

**Land, Water & Conservation Division: Advisory Committee Minutes**  
**SCDNR Parker Annex, 2025 Barnwell Street, Columbia, SC 29201**  
**Tuesday, August 2, 2022 @10:00am**

<b>Present:</b>	William (Bill) Simpson*	Patricia Hartung	Webb Smathers
	James McLeod	Larry Nates	Tom Garrison
	William Glenn *	Dean Moss	Diane Edwins *

\*Call-in

**DNR Exec & Staff:** Robert Boyles, Ken Rentiers, Tyler Brown, Deanne Myrick, Brooke Myres, Sean Taylor

**Call to Order/Welcome:** The **August 2, 2022** meeting was called to order by Mr. Dean Moss (serving in the role of Chairman at the meeting/referred to as “Chair” for this meeting/ due to Mr. Simpson being unable to attend) at 10:02 am. In compliance with provisions of Section 30-4-80(e) (Freedom of Information Act), notification of this meeting was posted in public places. **Mr. Moss** welcomed and thanked all for attending. Additionally, well wishes for Mrs. Simpson during her illness were spoken to the Chairman, who was in attendance by phone.

- Following the invocation,
- **Mr. Moss/ serving as Chairman** at this meeting: introduction of speaker, Sean Taylor, Senior Archaeologist, DNR and DNR Director, Robert Boyles

**Acting Chairman/ Moss:** *Thank you and moving to item #4 on agenda, please refer to the copy of the typed minutes from the March 2, 2022 meeting for consideration. Any comments or questions/further/additional discussion? Hearing none, motion was made by Mr. McLeod to approve the minutes as typed and seconded by Mr. Smathers. With all in favor and none opposed, motion passed.*

**Deputy Director’s Report; Ken Rentiers:** Welcome to everyone and turning the floor over to Director Boyles for his comments.

**Director Boyles:** Thank you to each of you, advisory committee members, Ken, and staff, for what you do for DNR and for conservation. There’s a lot going on, including budgeting talks, meetings, determinations for the next fiscal year; an upcoming meeting with the Governor, who has requested time with archaeology and myself; and daily ongoing operations. Our governor is engaged and supportive of DNR, which is good news and we’re thankful for this. The passion and commitment of our people really shows in the work - so very appreciate the leadership, staff, and of each of you, all working together for our larger cause of conservation and all things DNR. Any comments, questions, or concerns:

McLeod – can you please give us an update on acquisitions?

Boyles – FY current – DNR 24.5 % increase in recurring funds. That’s a balanced portfolio; supports our programs adds LWC + districts + other important initiatives.

Provided for some transformative generational investments, including our ask for \$140 million in properties ... resulted in House recommending \$68 million... and Senate recommending \$25 million which ultimately resulted in total of roughly \$40 million to secure properties around the state. Prior to that, in the late 1990's, \$10 million was secured for Jocassee Gorge property. Current situation is more than the general assembly has ever done before, so if you're inclined, thank the legislators who are going to bat for us.

For specifics, there's land acquisitions on the horizon in the southern low country; Port Royal Sound is one; Congaree Creek Heritage Preserve is another. Land acquisition is so important; great leadership and great work in getting this funding and getting these acquisitions together. Today we are set to work on FY 24 to come up with another competitive budget request.

McLeod – Thank you. Now that our request has resulted in funding, here in LWC/Conservation Districts, it's crucial that the districts put this funding to work; must deliver.

Boyles – if no further discussion here, we will move on to Ken's report.

**Deputy Director's Report; Ken Rentiers**

Ken: Jim, yes - delivering the services is critical and I have confidence in our team and know we will deliver. As most of you know, the additional funding for conservation districts – efforts are greatly appreciated; commending those who took it from the start, especially Tyler, along with all leadership, especially Robert's role and so many others, the State Association, the District Commissioners and staff, and everyone who worked tirelessly to see it through. This and other initiatives which were funded, including what Robert's already discussed as well as: \$860k plus for water monitoring and \$3.5 million for continued water planning (Governor supported \$8 million and Senate came up with the current number for funding; some more in recruitment and retention, and others. Out of our 25 priorities; 22 were funded; outstanding year for us and we are appreciative.

Update on water planning: Edisto River Basin Council – on track with the plan coming out in October; after 2 years in the works. Broad River Basin Council – underway and moving forward; Pee Dee River Basin Council - underway also; roster of who's on Pee Dee River basin council is here (printed handout), which shows a diverse group of stakeholders, that's what is best. Decisions forthcoming on Saluda or Savannah basin next? We will figure that out and keep you posted.

Also of interest, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a letter to SC Department of Health and Environmental Control & the Attorney General regarding current surface water not being in compliance with withdrawal as the main issue. DHEC wants to get us involved in the discussion and especially on the science on water levels; safe yields; discussions are ongoing. Any questions or comments?

Moss: Water planning - Pee Dee is the 3<sup>rd</sup> basin we are working on / post covid; how did experience in Edisto effect the way we are doing the Pee Dee and other basins?

Rentiers: virtual meeting not as good as in person. Staff and everyone working together has improved, it's still a work in progress and time and experience from work on the initial basin shows that with each basin, process is improving, getting better in many ways.

Hartung: is there an update or new information on reorganization of DHEC, Senate Bill 2? Boyles/Rentiers - would have been a big change; senate passed it; however, there were concerns on removing water from DNR; also, mental health aspects in the bill; the house ultimately put the brakes on it. We should fully expect the senate to take it or some version of it up again; in the meantime, we need to educate people about it; to understand the interwoven programs built over 30 + years. Lead resource agency needs to be involved with water resources. Lots of people talking to our legislators and others on this.

Smathers: who would represent duck hunters/ recreational? Ken: Water-based recreation.

McLeod: what is the right number or the best number of people / stakeholders for RBC's? 25 a good number of people on each RBC. The model: 2 public meetings/ applications/ vetting/ also an opportunity for alternates, who may step up when/if someone comes off.

Rentiers: Other issues of interest lately, local earthquakes – State Geologist, Scott Howard, has a report for additional details but – indicator of fluctuation in water levels/ shallow faults that move horizontally; called “swarms” and not likely to create a huge earthquake... not expecting 5 or above (damage) ... small swarms are common. Noted fault lines near Lake Murray dam/ also one in Charleston. Scott seeking funding for USGS monitoring systems / asking for mobile equipment for measuring/etc.in state budget process; the more prepared we are, the better.

Hartung – how realistic/ how prepared is the Murray dam as danger in earthquake scenario?

Rentiers: Dominion Energy doing draw down to study the condition of the dam. There is a backup dam.

Smathers: triggers related to water/ how credible is that?

KR: it is a concern/ lake of any size is pressure on the system. In past, “filling up that huge lake bucket” ... it's an ongoing study/ area of interest, for details, Scott would be happy to provide more information on that.

KR: Duke doing major work on the dam/ draw down will begin in November for assessment/Lake Wateree. necessary work. Many factors including overall health of the lake/ Lake Murray also.

Moss: *next on the agenda is Brooke Myres -*

Ongoing projects: strategic planning/ 3-year plan working with committee on specific deliverables/ tracking deliverables/ every 6 months.

Local Work Group (LWG) committee project – so far, 12 districts have held the LWG and someone on our team has attended 10 of the 12 meetings.

The committee is collecting the LWG results and information to use for helping with things like how best to host meetings/ what a LWG meeting is/ how rankings look individually and region/statewide/ etc. Reports are coming to us and to NRCS. By the end of November, we will have a statewide report which has the information from every county. We will follow up with surveys on what went well and ideas for improvement.

SC Envirothon: Spartanburg High School took 1<sup>st</sup> place, followed by Spartanburg Day School then Pendleton FFA.

National Envirothon (National Conservation Foundation) was held in Ohio last week and Spartanburg High School placed 17<sup>th</sup> overall of 40 teams. Represented us well and took top honors in wildlife (2<sup>nd</sup> place) and aquatics (4<sup>th</sup> place). Any questions for Brooke?

Ken – thanks to Brooke/ Tyler/ and team.

Garrison – Anderson LWG was held with good turnout.

Nates – LWG held also had good turnout. These meetings are critical for keeping everyone involved accountable and transparent. Also points to the question to NRCS -- what do they do with the information they collect from the districts and if funding's not matching local priorities, then why not, and how can we improve the way it works between local priorities and national funding?

Moss: Local districts are doing great job... will gathering and compiling this information across the state help NRCS in decisions about funding?

Tyler Brown: It can/will help us identify what the local districts prioritized and what did/did not hit the list. Some questions for NRCS on “does it truly match?” and if so, how can we get closer to funding what local voices are identifying in soil and water conservation/ with some federal programs. I always say we are only a few mistakes away from another conservation crisis such as what was experienced during the dust bowl days.

Smathers: conflict between federal goals and local goals always a concern.

Tyler Brown: the national group, National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) is looking at taking our model in SC and applying it across the nation for more effective LWG outcomes.

Garrison: Anderson has hired an educational coordinator, Anaston Porter, who is doing a remarkable job; she has many programs going on, and we are partnering resources with Pickens CD, which is a win for both... Kirby and Pickens Commissioners and staff and Anderson Commissioners and staff working so well together.

Moss: if no other questions, ***next up is Tyler Brown -***

1<sup>st</sup> expressing appreciation to Director Boyles, Ken Rentiers, LWC AC members and all involved for budget request, and seeing it through to approval. Conservation Districts and our team are so grateful.

Please refer to the 2021 Conservation Districts (statewide) Annual Report in packet. Very proud of this project which shows accountability statewide. Also in your packet is: “economics of conservation” from NRCS, which is broken out by congressional areas.

Last week, James Tillman, NRCS Regional Conservationist, visited Clarendon, Edgefield, Orangeburg, and Lexington Conservation District meetings as well as SC State University and Heirs Property, to hear landowner concerns. Mr. Tillman assured us he is taking his findings back to Washington, DC to address the concerns some are experiencing. He was made aware that there is a problem with state NRCS filling positions among other difficulties experienced by local landowners and local NRCS personnel and prior to his visit, he had received phone calls and other information on these issues.

Moss: will that have an effect?

Tyler: congressional staffers were there and that helps show Mr. Tillman the sincerity of the partnership and everyone being there together, including those from SCDNR; SC Department of Agriculture; SC Farm Bureau; and local Commissioners and landowners. All have issues, and Tillman was listening.

Nates: good meetings.

Moss: ***next on the agenda is District Commissioner appointments for consideration –***

Ken: the spreadsheet/slate shows 4 new appointee and 14 reappointment applications.

Moss: is there a need for executive session? All agreed executive session not necessary.

Mr. McLeod – Spreadsheet showing many are behind in reappointment, is there a reason some are not keeping up with appointed terms?

Tyler: most are catching up post covid because for many months/ in some cases years, USDA/ NRCS/ were not allowing people into the office.

Moss: is there further discussion on new appointments? Hearing none – Nates motioned to approve the 4 new appointments. Motion was seconded by Hartung. With all in favor and none opposed, motion passed to approve slate of new appointees as listed.

Moss: moving to reappointments, asking that Tom Garrison abstain concerning this order of business. With Garrison abstaining, motion was made by McLeod to approve entire slate of 14 reappointments. Motion was seconded by Hartung. With all in favor and none opposed, motion passed to approve the slate of reappointments as listed.

Moss: please forward this slate to include new appointments and reappointments with LWC AC's approval of all applicants on to the SCDNR Board of Directors for their consideration. Noted that Commissioner Allen Beer is the longest serving commissioner, whose initial service date is March 12, 1973.

Moss – next on the agenda is Sean Taylor, Senior Archaeologist; any thoughts, comments, or other business before moving on to hear from Sean? Hearing none, turn it over to Sean / he and his group are doing an extraordinary job.

Taylor: presented mapping and software features which are valuable to provide very specific information at each site the crew has identified; handouts and other information; interactive discussion on programs; also displayed samples of work being done; and future plans.

At conclusion of Sean's presentation –

Moss – Port Royal Sound – can we get you down there to present soon?

Garrison – how often do you find human remains? Per Sean, not as much as you may think; from this point on, forensic anthropologist will be with us because human remains can get complex, for example, when certain groups require ancestral remains must be left as is and original site.

McLeod – we have made remarkable strides. How do we perpetuate this into the future?

Sean: Heritage trust money / budgeting/ people cost.... ideas and discussions include partnerships; challenges around the curation problem... state of SC does not have a curation facility that meets standards. Common consensus is that we need more/ everything costs more...

Boyles: Acquisition vs curation ... solutions/ partnering/ archaeology/ anthropology/ balance/ Heritage Trust talks about management/ Taylor - identify what's there / management/ where... we can do more/ educate more/ need more.

Landowners aren't always fond of cultural resources surveys... we will keep doing everything we can to prioritize properly and get the work done.

Moss – any final statements?

Director Boyles: want to commend all of you and everyone at SCDNR; you all have a very competent and passionate crew working for DNR. We do our best to weigh out a number of priorities from many interested parties/partners and not everything can be #1 on the list. I appreciate your understanding of the different needs. The leadership of all is appreciated.

Boyles: SC Wildlife/ ace basin/ sharing with group... we talk about conservation. I've come up with an equation as we deal with the challenges of the day – we have a great place here.

Community is the sum of creation + construction + connection ... how we connect with what we've been given and what we do with it.

Moss – thanks to all for being here and meeting adjourned at 11:55am.