman McShane yielded the floor to the Chairman of the Grants Review Committee Chairman, Tommy Lavender, for a review of pending applications. Mr. Lavender then began the review of applications for the current cycle:

SC Sea islands Small Farmers Cooperative

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Chairman McShane and Charles Lane recused themselves from discussion or voting on this project. Lowcountry Land Trust submitted an application for \$200,000 to acquire 19.2 acres in fee simple in Charleston County. Ashley Demosthenes of Lowcountry Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #1 and a funding level of \$200,000 for this project. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve Addition (Phase 1A)

Open Space Institute Land Trust submitted an application for \$1,000,000 to acquire 126.90 acres in fee simple in Lexington County. Patrick Moore of Open Space Institute and Robert Boyles of SCDNR spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #2 and a funding level of \$1,000,000 for this project. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve Addition (Phase IB)

Open Space Institute Land Trust submitted an application for \$234,000 to acquire 93.60 acres in fee simple in Lexington County. Patrick Moore of Open Space Institute and Robert Boyles of SCDNR spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #2 and a funding level

of \$234,000 for this project. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Historic Glendale Mill

Spartanburg Area Conservancy submitted an application for \$897,000 to acquire 16.49 acres in fee simple in Spartanburg County. Clay McDonough of SPACE spoke in favor of the project and requested a reduction in grant request to \$785,000 after finding additional match funds. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #3 and a funding level of \$785,000 for this project. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Ravenswood

Lowcountry Land Trust submitted an application for \$625,000 for a 711.87 acre conservation easement in Charleston County. Natalie Olson of Lowcountry Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #4 and a funding level of \$625,000 for this project. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

Black River State Park: Sims Reach (Colonial Properties)

SCPRT and The Nature Conservancy submitted an application for \$300,000 to acquire 140.30 acres in fee simple in Williamsburg County. Katy McWilliams of TNC and Terry Hurley of SCPRT spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #5 and a funding level of \$300,000 for this project. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

ACE Basin: St. Helena Estuary (Cummings) Ti Ti 2

The Nature Conservancy submitted an application for \$215,000 for a 1,742 acre conservation easement in Colleton County. Katy McWilliams of TNC spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #6 and a funding level of \$215,000 for this project. The Board unanimously accepted the Grants Review Committee's recommendation.

GRC Chairman Lavender informed the Board that due to the current funds available for grants, this would be the last project that the GRC recommended funding. Director West reminded the Board and other applicants that the Bank Board would re-review the remaining projects once additional funding is available.

Fishing Creek Tract

Nation Ford Land Trust submitted an application for \$125,000 for a 101 acre conservation easement in York County. Steve Hamilton of Nation Ford Land Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #7 and no funding recommendation at this time.

Soapstone Church

Upstate Forever submitted an application for \$20,000 for a 7.39 acre conservation easement in Pickens County. Chris Stucker of Upstate Forever, Mabel Owens Clark of Soapstone Church, and Carlton Owen of Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #8 and no funding recommendation at this time.

Liberty Trail - Battle of Hobkirk's Hill (Conder Property)

SC Battleground Preservation Trust submitted an application for \$75,000 to acquire 1.72 acres in fee simple in Kershaw County. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #9 and no funding recommendation at this time.

Berkeley Orchard

City of Clemson submitted an application for \$162,500 to acquire 4.36 acres in fee simple in Pickens County. Andy Blondeau of the City of Clemson and the Mayor of Clemson spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #10 and no funding recommendation at this time.

Piedmont Manufacturing Company YWCA

Piedmont Historical Preservation Society submitted an application for \$100,000 to acquire 0.70 acres in fee simple in Greenville County. Anne Peden, Charlene Speltz and Joe Hursey, all of Piedmont, SC, spoke in favor of the project. The Grants Review Committee recommended a rank of #11 and no funding recommendation at this time.

Following a brief recess, Chairman McShane called the meeting back to order and asked Mr. Lavender to continue with the GRC recommendations. Mr. Lavender stated that The Nature Conservancy wishes to amend their request for the ACE Basin: St. Helena Estuary (Cummings) Ti Ti 2 project and invited Dale Threatt-Taylor, Executive Director of TNC, SC Chapter to speak. The Nature Conservancy requested a temporary reduction of their grant in the amount of \$20,000 in order to allow the SC Conservation Bank Board to proceed with approving the Soapstone Church application in the same amount. The Nation Ford Land Trust acquiesced to advancing the Soapstone Church project ahead of their application, which was the next highest-ranking project. The Nature Conservancy included the caveat that they would request the Board consider increasing the grant by \$20,000 to the original amount of the grant request once the Bank received additional funding. Mr. Lavender made a motion to amend the ACE Basin: St. Helena Estuary (Cummings) Ti Ti 2 application to reduce the funding level by \$20,000 to \$195,000. Mr. Williamson seconded, and the Board unanimously approved. Mr. Lavender made a motion to approve the Soapstone Church project at \$20,000, Mr. Lane seconded, and the Board voted unanimously to approve this project. Following the vote, Ms. Mabel Owens Clark expressed her heartfelt thanks to the Board and other champions of land conservation around the state.

f) National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

Director West reminded the Board that the Bank now has the authority to sponsor Coastal Wetlands Grants. Two projects are requesting SCCB sponsorship at this time:

- 1) A 460-acre tract in North Charleston with high conservation value. Mr. Lavender stated that the GRC has reviewed the project and recommends that the Board authorize sponsorship of this grant. The Board voted unanimously in favor of sponsorship
- 2) An approximately 2300-acre project Santee River Project, including several miles of frontage along the Santee River. Mr. Lavender stated the GRC has reviewed the project and recommends that the Board authorize sponsorship of this grant. The Board voted unanimously in favor of sponsorship.

Director West and Mr. Lavender reminded the Board that sponsorship in no way commits the Bank to funding the subject properties.

8) BOARD MEMBER OPEN DISCUSSION

All members thanked the Board and Staff for a great meeting and applauded the land trusts for their efforts. Director West and Mr. Williamson thanked the land trusts for their presentations and explanations of project proposals. Dr. McPhail especially thanked Mabel Owens Clark for her presentation. Chairman McShane thanked Russell Hubright and the SC Forestry Commission for their hospitality in hosting the Board for this meeting.

9) TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman stated that the next scheduled Board Meeting would be held on June 8, 2022, at 10am with the location to-be-determined. He requested that members hold April 20, 2022, available for a virtual Board meeting, if additional funding should become available.

10) ADJOURN

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