

# SCDNR Director addresses international forum in Ecuador

*Dr. Tom Mullikin says S.C. and the Galápagos Islands, face similar threats from erosion, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events*

SAN CRISTOBAL, GALAPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR, October 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Tom Mullikin, director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), delivered the keynote presentation at the International Seminar on Natural Resources and Coastal Futures, hosted by Escuela Politécnica Agropecuaria de Manabí, Manuel Félix López (ESPAM-MFL) Campus in Calceta, Ecuador, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2025.

The seminar brought together officials, students, educators, and environmental professionals from around the world who shared information and fostered collaboration on pressing coastal conservation challenges.

Mullikin, invited as a “master lecturer,” highlighted South Carolina’s comprehensive efforts addressing coastal erosion and the impacts of extreme weather events. He presented case studies on shoreline restoration, floodwater management, and resilience strategies currently being implemented along S.C.’s coast.



SCDNR Director Tom Mullikin, PhD, during a lecture in S.C. earlier this year.



SCDNR Director Tom Mullikin is seen here on horseback during working-lecturing-exploratory trip to Ecuador in October 2025.

“Our coastal regions, whether in South Carolina or the Galápagos, face similar threats from erosion, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events,” said Mullikin. “Through collaborative research, education, and innovative restoration initiatives, we can strengthen the resilience of our coastal ecosystems while safeguarding the communities that depend on them.”

As Director of SCDNR and former chair of the S.C. Floodwater Commission, Mullikin has spearheaded numerous statewide initiatives to mitigate coastal erosion, restore natural barriers, and adapt infrastructure to future sea-level rise. His signature projects include:

- Living Shorelines: Using oyster shells and marsh grasses to stabilize eroding coastlines while enhancing habitat for marine life.
- Oyster Reef Restoration: Rebuilding reefs that filter water, reduce wave energy, and provide ecological benefits for estuarine environments.
- Dune Stabilization: Protecting barrier islands and beaches through vegetation planting and dune enhancement to create natural storm surge defenses.
- Floodwater Management Innovations: Developing strategies to capture and redirect floodwaters inland to reduce coastal flooding risks.

In establishing the Floodwater Commission, S.C. Gov. Henry McMaster emphasized the urgency of addressing flood risks statewide, noting that S.C. has repeatedly experienced damaging coastal and inland flooding from storms, heavy rains, and tides. The Governor’s directive called for comprehensive strategies to protect communities, infrastructure, and natural resources, with special emphasis on vulnerable coastal and riverine areas.

ESPAM-MFL highlighted its commitment to environmental education and sustainability, noting that it was inspired by S.C.’s restoration policies, community engagement, and leadership in climate adaptation.

Dr. Mullikin’s keynote underscored the value of expanding The Palmetto State’s conservation partnerships globally, connecting the state’s shoreline protection and floodwater management expertise with counterparts facing similar challenges. The forum concluded with a call for continued collaboration between Ecuadorian institutions and international leaders to protect



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fragile coastal and marine environments, like S.C., for future generations.

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