

Release

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South Carolina's natural resource management agencies sign Shared Stewardship agreement

Accord establishes partnership to improve forest conditions on public and private lands

COLUMBIA— Directors of nine federal and state agencies came together today to sign a Shared Stewardship agreement at a ceremony held on Harbison State Forest. Shared stewardship agreements between federal and state agencies establish a framework to improve collaboration, accomplish mutual goals, further common interests and effectively respond to the increasing ecological challenges and natural resource concerns.

The agreement will use the best available science to manage and enhance private and public lands within the Palmetto State. South Carolina's forests will benefit from strengthened partnerships between these agencies following today's signing.

"This memorandum of understanding reminds us of our shared responsibilities to care for South Carolina's lands across all boundaries," said Southern Regional Forester Ken Arney with the USDA Forest Service. "This shared stewardship agreement builds on a long history of collaboration between the USDA and the state of South Carolina in improving air and water quality and ensuring our forestlands are sustainable for future generations."

This was the largest group of agency partners (nine) ever to convene to sign a shared stewardship memorandum of understanding within a state.

"The diversity of the signatories here today shows that conservation truly is a team sport here in South Carolina. We have a great group of partners engaged in conserving the forests of our state and the full suite of benefits they produce," said State Forester Scott Phillips. "Our forests provide clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and beautiful scenery. At the same time they provide sustainable raw materials that are a pillar of our state's economy, supporting more than 100,000 high-paying jobs and generating an annual economic impact of \$23.2 billion.

Signatories included:

- Ken Arney, Southern Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service
- Scott Phillips, State Forester, SC Forestry Commission
- Robert Boyles, Director, SC Department of Natural Resources
- Paul McCormack, State Parks Director, SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism
- Ann English, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service



A record-setting collection of state and federal agency representatives met in Columbia today to formalize a South Carolina 'Shared Stewardship' partnership initiated by the USDA Forest Service. From left to right, SC State Parks Director Paul McCormack, USDA Farm Service Agency State Executive Director Laurie Funderburk, Clemson Extension Natural Resources Program Director Derrick Phinney, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist Ann English, State Forester and SC Forestry Commission Director Scott Phillips, US Fish & Wildlife Service Southeast Regional Director Leo Miranda, SC Department of Natural Resources Director Robert Boyles, USDA Forest Service Southeast Regional Forester Ken Arney and The Adjutant General of the SC National Guard Maj. Gen. Van McCarty.

- Laurie Funderburk, State Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency
- Leo Miranda, Southeast Regional Director, US Fish & Wildlife Service
- George Askew, VP, Public Service & Agriculture
- Major General R. Van McCarty, The Adjutant General, SC National Guard

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Supporting quotes from signatory agencies:

USDA Farm Service Agency

“FSA is committed to strengthening partnerships in South Carolina through mutually beneficial collaborations, such as the Shared Stewardship agreement,” said Laurie Funderburk, State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency. “By leveraging our resources in support of both our partners and producers, we can work together to mitigate the impact of natural disasters while protecting and building stronger, healthier forests in South Carolina.”

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

“This Shared Stewardship builds onto partnerships that remain essential to promoting opportunities to work together to set landscape-scale priorities. This allows for greater success in reaching our conservation goals to protect our natural resources”, said Ann English, NRCS State Conservationist. “This Shared Stewardship agreement reaffirms our commitment to partnering in these beneficial areas.”

US Fish & Wildlife Service

“Please note the use of the word ‘shared’ in this program,” said Leopoldo “Leo” Miranda-Castro, Director of the Service’s South Atlantic and Mississippi Basin Regions. “By sharing our resources energy and enthusiasm for conservation, this state-federal partnership has accomplished something great. ‘Stewardship’ is important, too. If we aren’t stewards of the land, who will be?”

SC Department of Natural Resources

“Shared Stewardship of South Carolina’s natural resources, particularly our state and national forest lands, allows for a strong, continued dedication to wildlife conservation,” SC Department of Natural Resources Director Robert Boyles said. “Natural resource-based agencies working together under a shared framework allows us to work across boundaries and implement landscape-scale projects for healthy wildlife, sustainable forests, clean water and outdoor recreation.”

SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism

“Stewardship and service are at the root of our mission at South Carolina State Parks,” said SC State Parks Director Paul McCormack. “We are grateful to have state and federal partners who share our commitment to protect, preserve and manage South Carolina’s natural, cultural and recreational resources. We’re dedicated to serving as responsible stewards of the lands, sites and waters we are entrusted with, and to sharing positive and meaningful experiences with all of our visitors.”

Clemson University Cooperative Extension

Clemson Extension helps improve the quality of life of all South Carolinians by providing unbiased, research-based information through an array of public outreach programs in youth development; agribusiness; agriculture; food, nutrition, and health; and natural resources. With offices in all 46 counties of the state, Extension works to help support South Carolina’s \$42 billion agriculture and forestry industries; strengthen families and communities; improve stewardship of natural resources and the environment; strengthen connections between people and their food; and expose South Carolina youth to opportunities in agriculture, science, technology, engineering and math.