

AGENCY: Department of Administration, Executive Budget Office

SUBJECT: Department of Natural Resources – Pickens - Jocassee Gorges HP/WMA Land Acquisition (His Way)

The Authority is asked to approve the following permanent improvement project establishment request and budget revision as requested by the Department of Administration, Executive Budget Office as noted herein. This item was reviewed favorably by the Joint Bond Review Committee (JBRC).

**Project:** JBRC Item 53: Department of Natural Resources  
 P24.6115: Pickens - Jocassee Gorges HP/WMA Land Acquisition (His Way)

**Request:** Establish Preliminary Land Acquisition for the purpose of investigating the acquisition of +/- 106 acres in Pickens County.

**Included in CPIP:** No – The property was not available for purchase during the 2024 CPIP submission process.

Source of Funds	Original Budget Amount	Cumulative Changes Since Original Budget	Current Budget	Adjustment Requested	Total Budget After Current Adjustment
Other, Heritage Land Trust				20,000	20,000
All Sources				<u>20,000</u>	<u>20,000</u>

**Rationale:** Acquisition of this property will protect the viewshed along Highway 11 and limit the threat of development along the Eastatoe Creek. It would expand visitor benefits for users of the existing Jocassee Gorges HP and Wadakoe Mountain HP/WMA by providing opportunities for recreational fishing, hunting, and nature observation. Trails could be established and there is existing parking and trail access across the street from the property on Roy F. Jones Highway. If acquired, this property will be dedicated as a Heritage Preserve and placed into the Corpus of the Heritage Trust program. The property will also be designated a Wildlife Management Area to be added to the Jocassee Gorges WMA.

**Characteristics:** Jocassee Gorges boasts a diverse array of wildlife, including some of the most abundant salamander and black bear populations in the southeast.

**Financial Impact:** The property is offered by Naturaland Trust of Greenville, South Carolina for the proposed purchase price of \$475,000. The due diligence activities

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will be funded from Other, Heritage Land Trust Funds (uncommitted balance \$37.29 million at December 27, 2024). SC Code 51-17-115 provides for the department to use Heritage Land Trust Funds to acquire in fee simple or lesser interest in priority areas, legal fees, appraisals, surveys, or other costs involved in the acquisition of priority areas, and for the development of minimal facilities and management necessary for the protection of priority areas. If acquired, no construction will be completed on the property. The project is expected to result in an increase of \$10,000 (year 1), and \$1,000 (year 2), in annual operating expenditures.

Full Project Estimate: \$495,000 (internal) funded from Heritage Land Trust Funds.

Other: The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources has coordinated and collaborated with the South Carolina Conservation Bank to confirm that the proposed conservation land acquisition of this property is an appropriate conservation purchase and will maximize the most cost-effective use of funds appropriated or authorized by the General Assembly in the proposed purchase.

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AUTHORITY ACTION REQUESTED:

As requested by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through the Department of Administration, Executive Budget Office, approve the Permanent Improvement Project for the Pickens - Jocassee Gorges HP/WMA Land Acquisition (His Way); and as requested by DNR approve an expenditure of \$20,000 from the Heritage Land Trust Fund pursuant to Section 51-17-115 toward the acquisition of land described in Permanent Improvement Project 6115.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Agenda item worksheet and attachment

**STATE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AUTHORITY AGENDA ITEM WORKSHEET**

Meeting Scheduled for: **April 1, 2025**

**Regular Agenda**

**1. Submitted By:**

(a) Agency: Department of Administration

(b) Authorized Official Signature:

  
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 Kevin Etheridge, Executive Budget Office

**2. Subject:**

Department of Natural Resources – Pickens - Jocassee Gorges HP/WMA Land Acquisition (His Way)

**3. Summary Background Information:**

Project: JBRC Item 53: Department of Natural Resources  
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