

S.C. Department of Natural Resources removes abandoned Navy torpedo-retriever boat from Lowcountry waterway

Officials say discarded vessel was a major environmental hazard

WADMALAW ISLAND, SC, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) together with Stevens [heavy-lift marine] Towing Company successfully removed a 120-foot abandoned U.S. Navy torpedo-retriever boat from Bohicket Creek near Johns Island, Tuesday, August 19. The necessary removal addressed long-standing environmental and navigational hazards in the Lowcountry waterway effectively preserving the integrity of the adjacent marsh ecosystems, say SCDNR officials

The vessel – officially a torpedo-weapon retriever vessel which was decommissioned in 2019 – had been grounded beside a private dock for over four years and was central to the first arrest ever made under the state's recently enacted abandoned boat law, authored and championed by S.C. Senator Chip Campsen. "Now we've got a law," said Campsen. "And if you do this [abandon a vessel] we're coming after you."



SCDNR Director Tom Mullikin and S.C. Sen. Chip Campsen are flanked by several SCDNR law enforcement officers at Bohicket Creek, Aug. 19. Photo by Allison DeVore, SCDNR.



Abandoned Navy torpedo-retriever boat rests in Bohicket Creek prior to removal, Aug. 19. Photo by Allison DeVore, SCDNR.

Late last year, the U.S. Coast Guard removed approximately 3,500 gallons of hazardous oil and “oily water” from the vessel after deeming it an environmental threat according to reports.

“Removing this vessel is about more than cleaning up an eyesore — it’s about protecting the health of our marshes, waterways, and coastal communities,” said Dr. Tom Mullikin, director of SCDNR. “Our salt marshes are among South Carolina’s most valuable natural resources, serving as nurseries for fish and shellfish, providing habitat for wildlife, and buffering our coastlines.”

Mullikin – a lifelong conservation champion, sportsman, acclaimed global expedition leader, and accomplished open-water SCUBA diver and diving instructor – added: “Protecting these ecosystems is essential to the future of our state.”

Sen. Campsen and Dr. Mark Hartley, chairman of the SCDNR Board, joined Mullikin during the Tuesday removal effort to shed light on the criticality of safeguarding South Carolina’s coastal habitats and adjacent environs. Their presence underscored how legislative leadership and agency enforcement together ensure the success of efforts to address the abandoned and derelict vessel (ADV) challenge.

ADVs have for years posed increasing risks across South Carolina’s waterways. As vessels deteriorate, they can leak oil, fuel, and other hazardous substances, which smother marsh vegetation, threaten wildlife, and degrade water quality. ADVs also present navigational dangers—especially when partially submerged or unlit.

“No longer,” said Mullikin, flanked by several law enforcement officers (game wardens) from his SCDNR. “It stops here!”

The successful removal of the Bohicket Creek torpedo vessel marked a significant milestone in SCDNR’s ongoing commitment to restoring sensitive habitats, protecting coastal resources, and improving public safety on our waterways.

– Photos by Allison DeVore, SCDNR photographer.



The S.C. Department of Natural Resources

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