

SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK

ANNUAL  REPORT



WETLANDS



OPEN SPACES



URBAN PARKS



CAROLINA BAYS



FAMILY FARMS



HISTORIC SITES



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Open Space Institute
and The Nature
Conservancy staff
tour the Santee River
Focus Area

The SC Conservation Bank Act Title 48 Chapter 59

S.C. Code of Laws Act 200

MISSION

To improve the quality of life in South Carolina through the conservation of significant natural resource lands, wetlands, historical properties, archaeological sites, and urban parks.

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

- Wildlife Habitat
- Water Quality
- Forest Lands
- Farmland
- Scenic Vistas
- Historical and Archaeological Sites
- Hunting and Fishing Opportunities
- Public Outdoor Recreation

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The South Carolina Conservation Bank publishes its Annual Report in January to report on the previous fiscal year. This report is printed in limited quantities but is available in digital format on the agency's website, www.sccbank.sc.gov.



LETTER *from the* DIRECTOR

J. Raleigh West, III

The late conservationist John C. Sawhill once stated “a society is defined not only by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy.” That remark often comes to mind as I travel across South Carolina and witness the remarkable rate of change on the landscape that has occurred in the last decade and, perhaps more dramatically, since the pandemic began two years ago, when an exodus of folks came our way in search of a better quality of life.

In fact, most studies of national population trends show that the Carolinas trail only a handful of Rocky Mountain states and Texas as the most rapidly growing areas in the country. They also show that South Carolina's population will double in the next 50 years. From my layman's perspective, I believe we are in the midst of one of the most significant in-state migration periods in our state's history. Naturally, the pending influx of new people will only accelerate the already fast-paced conversion of rural and natural lands to urban and suburban uses. And that—the pace of change—is what generates for me a heightened sense of urgency to protect the special places in South Carolina while we still have the opportunity to do so.

At the heart of the conservation movement is the reckoning that the historic landscapes that make South Carolina unique and distinguishable from others—our sense of place—should survive. Fortunately, amidst such rapid change, the Conservation Bank's investments are ensuring just that. Last year's portfolio includes 16 different grants that vary a great deal in size and type: from the historic Spring Park Inn in downtown Travelers Rest to the Parker's Ferry Revolutionary War battlefield on the Edisto; longleaf pine savannas in the ACE Basin to hardwood forests in the Piedmont; and trout streams in the mountains to black river preserves on the coast. Yet despite these geographical and contextual distinctions, to paraphrase Sawhill, they all share the common thread of reflecting what we value so dearly that we refuse to allow their destruction.

J. Raleigh West, III
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



County Conservation


How Oconee County is Leveraging its Dollars to Achieve Big Conservation Results

Feature by Andy Smith, Chairman of Oconee County Conservation Bank



SCAN ME

Scan your
smartphone's
camera over the
code above to
learn more about
the Oconee Bell



While the Conservation Bank often receives credit for helping save South Carolina's special places, the fact that it accomplishes its mission at such a low cost relative to the market value of the properties saved more frequently goes unnoticed.

Specifically, in its roughly fifteen years of existence, the Bank has issued \$173 million in grant awards to 345 projects throughout the state, which has cumulatively protected \$1.15 billion in appraised value of land. This means that for every dollar the Conservation Bank contributed, \$6.60 worth of property was protected. This is, perhaps, the most impressive aspect of the Conservation Bank's administration and something we wanted to emulate with the Oconee County Conservation Bank.

When Oconee County established its own land protection program with \$618,000, we knew we had to leverage our funding the same way as the State if we were to achieve landscape-scale results from our grants. Accordingly, we determined that any grant award we made should include partners who also contributed to the project, with the goal of getting the most bang for the buck.

THE RESULT: Since its formation in 2012, the Oconee County Conservation Bank has issued roughly \$315,000 in awards to nine different projects that have commanded a market value of more than \$4 million.

Photo by Mac Stone



Photo by Mac Stone

Oconee
County
helped add
792 acres
to the
Stumphouse
Mountain
Heritage
Preserve

These projects have collectively saved hundreds of acres of valuable farmland, river corridors, threatened wildlife species like the Oconee Bell, public preserves and parks, **with an investment from Oconee County of only \$1 for every \$12 worth of property value.**

One of the most positive and effective aspects of our work is the shared mission of other granting entities like the South Carolina Conservation Bank and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other conservation groups like Upstate Forever, Naturaland Trust, Oconee Soil and Water Conservation Service, and The Foothills Farmstead. Another often overlooked partner is the landowner and their families who agree to protect their properties at a significantly bargained price—these are the true heroes in the conservation movement.

These partnerships form the backbone of the local conservation effort in Oconee County and are the primary reason we have been able to leverage our dollars as well as we have. As John Elliott, Chairman of the Oconee County Council puts it, “The Oconee County Conservation Bank allows Oconee County to preserve the beauty of our County, from the Oconee Bells to the waterfalls, streams, and the beautiful landscape for future generations.” To be able to accomplish that while also responsibly stewarding public dollars, is our aim.

OCONEE PARTNERS

South Carolina
Conservation Bank
www.sccbank.sc.gov

USDA-Natural Resources
Conservation Service
www.nrcs.usda.gov

Upstate Forever
www.upstateforever.org

The Naturaland Trust
www.naturaland.org

Oconee Soil and Water
www.oconeesoilandwater.org

The Foothills Farmstead
www.foothillsfarmstead.org

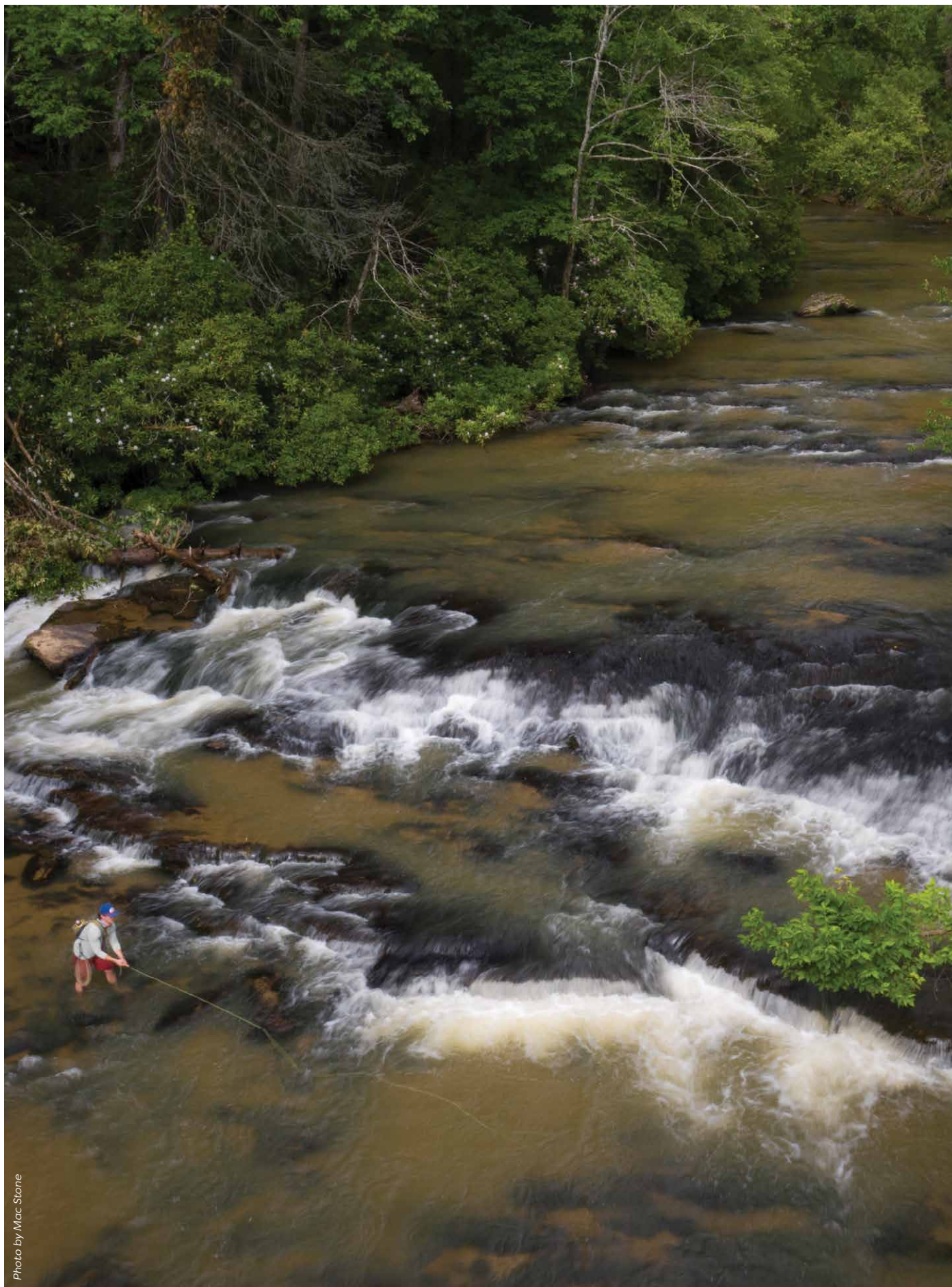


Photo by Mac Stone



The Mounting Pressure on South Carolina's Farmland

How the Conservation Bank Can Help Farmers

Feature by Stephanie Sox, Director of Promotion and Education of the South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation



Photo by Mac Stone

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape in South Carolina. The foreground shows a large, brown, tilled field. To the right, there is a dense forest with green and yellow trees. In the background, more fields and distant hills are visible under a cloudy sky.

DID YOU KNOW?

Agriculture is the leading industry in South Carolina generating nearly \$47 billion in economic impact each year and supporting over 246,000 jobs.

The Bank has helped protect roughly 22,800 acres of working farms since its inception. Visit www.sccbank.sc.gov to learn more about our land grants.

Agriculture is the leading industry in South Carolina generating nearly \$47 billion in economic impact each year and supporting over 246,000 jobs. It didn't reach that milestone by chance. Farmers' careful planning and resourcefulness have propelled agriculture to its prominent place.

Regardless of the crop they plant, farmers work in partnership with their land. And without that land, farming ceases to exist.

From 2001 to 2016, over 280,000 acres of agricultural land in South Carolina were developed or compromised.

Wildlife benefits from sustainable agriculture practices. Here, wild turkeys displaying near Cedar Mountain.



Photo by Mac Stone

As more and more people move to South Carolina, farmland is fast becoming a precious commodity that, without protection, will inevitably be converted to residential, commercial or industrial uses.

According to a study conducted by American Farmland Trust, from 2001 to 2016, over 280,000 acres of agricultural land in South Carolina were developed or compromised. This land was converted to both urban, highly-developed, land use and low-density, residential land use. The majority of the land was converted from cropland.

Further, the study shows that South Carolina is at a high threat of additional land conversion while receiving a low rating in terms of developing policies and programs that protect agricultural land.

Development of rural areas brings with it a plethora of challenges to folks who want to stay in farming, including overloading nearby infrastructure and encroaching on day-to-day agricultural operations.

For instance, new neighbors may not be amenable to commonplace farming practices, such as moving equipment down congested roads, applying herbicides and fertilizers, or control burning wooded areas. As a result, urban sprawl into agrarian areas not only directly removes the converted land from an agricultural use but it can make nearby farms less viable.

SPOTLIGHT: COASTAL FARMS

Beaufort County Open Land Trust and the Center for Heirs Property Preservation™ partnered to permanently protect 88 acres of prime agricultural land and frontage along Eddings Creek on St. Helena Island. The property, known as Henry Farms, is owned by the Center and will be used as a demonstration site with educational offerings for landowners and youth. The Open Land Trust will hold the conservation easement.

In addition to funding from the Conservation Bank, the acquisition was made possible with funding from the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program and Open Land Trust. This protection adds to over 1,700 acres of protected land on St. Helena, including the nearby Henry Farms.




Beaufort County District Three Councilman York Glover represents St. Helena Island and noted, “Beaufort County recognizes the growth pressures placed on agricultural landowners. Protecting this property is one way we can ensure farms and forests are protected in our rural communities and this site can become a resource for small farms and farmers right here in Beaufort County.”



Photo by Mac Stone

While South Carolina Farm Bureau supports a landowner's private property rights, we also recognize the dire need to balance these rights with opportunities to protect and preserve farmland from development and encroachment. The agricultural community needs innovation and cooperation to create solutions that are mutually beneficial for all citizens of South Carolina.

Programs like the South Carolina Conservation Bank will compensate landowners for protecting their farms while offering them the ability to continue to grow a crop and raise livestock. Our ultimate goal is to help set sound policy and develop programs that respect private property rights while encouraging a sustainable future for agriculture.

Ultimately, South Carolina Farm Bureau believes in initiatives that can benefit our robust agriculture industry in a manner that supports the best interests of our state. Programs like the Conservation Bank are a good way to help ensure that our state's farmlands and agricultural industry will still be here fifty years from now, a win for both the industry and our economy. South Carolina has a rich agricultural heritage that has shaped the lives of each and every one of us. Now it's our turn to ensure agriculture continues to thrive for future generations. 

South Carolina Farm Bureau is a grassroots, non-profit organization that celebrates and supports family farmers, locally grown food and our rural lands through legislative advocacy, education and community outreach. The organization, founded in 1944, serves nearly 90,000 member families in 47 chapters. For more information, please visit www.scfb.org.





Rivers and Recreation

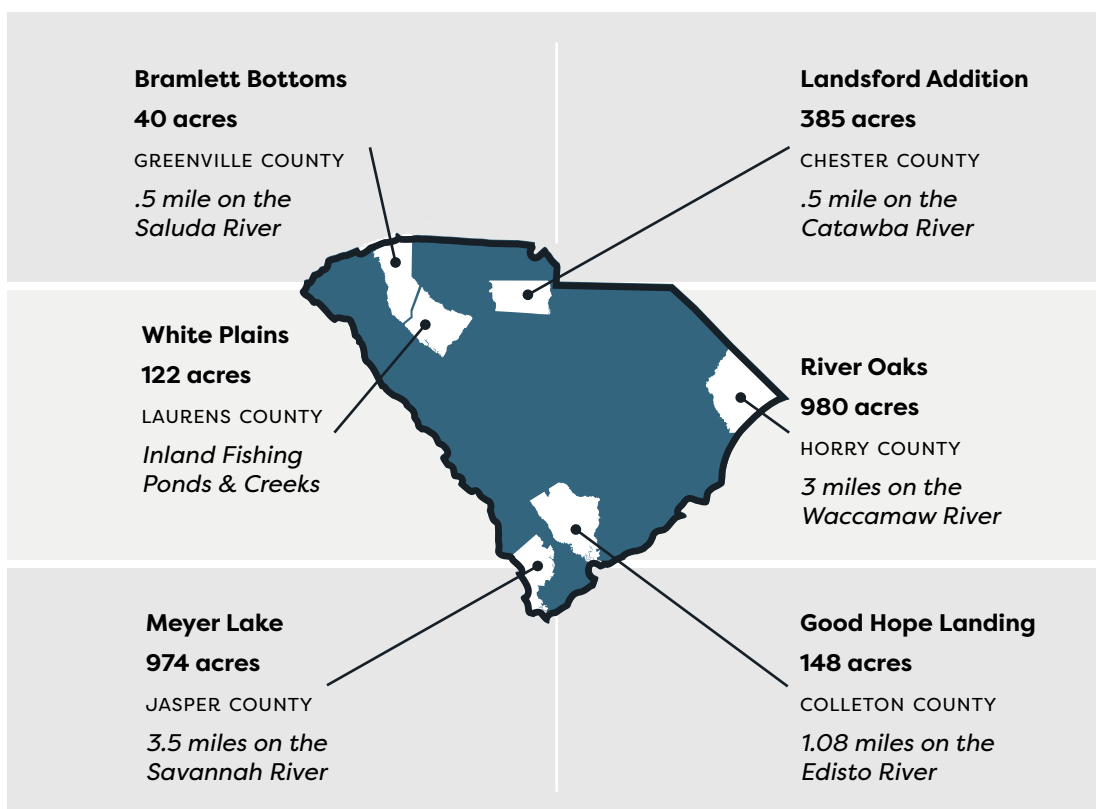
Protecting and Expanding Public Access to our State's Waterways

Feature by Anna Smith, State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator for SC Dept. of Natural Resources



The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is proud to partner with the South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB) to protect the rivers and streams of our state. From vast acreages of riverine floodplains along the Coastal Plain to trout streams in the Upstate and blackwater creeks in the Midlands, this partnership has not only saved important wildlife habitat, but also improved public access to them.

Just this past year, DNR and SCCB expanded public access to the following waters:



Rivers and streams aren't the only aquatic habitats protected by the SCDNR and SCCB. The partnership has helped save cataract bogs and spring heads in the Carolina mountains and Piedmont. In the lower half of the state, we have collaborated on projects that will preserve oxbows lakes, bottomland hardwoods, and isolated wetlands within longleaf pine flatwoods.

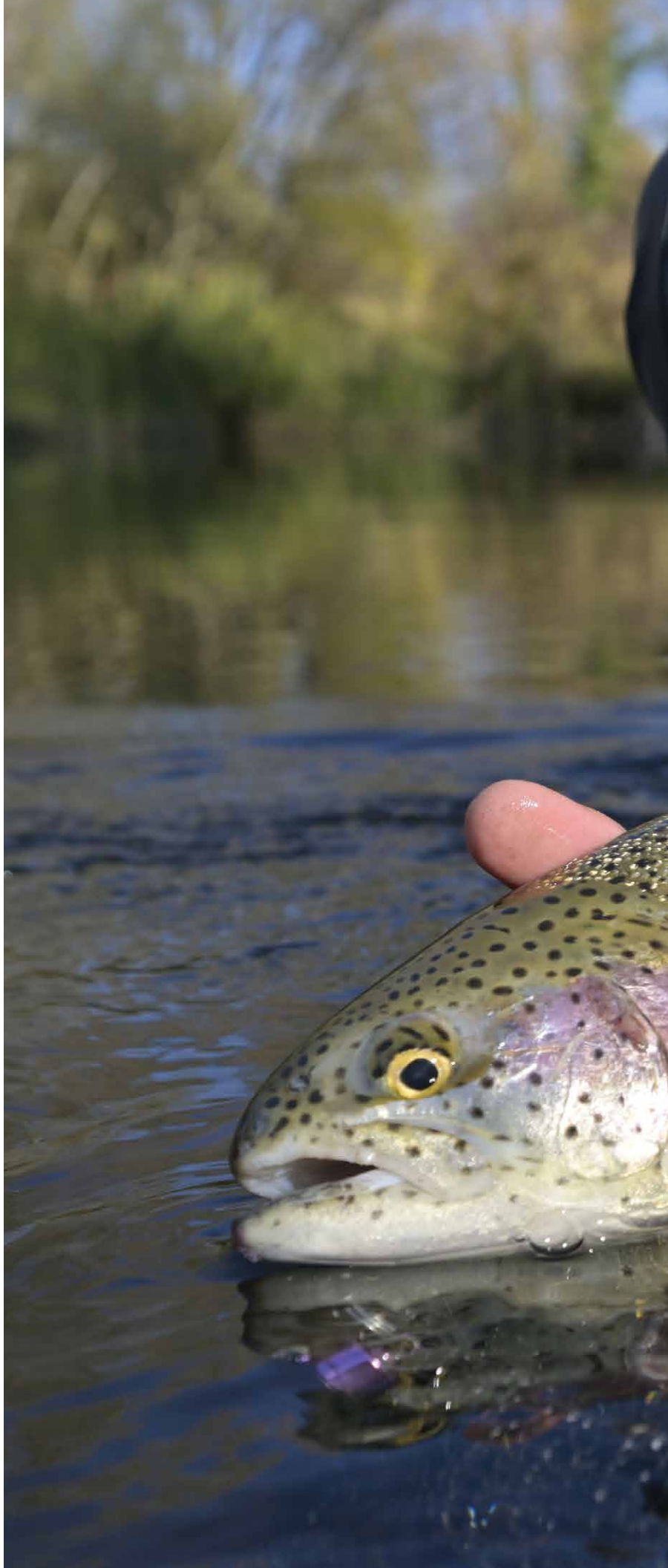
These projects collectively support the integrity of river systems throughout the state, which simultaneously benefit water quality while providing habitat for

numerous priority wildlife species, such as migratory waterfowl, songbirds, and federally threatened and endangered species like Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, frosted flatwoods salamander, and the state endangered gopher frog.

Just as wildlife and rare plants benefit from the preservation of wetlands and floodplains, South Carolina's citizens also reap the rewards in the form of new places to recreate.

New Wildlife Management Areas and Heritage Preserves are providing opportunities for public access in under-served areas of the state. Bank fishing access and preserved scenic vistas along paddling trails bring much-needed revenue to rural economies and provide locals and visitors places to reconnect with nature through bird-watching, hunting, and simply taking a walk on trail networks.

South Carolina is blessed with a myriad of historically, aesthetically and naturally significant rivers and creeks. With the help of the Conservation Bank, DNR is proud to partner on numerous projects throughout the state that will both protect important natural resources and improve public access to them. 🇺🇸







BY THE NUMBERS OUR RESULTS

IN FY 2021
16 SCCB GRANTS
protected important properties across South Carolina
WITH A **FAIR MARKET VALUE** OF
\$19,121,000

EVERY **\$1** OF SCCB GRANT DOLLARS
PROTECTED **\$4** WORTH OF PROPERTIES

47%

LANDOWNERS
\$8,997,614

24%

SCCB
\$4,639,709

21%

PRIVATE/LOCAL
\$4,057,177

8%

FEDERAL GRANTS
\$1,426,500

WHERE WE WORK

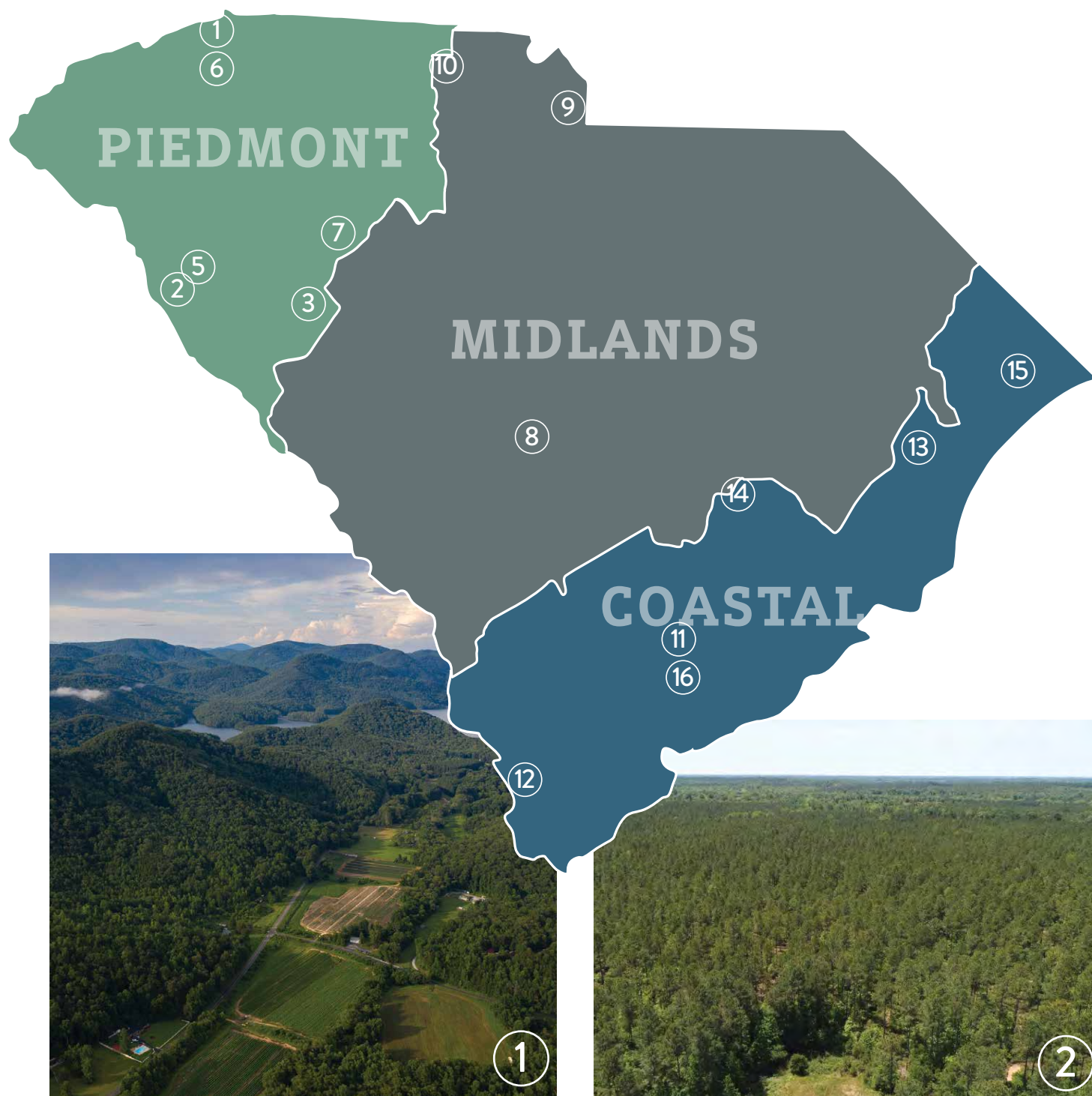
COMPLETED PROJECTS
& CONSERVATION MAP FOR 2021

Photo by Sarah Nell Blackwell





FY 2021 SCCB GRANTS MAP



1. Bramlett Bottoms

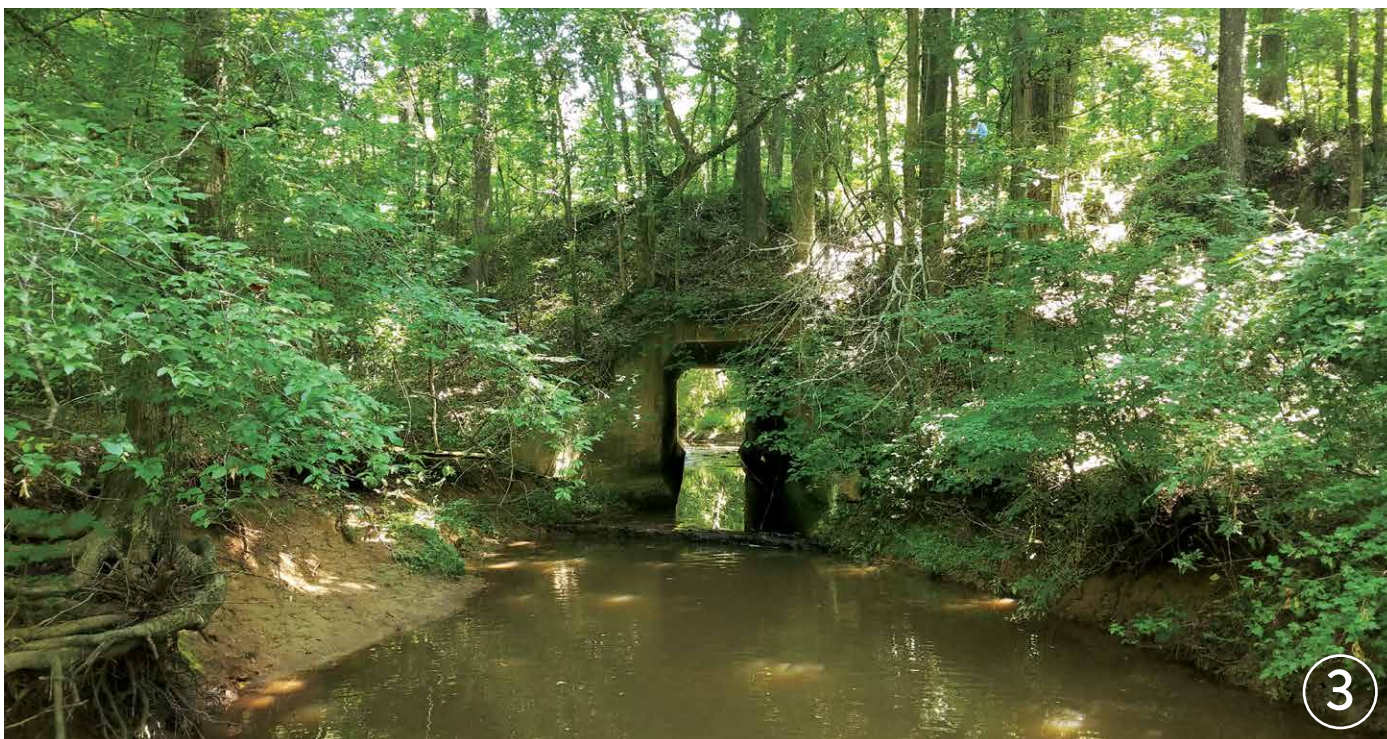
41 acres / Greenville County / Naturaland Trust
SCCB Grant: \$100,000

Bramlett Bottoms protects over a half mile of riparian habitat along the North Saluda River, a major source of drinking water for Greenville, and will provide a new access point for catch-and-release trout fishing.

2. Gill Creek Preserve

239 acres / Abbeville County / Upstate Forever
SCCB Grant: \$82,500

This property adjoins Morrow Creek Timbers and, together, they protect wetlands and streams that flow into Lake Russell.



3. Mays–Epworth Conservation Area (Adams)

1,332 acres / Greenwood County / Upper Savannah Land Trust
SCCB Grant: \$225,000

This working forest project connects important wildlife corridors to Sumter National Forest and the headwaters of Cuffeytown Creek, which provides habitat for the endangered Carolina Heelsplitter.

4. Moore Property

57 acres / Oconee County / Oconee County SWCD
SCCB Grant: \$30,557

This projects protects prime soils, a quarter mile of flowing streams, a 19th-century farmstead, and scenic vistas along two public highways.

5. Morrow Creek Timbers

430 acres / Abbeville County / Upstate Forever
SCCB Grant: \$150,000

Morrow Creek Timbers, together with Gill Creek Preserve (below), protects important wildlife habitat and working forestland in the Piedmont, and buffers the historic Old Rocky River Presbyterian Cemetery, which dates to the mid-1700's.

6. Spring Park

20 acres / Greenville County / Upstate Forever
SCCB Grant: \$300,000

The Spring Park project will create a new urban park along the extremely popular Swamp Rabbit Trail in downtown Travelers Rest and will allow for the restoration of the 19th century Spring Park Inn, from which the town's name originates.

7. White Plains Tract

122 acres / Laurens County / SCDNR
SCCB Grant: \$275,000

The White Plains tract protects priority upland habitat and will provide new public hunting and fishing opportunities for multiple game species as an expansion of Belfast Wildlife Management Area.





8. JRJ Farms

121 acres / Orangeburg County / Ducks Unlimited
SCCB Grant: \$40,000

JRJ Farms builds on the existing partnership with the Department of Defense and helps buffer the North Auxiliary Airfield (NAAF) from encroachment while also protecting unique upland pine forests and forested wetlands situated along the North Fork Edisto River.



9. Landsford Addition Tract

385 acres / Chester County / SCDNR
SCCB Grant: \$400,000

This project protects a half mile of frontage on the Catawba River near one of the highest concentrations of the famed spider lilies and expands public outdoor recreation opportunities at Landsford Canal WMA for hunting, fishing, birding and educational research.



10. Smith Ford Farm

446 acres / York County / Nation Ford Land Trust
SCCB Grant: \$321,472

This 446-acre historic farm protects 1.6 miles of the Scenic Broad River and contains a colonial-era farmstead that will be made available for pre-scheduled historic tours coordinated by Nation Ford Land Trust.

11. Battle of Parker's Ferry–Liberty Trail

31 acres / Colleton County / South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust
SCCB Grant: \$55,180

This acquisition by the SC Battleground Preservation Trust secures the footprint of the Battle of Parker's Ferry, a Patriot victory that showcased General Francis Marion's guerrilla warfare tactics, and will be a featured part of the Liberty Trail.

12. Meyer Lake

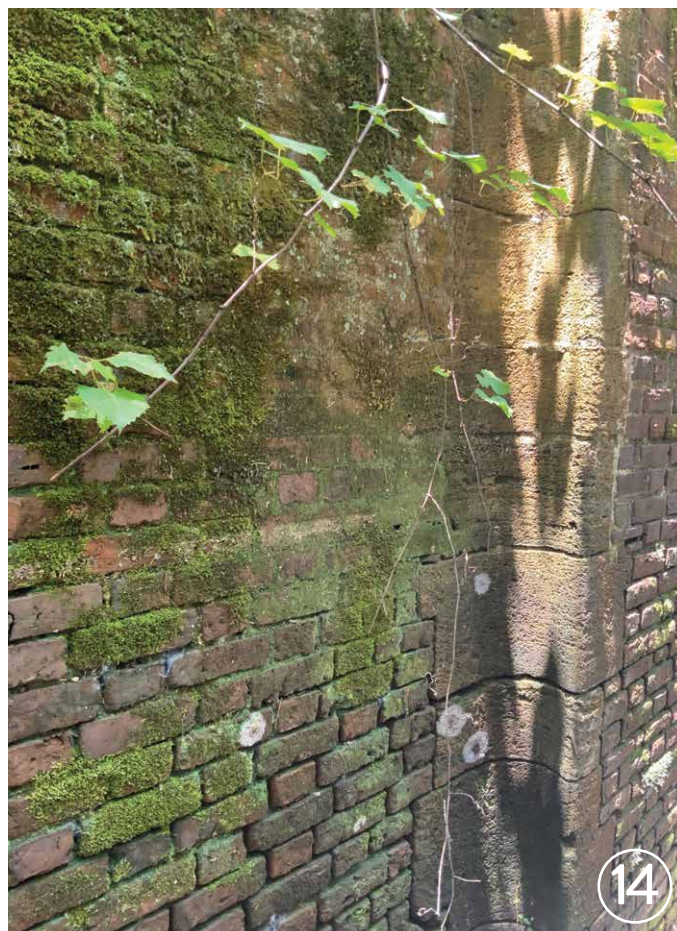
974 acres / Jasper County / Lowcountry Land Trust
SCCB Grant: \$1,000,000

Meyer Lake secures over 3.5 miles of riverine habitat on the Savannah River, contains important wildlife habitat featuring mature hardwood bottomlands, and will be enrolled in the DNR Wildlife Management program, where it will provide new opportunities for public outdoor recreation.

13. Millgrove Plantation

445 acres / Georgetown County / Lowcountry Land Trust
SCCB Grant: \$165,000

This project is located within the Winyah Bay Focus Area and protects scenic vistas near the new Black River State Park.



14. Old Santee Canal**565 acres / Berkeley County / Lord Berkeley Conservation Trust****SCCB Grant: \$270,000**

This property contains the terminal section of the 18th-century Old Santee Canal, including an extant lock system, and protects nearly two miles of the Santee River; the historic assets on the site will be made available for pre-scheduled tours in partnership with the Berkeley Museum.

15. River Oaks Plantation**1,005 acres / Horry County / Ducks Unlimited****SCCB Grant: \$975,000**

This projects conserves important wildlife habitat and 3 miles of riparian habitat along the Waccamaw River, and will be enrolled in the SCDNR Heritage Trust and WMA programs, where it will provide new opportunities for outdoor recreation and access to the river.

16. Willtown (Knox)—ACE Basin**2,101 acres / Charleston County / The Nature Conservancy**
SCCB Grant: \$250,000

This 2,101-acre property shares a 1.3 mile boundary with the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge, solidifies an uninterrupted 26-mile corridor of conserved lands along the coast, and contains highly prioritized longleaf pine habitat.



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South Carolina Conservation Bank

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