

Global Expedition Leader begins DAY TWO as new director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources

Mullikin received three unanimous confirmations in run-up to new post

COLUMBIA, SC, UNITED STATES, February 11, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Tom Mullikin – acclaimed global-expedition leader, attorney, university professor, retired two-star military commander, and founding chair of the S.C. Floodwater Commission – began his first full day in office as DIRECTOR of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), Feb. 10, following unanimous confirmation by the S.C. Senate, Feb 5.

Mullikin’s Senate confirmation last week was immediately followed by his swearing-in; conducted by Senate President Thomas Alexander and attended by Mullikin’s wife Virginia Ann Mullikin and S.C. Governor Henry McMaster.

“The Department of Natural Resources has a strong and exceptional leader in Tom Mullikin,” said McMaster in an official statement released after Mullikin’s swearing-in. “His expertise in environmental law and policy, combined with his proven leadership as chairman of the S.C. Floodwater Commission, makes him uniquely qualified for this role. I look forward to working with Mr. Mullikin as we continue our efforts to protect and preserve our natural resources.”

Senator Alexander agrees.



Dr. Tom Mullikin is the new SCDNR director.



Dr. Tom Mullikin takes oath of office as new SCDNR director, Feb. 5, 2025.

“Dr. Tom Mullikin is superbly suited for the directorship of SCDNR,” said Alexander during a phone interview. “I say this in all earnestness, not only because of Tom’s background but because of the depth of his experience as demonstrated over many decades.”

Alexander added: “I have every confidence in his [Mullikin’s] ability to direct and guide the progression of this agency and to protect our sterling natural resources – and teach our citizens to better appreciate and respect those same natural resources – and to manage them in such a way that they will be enjoyed and utilized by our citizens for generations to come.”

Mullikin was easily everyone’s choice throughout the multi-month conception, consideration, vetting, and confirmation process.

Gov. McMaster, who previously selected Mullikin to chair the S.C. Floodwater Commission in 2018 (following Mullikin’s retirement as commanding general of the S.C. State Guard), picked Mullikin weeks ago to direct SCDNR beginning in 2025. Then in November 2024, the seven-member S.C. Natural Resources Board convened and unanimously approved Mullikin as the next SCDNR director. This approval was followed in January by the Senate Fish, Game, and Forestry Committee’s unanimous confirmation. The Committee’s confirmation was followed by last week’s unanimous Senate confirmation.

“They say three’s a charm,” said retired USMC Col. Steve Vitali, a member of the Mullikin-led S.C. Floodwater Commission. “Tom’s not only passionate about the outdoors and involving all of S.C.’s citizens in their natural world and the necessity of protecting it, but he’s an accomplished sportsman long advocating for the preservation of S.C.’s wilderness areas and game-management lands.”

Vitali adds: “He also has a distinguished albeit unique military background: A gifted leader whose intellect and character have enabled his success as a U.S. Army officer (certified Army master fitness trainer), later commanding general of the S.C. State Guard where he implemented a rigorous training methodology.”

As SCDNR director, Mullikin leads an important agency employing more than 1,100 personnel working across the state’s 46 counties. According to SCDNR’s website, those employees include technicians, biologists, law-enforcement officers (game wardens), educators, scientists, and administrators.

“Tom’s an excellent selection,” said Dr. Geoff Scott, a former NOAA research facility director who today serves as a professor at the University of South Carolina. “His vast knowledge as well as his keen understanding of the importance of S.C.’s natural resources will mesh well with SCDNR scientists, researchers, and conservation officers.”

Executive leadership is not new to Mullikin, though this is his first cabinet-level directorship.

Mullikin's work, locally, nationally, and internationally – from collaborative efforts between the UN and the ABA to building projects in Fiji, National Geographic “expert” work in Alaska, to classroom instruction in the Galapagos – is renowned; though he is perhaps best known for his leadership of the annual SOUTH CAROLINA SEVEN Expedition from the mountains to sea, and his overall command of numerous arduous expeditions to every continent on Earth, climbing four of the world's Seven Great Summits, and leading SCUBA-diving excursions in all Earth's five oceans, many seas, and other remote waterways.

Retired USMC Maj. Gen. Jim Livingston says: “Tom Mullikin, and those like him who've climbed many of the world's great summits, is a model of perseverance.”

The late founder and first commanding officer of SEAL Team Six (aka DEVGRU) Richard Marcinko, once said: “Men like Tom are the kind of men who push the envelope beyond normal human endurance to achieve life's great summits.”

A lifelong outdoorsman and sportsman – hunting, sport-shooting, fishing, boating, and equestrian sports (supporter and now boardmember of the Camden, S.C.-based Carolina Cup Racing Association) – Mullikin is also a law-enforcement leader and supporter who is a formerly certified state constable, special deputy with the Richland County Sheriff's Department (RCSD), and a former member of RCSD's Waterborne Operations Team (Marine Patrol and Dive Team).

“Tom is a great outdoorsman and protector of our natural resources,” said Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott. “I've spent many hours in the outdoors with him hunting, fishing and hiking throughout our State and in Louisiana, Texas and Alaska.”

Mullikin is also an inductee in the S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame (SCBBHOF).

“Tom's passion for the the natural world is one of many reasons he's the perfect choice to lead SCDNR,” said Bruce Brutschy, 10th-degree black belt and fellow SCBBHOF inductee. “He's also one of S.C.'s champions when it comes to participation-in and support of shooting-sports, hunting, fishing, hiking, diving, and generally exploring the highways, byways, and waterways of S.C. I know as I've participated with him in all for years. ”

According to Mullikin, it's been a labor of love.

“But there's much more to do,” Mullikin said while ringing the bells for the Salvation Army in December. “There's a huge conversation to be had for all of us, a lot of sunshine in front of us, and I'm eager to get started on it all.”

Coincidentally, Mullikin and his Mullikin Law Firm set the record for most money raised in a single day at any one location in Camden during the 2024 Christmas season.

Col. (Ret.) W. Thomas Smith Jr.

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