

S.C. Department of Natural Resources Director earns CLASS-I Law-Enforcement certification

Retired two-star general officer and renowned global expedition leader Tom Mullikin completes rigorous law enforcement training

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EINPresswire.com/ -- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Director Tom Mullikin is now the ranking SCDNR game warden, having completed a demanding "Class I" (1) law-enforcement (LE) officer certification course which he says underscores his commitment to safeguarding the state's natural resources and supporting the officers who protect them every day: Mullikin's LE certification is official as of Sept. 16, 2025.

Training and testing at both SCDNR headquarters and at the S.C. Criminal Justice Academy (SCCJA) throughout August and the first half of September, Mullikin completed all requirements. Unlike SCCJA graduates who take weekly exams, Mullikin received the Basic Law Enforcement curriculum all at once requiring his hitting the books six to eight hours a day for several weeks in addition to managing his responsibilities as SCDNR director. He was then required to pass a single



SCDNR Director Tom Mullikin takes aim during the firearms phase of his Class-I law enforcement officer training, August-September, 2025.



Dr. Tom Mullikin, director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, is now the ranking game warden in S.C.

comprehensive written exam upon completion of the course curriculum in early September.

In terms of marksmanship-skills training and qualification, Mullikin – a lifelong shooting sports enthusiast – was reintroduced to the “fundamentals of shooting” before qualifying on four separate shooting qualification courses utilizing both pistol optics and iron sights. The qualification courses included –

- Glock 45 optic qualification
- Glock 45 optic failure qualification
- Glock 43 (backup weapon) qualification
- SCCJA basic student qualification

A career attorney, former U.S. Army officer (captain), and retired commanding general (major general) of the S.C. State Guard; Mullikin previously served as an assistant solicitor for S.C.’s Fifth Judicial Circuit, also as a JAG trial counsel (prosecutor) with the U.S. Army Reserve, and as special assistant to the lead prosecutor for the 9/11 terrorists. He also taught members of the Richland County Sheriff’s Department’s DIVE TEAM and he taught the Reserve Deputy Program for the Kershaw County Sheriffs Office.

Mullikin assumed the directorship of SCDNR in February.

“Enforcing South Carolina’s natural resource laws is essential to preserving our state’s wildlife, waterways, and public lands,” said Mullikin earlier this week. “By earning this certification, I have a better appreciation of the responsibilities borne by our officers, and I stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them in protecting the people and property of S.C. as well as safeguarding the resources that belong to every South Carolinian.”

According to SCDNR officials and others, Mullikin’s LE certification reinforces SCDNR’s mission to protect and sustain South Carolina’s natural heritage — ensuring that hunting and fishing traditions, wildlife habitats, and critical ecosystems remain healthy for future generations.

“Tom Mullikin is a longtime friend who is perfectly placed as SCDNR director, if for no other reason he not only recognizes the importance of SCDNR’s law enforcement arm, but he himself has gone through the training to become a class-1 law enforcement officer – no easy task,” said Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott. “Prior to his directorship at SCDNR he was a state constable and a special deputy with the Richland County Sheriff’s Department. I’m proud of him and I’m inspired by the work he is doing.”

Mullikin’s fellow inductees in the elite S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame expressed similar sentiments.

“Tom Mullikin’s immersion into and successful completion of this rigorous course of instruction quite literally speaks to who he is as a fighter,” said Bruce Brutschy, a 10th-degree Black Belt (martial arts grandmaster) and Black Belt Hall of Fame inductee. “His [Mullikin’s] goal-setting

tenacity and persistence is inspiring and is a reflection of the requisite discipline to become a black belt which he is among other lofty titles and achievements.”

Brutschy adds: “He and SCDNR make South Carolina a better place to live, work, and play.”

Col. Steve Vitali, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.), also a S.C. Black Belt Hall of Famer, agrees.

“Tom leads from the front,” said Vitali. “His completion of this law enforcement training is yet another example and a demonstration of his exceptional leadership as SCDNR director.”

Though newly minted as a Class-I (1) LE officer, Director Mullikin will continue training, including forthcoming courses of instruction in emergency vehicle operation and defensive tactics in October.

– For more information about SCDNR, please visit <https://www.dnr.sc.gov/>.

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