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AGENCY: Department of Administration, Facilities Management and Property Services

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SUBJECT: SC Forestry Commission Acquisition of Conservation Easements over ±61,340 acres of Forested Land

The SC Forestry Commission (Forestry) is requesting approval to acquire four (4) Conservation Easements over a combined total of ±61,340 acres of land as part of the Pee Dee Basin RMS initiative (the “Project”) in Marion, Georgetown and Williamsburg counties as follows:

- Evergreen – Evergreen Timberco SC LLC will grant a Conservation Easement to Forestry consisting of ±8,666 acres of substantially natural and undeveloped forested land in Georgetown and Williamsburg counties for \$11,900,000, which is the appraised value of the easement.
- Oak Mountain – Oak Mountain Timberco SC LLC will grant a Conservation Easement to Forestry consisting of ±14,124 acres of substantially natural and undeveloped forested land in Georgetown and Marion counties for \$14,500,000 which is the appraised value of the easement.
- Shades Mountain Timberco SC LLC will grant a Conservation Easement to Forestry consisting of ±2,751 acres of substantially natural and undeveloped forested land in Georgetown and Marion counties for \$3,400,000, which is the appraised value of the easement.
- Tamarack – Tamarack Timberco SC LLC will grant a Conservation Easement to Forestry consisting of ±35,799 acres of substantially natural and undeveloped forested land in Georgetown County for \$39,100,000, which is the appraised value of the easement.

An additional ±880 acres will be purchased in fee simple by Forestry, if approved, under a separate item included on this agenda, bringing the total Project area to ±62,220 acres. Forestry has indicated that these conservation easements will conserve expansive working forests to benefit the timber economy while conserving habitat for at least 115 priority plant and animal species. The Project will also expand recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, with 7,567 acres open to the public for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities. Forestry will have the right to enter the properties for inspection and monitoring purposes and for enforcement of the terms of the Conservation Easements but will have no responsibility for operation or maintenance of the easement areas.

The Project is being funded as follows:

- For the purchase of the Conservation Easements: \$50,000,000 Forest Legacy Program Inflation Reduction Act Project Grant from the USDA Forest Service, \$17,300,000 contribution from the SC Office of Resilience, \$1,392,000 North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, \$208,000 Acres Across America Grant.
- For the 880 acre fee simple acquisition (P12-9608): \$3,300,000 contribution from the SC Conservation Bank.

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There are also various grants and other contributions being allocated to due diligence, closing costs, and stewardship endowment as shown on the attached chart.

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AUTHORITY ACTION REQUESTED:

Approve the SC Forestry Commission's acquisition of four (4) Conservation Easements over ±61,340 acres of forested land in Georgetown, Marion and Williamsburg counties for a combined total of \$68,900,000, as recommended by the Department of Administration, Facilities Management and Property Services.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Agenda item worksheet and attachment

**STATE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AUTHORITY  
AGENDA ITEM WORKSHEET**

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Meeting Scheduled for: April 1, 2025

Regular Agenda

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**1. Submitted by:**

- (a) Agency: Department of Administration  
(b) Authorized Official Signature:

*Ashlie Lancaster*

Ashlie Lancaster, Director

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**2. Subject:** SC Forestry Commission Acquisition of Conservation Easements over ±61,340 acres of Forested Land

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**3. Summary Background Information:**

The SC Forestry Commission (Forestry) is requesting approval to acquire four (4) Conservation Easements over a combined total of ±61,340 acres of land as part of the Pee Dee Basin RMS initiative (the “Project”) in Marion, Georgetown and Williamsburg counties as follows:

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The Project is being funded as follows:

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- For the 880 acre fee simple acquisition (P12-9608): \$3,300,000 contribution from the SC Conservation Bank.

There are also various grants and other contributions being allocated to due diligence, closing costs, and stewardship endowment as shown on the attached chart.

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**4. What is the Authority asked to do?** Approve the SC Forestry Commission's acquisition of four (4) Conservation Easements over ±61,340 acres of forested land in Georgetown, Marion and Williamsburg counties for a combined total of \$68,900,000.

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**5. What is recommendation of the submitting agency involved?** Approve the SC Forestry Commission's acquisition of four (4) Conservation Easements over ±61,340 acres of forested land in Georgetown, Marion and Williamsburg counties for a combined total of \$68,900,000.

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**6. Private Participant Disclosure – Check one:**

No private participants will be known at the time the Authority considers this agenda item.

A Private Participant Disclosure form has been attached for each private participant.

As referenced on the Disclosure forms, a private participant is a natural person or non-governmental legal entity which may directly benefit from, and is participating in or directly associated with, the requested approval.

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**7. Recommendation of other offices (as required)?**

- (a) Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Office Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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**8. List of Supporting Documents:**

- (a) Letter from Forestry
- (b) Funding Matrix Chart

Ashlie Lancaster  
Director, Division of Facilities Management and Property Services  
The South Carolina Department of Administration  
1200 Senate Street, Suite 600, Columbia, SC 29201

February 28, 2025  
Re: RMS Santee Project

The South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) respectfully requests that this body approve the acquisition of conservation easements over 61,340 acres of forested land as the primary component of a conservation project known as the Pee Dee Basin RMS Initiative. The second component of this project, an 880-acre fee acquisition, also will be submitted to this body upon approval by JBRC. This request includes a description of the broader project for the purpose of transparency and to provide context for the proposed conservation easement acquisition.

The Pee Dee Basin RMS Initiative, located in the Northern Coastal Forest Legacy Program Focus Area, consists of approximately 62,220 ac. across three counties (Marion, Georgetown, and Williamsburg) and would be the largest, single conservation land protection project ever undertaken by a South Carolina State agency. Conservation easements totaling 61,340-ac. will be purchased by (SCFC) and held in perpetuity in an area threatened by development in the third-fastest growing state in the country. An additional 880 ac. will be purchased FEE SIMPLE by the SCFC and incorporated into Wee Tee State Forest, upon approval by the JBRC and SFAA. Of the total project acreage, 7,567 ac. will be opened to the public for hunting, fishing and other recreational uses.

Southern forests are the "wood basket" of the nation, and this project will conserve expansive working forests to benefit the timber economy while conserving habitat for at least 115 priority plant and animal species. The blocks making up this project vastly expand a corridor of protected lands including state parks, a state forest, wildlife management areas, and private lands to protect water resources and increase resiliency of South Carolina's landscape.

This project would not be possible without substantial financial commitments from several public and private partners. The larger project is primarily funded through a \$50 million Forest Legacy Program Inflation Reduction Act Project Grant from the USDA Forest Service, which requires 25% of non-federal matching funds. The majority of the match will be provided by a \$17.5 million contribution from the South Carolina Office of Resilience, in addition to an Acres Across America Grant and Lowcountry Landscape Grant, and others. The South Carolina Conservation Bank has agreed to fund the \$3.3 million purchase of the 880 ac. fee portion of this project. With over 70% of the funding coming from other sources, this project demonstrates significant financial leverage through substantial federal and private support.



OUR MISSION

Protect, promote and enhance South Carolina's forests for the benefit of all.

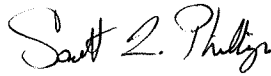
OUR VISION

Healthy forests, resilient communities, impeccable service

Support for this project comes from numerous partners such as Governor Henry McMaster; South Carolina Office of Resilience (SCOR); South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR); South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT); South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB); Canfor Southern Pine, Inc.; Resource Management Service (RMS); Open Space Institute (OSI); Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS); Audubon SC; United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); and WestRock.

We ask that you recognize this letter as our formal request for approval from the SFAA for the purchase of these conservation easements. If you have any questions, please contact David Owen at 803-896-8829.

Sincerely,



Scott Phillips  
State Forester



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OUR VISION

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<b>Budget Worksheet</b>						
<b>Funding Commitments:</b>	<b>Funding Commitments</b>	<b>Allocation to Purchase</b>	<b>Allocation to Due Diligence</b>	<b>Allocation to Stewardship Endowment</b>	<b>Allocation to Closing Costs</b>	<b>Balance</b>
FY2024 Forest Legacy Program Funding:	\$ 50,000,000	\$ 50,000,000				\$ -
SC Office of Resilience Funding:	\$ 17,777,000	\$ 17,300,000			\$ 200,000	\$ 277,000
SC Conservation Bank Funding:	\$ 3,300,000	\$ 3,300,000				\$ -
NAWCA	\$ 1,401,000	\$ 1,392,000			\$ 9,000	\$ -
Acres for America Grant	\$ 500,000	\$ 208,000	\$ 151,250		\$ 90,335	\$ 50,415
Lowcountry Land Trust	\$ 100,000		\$ 100,000			\$ -
Longleaf Alliance	\$ 12,000		\$ 12,000			\$ -
Atlantic Packaging	\$ 330,000			\$ 330,000		\$ -
FLP Admin Grant	\$ 200,000		\$ 76,800		\$ 25,000	\$ 98,200
SCFC	\$ 172,050	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 66,000	\$ 106,050
<b>Total commitments:</b>	<b>\$ 73,792,050</b>	<b>\$ 72,200,000</b>	<b>\$ 340,050</b>	<b>\$ 330,000</b>	<b>\$ 390,335</b>	<b>\$ 531,665</b>
	Purchase DIFF:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -