

SCDNR Director receives S.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice's Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Tom Mullikin is presented lofty honor from Chief Justice John W. Kittredge

COLUMBIA, SC, UNITED STATES, October 27, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A meeting of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Board of Directors was pleasantly and unexpectedly interrupted by Chief Justice John W. Kittredge, South Carolina Supreme Court, who approached the podium and presented SCDNR Director Tom Mullikin with THE S.C. SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE'S LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025.



S.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice John W. Kittredge and SCDNR Director Thomas S. Mullikin

The near standing-room-only presentation – attended by throngs of family, friends, and state officials – took place in the 1st-floor boardroom/auditorium at SCDNR's new spacious headquarters building in West Columbia, S.C.

"To say that this was an overwhelming honor is greatly understating it," said Director Mullikin. "My gratitude is frankly beyond description and beyond words."

The award, recognizing a lifetime of work and service is "much deserved," so said Chief Justice Kittredge moments before making the presentation.

According to Kittredge: "In making the Chief Justice's Lifetime Achievement Award I consider the individual's contribution to the legal system and profession, to the rule of law, to the community, and to our state. The person [recipient] must possess the highest character and integrity."

Kittredge added "The person we honor this morning not only meets that rigorous criteria, he surpasses it. Dr. – General – Director Tom Mullikin is one of the finest people I have ever known. I

thought I knew a lot about Tom Mullikin and his greatness, but as I wanted to make sure I covered the highlights I learned that I only knew a part of his remarkable life and achievements. But because of his humility – another wonderful trait – you’re not going to hear Tom talk about himself.”

Kittredge detailed a portion of Mullikin’s life’s work expressing his “marvel” of Mullikin’s love of nature and the environment as well as his [Mullikin’s] devotion to protecting and preserving “our natural resources, not just in S.C., but all over the world.”

Kittredge also discussed Mullikin’s leadership of both the annual statewide SC7 Expedition, from the mountains to the sea, and the gubernatorially established S.C. Floodwater Commission. “Governor Henry McMaster, to his great credit, tapped Tom to chair the S.C. Floodwater Commission, and predictably Tom served superbly with distinction.”

That’s not all. Kittredge pointed out that Mullikin’s legal contributions have not only been limited to environmental law. “His reach and impact on law is broad and sweeping,” said Kittredge who then referenced the *Briggs v Elliott* case (where decades ago a group of African-American children in Clarendon County, S.C. were denied transportation to school). That case was unfortunately backstaged by the more well-known *Brown v Board of Education* case.

“Tom wanted to right a wrong and have the *Briggs* case elevated to it’s rightful status,” said



S.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice John W. Kittredge makes presentation to SCDNR Tom Mullikin



Ms. Connie Davis Rouse presents a separate congratulatory commendation to Dr. Tom Mullikin on behalf of S.C. Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter. Ms. Davis Rouse is director of Constituent Services for Rep. Cobb-Hunter.

Kittredge.

To set the historical record straight, Mullikin spent hours-and-hours in tireless research, petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court and filing briefs. "What was Tom's legal fee? Zero," said Kittredge. "It wasn't about money. Who were his clients? The 1946 Clarendon County black children and their parents."

Mullikin's "heart" was also a client as was his unassailable commitment to "doing the right thing, no matter what," added Kittredge.

In conclusion, Kittredge briefly discussed Mullikin's years of distinguished military service, his inclusion in two international martial arts halls of fame as well as the elite S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame, and his work overseas specifically mentioning the island nation of Fiji and the words of Fijian Permanent Secretary of Lands and Mineral Resources Tevita Boseiwaqa, who several years ago said: "Tom Mullikin has a huge heart for Fiji."

A correct statement according to the Chief Justice. "But it misses the larger reality," he said. "Tom Mullikin has a huge heart for justice, for equal treatment for all, for our natural resources, for his family, and his fellow man. That huge heart has been a unifying force in bringing people together."

Kittredge expounded on the Biblical King Solomon's words in ECCLESIASTES regarding true wisdom, which according to Kittredge is "An understanding and pursuit of life's enduring truths: It is selfless and authentic. At his core, Tom Mullikin is both. Tom is not about himself. He is about you, me, and his fellow man. I can tell you the South Carolina legal profession would not be what it is today without Director Tom Mullikin. The more important truth is our great state would not be what it is today without Tom Mullikin. Fiji may want to claim him. The nations and countries around the world may want to claim him. But Tom Mullikin is ours: He is a true South Carolina treasure – our lives have been enriched by the person and presence of this great man with the huge heart – and we in S.C. are thankful he is ours."

Following Kittredge's presentation, Mullikin received a separate recognition from S.C. Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, who formally congratulated him on his appointment and unanimous election as director of SCDNR in February 2025. The signed congratulatory recognition – beginning with "Dear General Mullikin," and concluding with "Congratulations again, my dear friend, on this outstanding achievement. I wish you great success as you lead with vision and integrity" – was presented by Ms. Connie Davis Rouse, director of Constituent Services for Rep. Cobb-Hunter.

– Visit S.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice John W. Kittredge's biography at <https://www.sccourts.org/courts/supreme-court/justices/john-w-kittredge/>

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