CHAPTER 17

Heritage Trust Program

Article 1

Heritage Trust Program

**SECTION 51-17-10. Definitions.**

 The following words or phrases have the definition given unless clearly specified otherwise:

 1. "Board of the department" means the governing board of the Department of Natural Resources.

 2. "Department" means the Department of Natural Resources.

 3. "Advisory board" means the Heritage Trust Advisory Board.

 4. "Natural area" means an area of land or water, or a combination thereof, generally, but not necessarily, large in size. Such an area may be in public or private ownership and shall contain relatively undisturbed ecosystems, landforms, threatened, endangered, or unique plant life or animal habitats, or other unusual or outstanding scientific, educational, aesthetic, or recreational characteristics.

 5. "Natural feature" means an area of land or water, or a combination thereof, which is generally, but not necessarily, small in size. Such area may be in public or private ownership and shall contain or consist of outstanding remnants or natural elements of surviving undisturbed natural ecosystems such as record size individual species of plant life, nests or rookeries, geological formations, or objects of special scientific, educational, aesthetic, or recreational character.

 6. "Cultural area or feature" means an area or feature which provides an outstanding example of our historical or archeological heritage. Such an area or feature shall be a site of special historic interest or contain outstanding remnants or elements of the way of life and significant events of our past so that through their preservation and the restoration of related existing structures, or the development of a historic area, as well as through study, investigation and examination of the material remains in that life, a record may be preserved of the interrelationship and effect between man's activities and his surrounding environment. A cultural area or feature may be one that is either publicly or privately owned.

 7. "Heritage Preserve" means a natural or cultural area or feature which is "dedicated" under this chapter.

 8. "Heritage Site" means a natural or cultural feature which has been recognized as such through "registration" under this chapter.

 9. "Dedicate or dedication" means the process by which any natural or cultural area or feature shall be established as a Heritage Preserve in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 51-17-80. Dedication may result from either of the following methods, but no power of eminent domain is hereby conferred or granted to the board of the department, the advisory board, or the department under this chapter:

 (a) "Acquisition" means the establishment of a Heritage Preserve whereby the owner of a natural or cultural area or feature transfers the fee simple interest therein to the board of the department for such purpose; or

 (b) "Acceptance" means the establishment of a Heritage Preserve whereby the owner of a natural or cultural area or feature transfers less than the fee simple interest therein to the board of the department for such purpose. Examples are granting of a "conservation or open space easement" or the transfer of title subject to a life estate or reverter. Interests in real estate of a term of years shall not qualify for dedication under this chapter.

 10. "Register" or "registration" means the process by which the owner of a natural or cultural feature shall enter into a written agreement with the board of the department recognizing the unique and outstanding characteristics thereof in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 51-17-100.

 11. "Priority areas and features list" means the list made up of those areas and features recommended by the advisory board, and approved by the board of the department, under this chapter whose preservation is of primary importance to the goals and purposes of this chapter and which are, therefore, eligible to be included as Heritage Preserves and Sites.

 12. "The Heritage Trust Program" means the entire system established under this chapter to provide for the inventorying, preservation, use and management of unique and outstanding natural or cultural areas and features in this State. The term 'Heritage Trust' means the legal trust which is created under Section 51-17-90.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 2; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1280, eff July 1, 1993; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-20. Legislative findings.**

 The General Assembly finds that as a part of the continuing growth of the population and the development of the economy of the State it is necessary and desirable that portions of the State's rich natural and cultural diversity be set aside as Heritage Preserves and Sites and protected for the benefit of present and future generations, for once disturbed they cannot be wholly restored. Such areas and features are irreplaceable as laboratories for scientific research; as reservoirs of natural materials for which the value and usefulness thereof is not yet fully known; as habitats for rare and vanishing species; and as living museums where people may observe natural biotic and environmental systems and as areas for study and enjoyment as examples of the lands, structures and related artifacts which represent significant parts of our historical and cultural heritage.

 While a number of independent and differing efforts, both private as well as governmental, have been initiated to protect some of these assets, a coordinated and concerted program is needed in order to avoid duplication among these and other valuable activities and to insure the maximum conservation of these resources through the establishment of a more effective and adequate official legal mechanism for identifying, recognizing and protecting such areas for their outstanding characteristics. While the preservation of all of these assets in their natural state is both impractical and often not necessarily in the total best interest of the State and the public, they exist in limited and decreasing quantities. The time is now for a decision to be made as to which of these areas and sites deserve increased protection and for selecting the most appropriate means for doing so.

 It is therefore the public policy of this State to secure for the people, both present and future generations, the benefits of an enduring resource of natural and cultural areas and features by establishing a system of Heritage Preserves and Sites; protecting this system; gathering and disseminating information regarding it; establishing and maintaining a listing of Heritage Preserves and Sites; and otherwise encouraging and assisting in the preservation of natural and cultural areas and features of this State.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 1; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-30. Purpose.**

 The Heritage Trust Program is created to achieve the following goals by protecting lands and making them available to state agencies, educational institutions, and public and private groups for the following purposes:

 1. For research in such fields as archeology, agriculture, conservation, ecology, forestry, genetics, geology, history, paleontology, pharmacology, soil science, taxonomy, and similar fields by governmental employees, educational and scientific groups as well as by private individuals.

 2. For the teaching of archeology, biology, conservation, ecology, geology, history, natural history, and other subjects.

 3. As habitats and places for maintaining plant and animal species in communities.

 4. As reservoirs of natural and cultural materials.

 5. As places of natural and cultural interests and beauty whereby through visitation the public may observe, value, and enjoy natural and cultural processes and events. Unique recreational opportunities of a type not generally available through the existing State Park System may be provided, including outdoor sporting usage such as hunting and fishing as well as aesthetics, where wholly compatible and consistent with the character of the area or feature.

 6. As benchmarks against which to measure such processes or events as well as the environmental degradation from natural and unnatural influences.

 7. To promote the understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic, cultural, and scientific values of such areas and features by the people of the State.

 8. For the preservation and protection of Heritage Preserves and Sites against modification or encroachment resulting from occupation, development, or other uses which would destroy their natural and cultural character.

 9. As places for maintaining representative lands and related structures which illustrate periods, events, styles, and uses of the land in our state's historic and cultural heritage.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 3; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-40. Department of Natural Resources Board, powers and duties.**

 The board of the department shall have the following duties, responsibilities, and powers under this chapter:

 1. To serve as trustee of the trust created under this chapter and to carry out the powers, duties, and responsibilities thereunder.

 2. To supervise the establishment, updating and maintenance of a statewide inventory of the natural and cultural resources and the maintenance of a list of those areas and features selected or established under this chapter as priority areas and features or as Heritage Preserves and Sites.

 3. To select from the recommendations of the advisory board those natural and cultural features, the preservation of which is of primary importance to the goals and purposes of this chapter, and to classify such as priority areas and features.

 4. To select from the recommendations of the advisory board those priority areas and features which should be dedicated or recognized as Heritage Preserves or Sites, and thereafter to establish as such through dedication or recognition.

 5. To select from the recommendations of the advisory board those Heritage Preserves, interests therein or portions thereof, deserving of protection under the Heritage Trust and thereafter to transfer same into the corpus of the trust.

 6. To conduct public hearings on the question of whether any particular natural or cultural area or feature should be established as a Heritage Preserve or Site, or on the uses or nonuses which shall apply to any area dedicated under the Heritage Trust Program.

 7. To manage or provide for the management of Heritage Preserves through the promulgation of rules and regulations designed to preserve the primary natural character of such areas or features and to provide the maximum public usage thereof which is compatible and consistent with the character of the area. Management duties and responsibilities may be assigned to any governmental or private group, with its consent, with respect to any particular Heritage Preserve.

 8. To cooperate with and to enter into agreement with other state, federal, county, and local units of government as well as private groups for the promotion of the purposes of this chapter including the carrying out of other requirements under federal and state law.

 9. To report annually to the Governor and to the General Assembly as to the activities of the Heritage Trust Program and its future plans, and to make any specific recommendations which it feels, if implemented, would assist in achieving the goals and purposes of this chapter.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 4; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-50. Heritage Trust Advisory Board created; composition.**

 The Heritage Trust Advisory Board is hereby created to assist the board of the department in carrying out its duties and responsibilities under this chapter. The advisory board shall consist of sixteen members who must be chosen as follows and shall elect from its membership a chairman:

 (1) From the general public, seven persons, one from each congressional district within the State, who must be appointed by the Governor and serve for a term of six years. Of these seven, four persons must be from the scientific community who are recognized and qualified experts in the ecology of natural areas, and three persons must be from the cultural community who are recognized and qualified experts in the history and archeology of the State. The term "expert" does not of necessity denote a professional but one learned and interested in the field.

 (2) From state government, the following persons or their designees:

 (a) the Chairman of the Board of the Department of Natural Resources;

 (b) the Director of the Department of Natural Resources;

 (c) the Director of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism;

 (d) the Director of the Land Resources Conservation Districts Division of the Department of Natural Resources;

 (e) the Director of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History;

 (f) the State Forester;

 (g) the State Archeologist;

 (h) the Director of the State Museum; and

 (i) the Secretary of Commerce.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 5; 1991 Act No. 248, § 6; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1281, eff July 1, 1993; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994; 1994 Act No. 361, § 8, eff May 3, 1994; 2012 Act No. 279, § 22, eff June 26, 2012.

**SECTION 51-17-60. Powers and duties.**

 The Heritage Trust Advisory Board shall have the following powers and duties:

 1. To review the inventories prepared and submitted by the department and other state agencies as well as other appropriate sources of information and to recommend therefrom to the board of the department the selection of those areas and features as priority areas and features that it deems to be of primary importance to the goals and purposes of this chapter.

 2. To evaluate, review and examine proposals of the department and other state agencies as well as citizen recommendations for the dedication or recognition of specific areas and features as Heritage Trust Preserves and Sites, and from its expertise to recommend to the board of the department the dedication or recognition of such areas and features which it feels proper.

 3. To recommend to the board of the department any rules, regulations, management criteria, allowable uses and such which the advisory board feels would be beneficial to carrying out the goals and purposes of this chapter.

 4. To appoint technical committees consisting of experts in specialty areas dealing with the ecology, history, and archeology of our State and any other type committees that the advisory board feels can be of assistance in fulfilling its duties and responsibilities under this chapter.

 5. To assist in maintaining a list of areas and sites which through dedication become Heritage Trust Preserves or Sites and to make public information regarding their location, management, regulation, and permissible public uses and the like.

 6. To authorize research and investigation for inventory and assessment purposes, including the reasonable right of entry and inspection, and to disseminate information and recommendations pertaining to natural and related cultural areas and features.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 6; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-70. Department of Natural Resources, powers and duties.**

 The department shall act as the basic staff for the board of the department and the advisory board and shall have the following powers and duties:

 1. The director shall select a member of his staff who shall be primarily responsible for the administration of the Heritage Trust Program.

 2. The department shall supply such other staff and support services as the board of the department and the advisory board require to fulfill their duties and responsibilities under this chapter.

 3. The department shall maintain a public record of any inventories or lists established under this chapter.

 4. The department shall work with owners, both public and private, in the development of proposals for the dedication and recognition of natural and cultural areas and features as Heritage Preserves and Sites, and it shall keep the advisory board informed of the same in order that therefrom the advisory board may make recommendations to the board of the department as provided under this chapter.

 5. The department shall consult with and work in cooperation with the Department of Archives and History, the State Archeologist, the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism and any other state, county, or local unit of government, or any private entity, or group which is or should be directly involved in the Heritage Trust Program as well as in any particular efforts to preserve or protect any specific area or feature under the provisions of this chapter. In all cases, the department shall attempt to avoid duplication of effort with other agencies and groups and shall have no mandatory authority hereunder to require action by any such body.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 7; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-80. Heritage Preserves established.**

 Upon recommendation of the advisory board and approval by the board of the department, any area or feature on the "Priority Areas and Features List" may be established as a Heritage Preserve through the process of dedication. In addition to the transfer of either the fee simple interest or a lesser interest therein such as an open space easement, the owner of any such area or feature must enter into a written "Dedication Agreement" with the department whereby any restrictions, conditions, permissive and nonpermissive uses of the area or feature involved are clearly stated. Once the necessary deed, easement or the like has been filed along with the "Dedication Agreement" in the real estate records for the county in which the area or feature is located, the process of dedication shall be complete and a Heritage Preserve shall have formally been established.

 No area or feature of primarily cultural significance or character shall be dedicated unless the Archives and History Commission approves thereof. The following restrictions shall apply to all Heritage Preserves:

 1. The primary dedication as a Heritage Preserve shall be to preserve and protect the natural or cultural character of any area or feature so established. The board of the department and its agents shall in all cases maintain the essential character of any area or feature dedicated, and as such they are hereby declared to be at their highest, best and most important use for the public benefit. No Heritage Preserve shall be taken for any other public purpose unless the approval of both the board of the department and the Governor has been obtained. In no case shall any Heritage Preserve be taken for any private use.

 2. An acquisition by dedication shall be in perpetuity.

 3. In any case where an area or feature is dedicated as a Heritage Preserve through acceptance of less than the fee simple interest therein, no management of such property shall be performed by state agencies or their employees and no public funds shall be utilized in the upkeep or general maintenance of such property; provided, in the case where public usage of such area or feature is compatible and consistent with the natural character of the property and the owner is agreeable to allow such as defined under this chapter, reasonable costs of maintenance and management may be borne by the State.

 4. No acquisition of any area or feature as a Heritage Preserve shall be allowed whereby the department receives the fee simple interest in the property while the grantor or transferor retains the beneficial use or interests in the land except where total and complete public usage of the area or feature as allowed under this chapter is agreed to in the "Dedication Agreement".

 5. Within ninety days from the date of the completion of the dedication process by which an area or feature is established as a Heritage Preserve, or as soon thereafter as possible, the department shall recommend a management plan for the area or feature concerned. Such proposed plan shall include recommendations as to the uses and nonuses to which the property should be put, recommendations as to whether all or a part of the area or feature is deserving of increased protection through inclusion in the Heritage Trust, the projected cost of the management of the property, and recommendations as to whether or not a user fee would be appropriate. All state, federal, county, local, and private groups interested in the area or feature involved shall be allowed to have input into the proposed management plan. The plan shall be considered by the advisory board, and therefrom the advisory board shall propose to the board of the department an overall management plan for the area or feature concerned. Upon approval by the board of the department of a plan, the department or that agency or group authorized by the board of the department shall manage the Heritage Preserve in accordance therewith.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 8; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-85. Heritage Trust property; disposition, exception.**

 (A) Notwithstanding another provision of law or subsection (B) of this section, the board may not dispose of any Heritage Trust property if otherwise permitted to do so unless there are restrictions sufficient to protect all of the natural and cultural characteristics of the property.

 (B) For the purposes of county, state, or federal infrastructure projects, subsection (A) does not apply.

HISTORY: 2006 Act No. 251, § 3, eff March 28, 2006; 2009 Act No. 12, § 1, eff May 6, 2009.

**SECTION 51-17-90. Heritage Trust created.**

 There is hereby created the South Carolina Heritage Trust, the trustee of which shall be the Board of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. The corpus of the trust shall be made up of those Heritage Preserves which the board of the department considers to be of such outstanding and unique natural or cultural character so as to be significant and essential to the carrying out of the goals and purposes of this chapter and as such, to merit a greater degree of preservation than that provided by dedication. The board of the department shall have authority to place into the corpus of the trust any Heritage Preserve that it feels meets this criteria and which has been recommended for inclusion therein by the advisory board. The beneficiaries of this trust are and shall be the present and future generations of citizens of the State, more particularly those present and future citizens residing within a close proximity to any area or feature which itself, or an interest therein, becomes, constitutes, or comprises a part of the corpus of such trust and who actually enjoy use of such area or feature; and further and more particularly, those present and future students, teachers, and persons residing in the State who are concerned with conservation or with research in any facet of ecology, history, or archeology and who actually utilize any such area or feature for the promotion of such interest.

 Wherever the term "area or feature" is used in this section, it shall include "or interests therein". The following, except as otherwise expressly provided, shall constitute substantive terms of the trust and apply to any area or feature which becomes a part of the corpus thereof:

 1. Upon approval by the board of the department of the inclusion of a Heritage Preserve in the corpus of the South Carolina Heritage Trust, such transfer shall be recorded in the county in which the property is located and shall establish conclusive proof that such area or feature is suitable for preservation and protection under this chapter and constitutes a part of the corpus of the South Carolina Heritage Trust.

 2. In any case wherein the previous owner of a Heritage Preserve has restricted such area or feature from inclusion in the South Carolina Heritage Trust, or where the previous owner has withheld an interest therein such as a life estate or reverter, the Heritage Preserve involved shall not be allowed to become a part of the corpus of the South Carolina Heritage Trust unless at a subsequent time such approval is obtained from such person or his successor in interest.

 3. Upon the approval by the board of the department of the inclusion of any Heritage Preserve in the South Carolina Heritage Trust and the transfer of the title or interest held by the board of the department therein to the trust, subject to the provisions of Item 2 of this section, legal title to such area or feature shall be conveyed to the trustee of the South Carolina Heritage Trust and the equitable, or beneficial ownership, shall rest in those beneficiaries previously stated and described, whether such property was owned by a private or public source prior to dedication.

 4. Upon approval by the advisory board, the department, the board of the department, and any agency of the State is hereby authorized to enter into agreement in advance with any person, firm, corporation, legal entity of government, or any private group that any particular area or feature shall be conveyed to the trustee in trust under the provisions of this chapter.

 5. Upon approval by the board of the department of inclusion of any Heritage Preserve into the corpus of the South Carolina Heritage Trust, the advisory board shall review the management plan therefor as well as the "Dedication Agreement" and any other sources of information which it may consider appropriate. Upon approval thereof by the board of the department, the department, or that agency or group assigned management responsibilities therefor, shall manage the property in accordance therewith. Except to the extent expressly otherwise provided in the "Dedication Agreement", the following substantive terms shall be deemed to be set forth in the conveyance to the Heritage Trust and the trustee shall hold such property in trust subject to such terms:

 (a) The essential natural character of the property shall be maintained.

 (b) There shall be no erection of any improvements thereon except those minimal improvements necessary for the security, safety, or convenience of the public and those required for maintenance and management.

 (c) Cutting or burning of timber, wood or other destruction of flora or fauna shall be permitted only for conservation or regeneration of flora or fauna; or for the control of plant succession by deliberate manipulation for restoration of preservation of a particular vegetation type or of an endangered species of flora, fauna or wildlife; or for the establishment and maintenance of nature and hiking trails, camping areas and the like where compatible and consistent with the character of the area or feature concerned and not seriously damaging or detrimental to the natural quality of the property.

 (d) No stream shall be dammed or have its course altered.

 (e) No motorized vehicles shall be permitted on the property other than those utilized by the trustee or its agents in management and protection of the property or used by the general public for ingress and egress to the property in compliance with the management plan for the area or feature concerned.

 (f) No change shall be made in the general topography of the area or feature except for those minimal alterations which may be necessary to provide on-foot access to the public for visitation, or observation; and this shall be done only where wholly compatible and consistent with the character of the property and where no detrimental effect shall result.

 (g) No activity shall be allowed or permitted which might pollute any stream, body of water, or the atmosphere.

 (h) No signs, billboards or other advertising of any kind shall be erected; however, informational and directional signs related to the designation of the area or feature as a Heritage Preserve and related to the public's enjoyment thereof shall be allowed when approved by the trustee.

 (i) No other acts or uses which are detrimental to the retention of the property in its natural state shall be allowed, including those detrimental to flood control, drainage, water conservation, erosion control or soil conservation, or fish or wildlife habitat preservation.

 (j) Where cultural areas or features are involved, reasonable excavation, improvement and the like shall be allowed for research purposes as well as to restore such area or feature.

 (k) The trust shall continue in perpetuity.

 (l) Nothing in this chapter shall be interpreted as restricting the use of an existing or any future easement, express or implied, in favor of any utility or other holder of an easement for public purposes.

 6. Those natural and related cultural areas and features which are acquired as Heritage Preserves in accordance with the trust provisions of this chapter are hereby declared to be as such at their highest, best and most important use for the public benefit. The State, any agencies thereof, local or county entities of government, or public utility which has the power of condemnation by law may acquire by purchase, gift, or eminent domain an easement or other interest in any property comprising a part of the corpus of the Heritage Trust; provided, however, that before any such condemnation shall occur a court of competent jurisdiction shall determine the following:

 (1) there is an unavoidable and imperative public necessity that the property or interest therein be taken for another public use;

 (2) that there is no feasible and prudent alternative for the proposed use for which the property or interest therein is to be taken; and

 (3) that the proposal for taking includes all possible planning to minimize the harm done to such property resulting from such proposed use. Where the court deems appropriate, a public hearing shall be conducted prior to the court's decision to allow comment and input thereto. No city, county, public district, agency of the State, or public utility of the State shall acquire any real property which is a part of the corpus of the Heritage Trust through condemnation for the purpose of utilizing such property for another public use unless the acquiring entity pays or transfers to the Heritage Trust sufficient compensation to enable the operating entity to replace the real property and facilities thereon. The trustee of the trust shall have authority to utilize such proceeds to acquire additional property for the trust and to maintain those properties which form the corpus of the trust.

 7. The common law of South Carolina pertaining to trusts shall be applicable to the Heritage Trust and to all areas or features, or interests therein, which become a part of this corpus. Without in any way limiting the generality of the foregoing, such trusts shall not fail for want of a trustee, and the trust shall be terminated as to any particular area or feature, or interest therein, only upon total failure of the intended purpose. Any substitution of the trustee or termination of the trust as to any particular area or feature, or interests therein, shall occur only after appropriate judicial action wherein the beneficiaries are adequately represented, and such total failure shall not in any way affect the remainder of the property within the corpus of the trust.

 8. The trustee shall hold, manage, preserve and enforce the various areas and features, or interests therein, which become a part of the corpus of the trust in accordance with the terms of this chapter and in any respective conveyances and transfers thereto. To that end the trustees may adopt and modify rules and regulations for the use and enjoyment of such trust properties by the public, and may employ or appoint agents to act on their behalf in the management of such properties.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 9; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-100. Heritage Sites, registration.**

 In any case wherein a priority feature is either unsuited or unavailable for acquisition as a Heritage Preserve, the board of the department in agreement with the owner thereof may recognize such for its importance by registering it as a Heritage Site through the following registration procedures:

 1. The department through its research and consultation with the owners of properties selected as priority features shall notify the advisory board of those which are unsuited or unavailable for dedication but for which the owners have made application for recognition as Heritage Sites through registration.

 2. The advisory board shall review such applications and shall recommend to the board of the department the approval of those which it deems worthy of preservation through registration as Heritage Sites.

 3. From the advisory board's recommendations, the board of the department shall approve those applications for recognition as Heritage Sites which it deems deserving and appropriate for carrying out the purposes of this chapter.

 4. Upon approval of an application by the board of the department, the department may enter into a written agreement of registration with the owner of the feature concerned whereby the State shall give public recognition of the importance of the area or feature as a Heritage Site and the owner shall express his intent to preserve it.

 5. The department shall erect and maintain an appropriate sign on the Heritage Site indicating its recognition and the owner thereof shall be given a certificate acknowledging its registration.

 6. The registration agreement may be terminated by the owner or the board of the department at any time upon thirty days' notification to the other party. Such termination shall remove the feature from the Heritage Site Program, and any certificate previously issued therefor or sign erected shall be returned to the department by the property owner.

 7. Unless the registration agreement is terminated, the owner of a Heritage Site shall maintain its essential natural character.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 10; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-110. Funding; appropriations; user fees; income.**

 The department shall include those costs and operating expenses necessary for the activities of the board of the department and the advisory board as well as staff support to carry out the provisions of this act in the annual State Appropriation Act. Funding for management of areas and features which become Heritage Preserves must be specifically requested by the department or that entity of government responsible for management thereof.

 The board of the department shall select those Heritage Preserves for which it is appropriate to charge an individual user fee. The department may sell such user permits for a cost not to exceed five dollars and to be valid for the fiscal year in which issued at all Heritage Preserves where a permit is required. At the end of the fiscal year, the department shall distribute the funds collected among the entities of government assigned responsibility for management in direct proportion to the acreage which they manage. The proceeds of the sale of the user permits must be used to defray the management expenses.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 11; 1985 Act No. 36, § 1; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-115. Heritage Land Trust Fund created.**

 There is created the Heritage Land Trust Fund, which must be kept separate from other funds of the State. The fund must be administered by the board of the department for the purpose of acquiring fee simple or lesser interest in priority areas, legal fees, appraisals, surveys, or other costs involved in the acquisition of interest in priority areas, and for the development of minimal facilities and management necessary for the protection of the essential character of priority areas.

 Unexpended balances, including interest derived from the fund, must be carried forward each year and used only for the purposes provided in this chapter.

 No fund money may be expended to acquire interest in property by eminent domain nor may the funds be expended to acquire interest in property without a recommendation of the Heritage Trust Advisory Board and the approval of the State Fiscal Accountability Authority or Department of Administration, as applicable.

 The board of the department shall report by letter to the presiding officers of the General Assembly not later than January fifteenth each year all funds expended pursuant to this chapter for the previous year, including the amount of funds expended and the uses to which the expenditures were applied.

 The fund is eligible to receive appropriations of state general funds, federal funds, donations, gifts, bond issue receipts, securities, and other monetary instruments of value. Reimbursement for monies expended from this fund must be deposited in this fund. Funds received through sale, exchange, or otherwise of any Heritage Preserve acquired under this section, or products of the Preserve such as timber, utility easement rights, and the like, accrue to the fund.

HISTORY: 1985 Act No. 36, § 2; 1993 Act No. 164, Part II, § 44, eff June 21, 1993; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994; 1999 Act No. 100, Part II, § 16, eff July 1, 1999.

**SECTION 51-17-117. Heritage Trust Program; donations of real and personal property.**

 (A) Donations of real and personal property including, but not limited to, land, houses, stocks, and bonds may be made to the Heritage Trust Program.

 (B) The board of the department, on its own or by its agent, may:

 (1) sell donated property. Proceeds from the sales must be deposited in the Heritage Land Trust Fund and used for the purposes established in this chapter;

 (2) establish minimum acceptable prices for disposition of donated property;

 (3) trade donated property for property of equal value;

 (4) promote donations to the program through advertising;

 (5) decline donations for any reason.

HISTORY: 1994 Act No. 346, § 1, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-120. Effect on certain other lands.**

 Nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed as interfering with the purposes stated in the establishment of or pertaining to any state or local park, preserve, wildlife refuge, forest or other area or the proper management and development thereof, except that any agency managing an area or feature acquired as a Heritage Preserve or a Heritage Site under the provisions of this chapter shall preserve it in accordance with the applicable conveyance, registration agreement and the rules and regulations of the board of the department applicable thereto.

 Neither the acquisition of any Heritage Preserve nor the registration of any Heritage Site nor any action taken by the board of the department under any of the provisions of this chapter shall void or replace any protective status under law which an area would have were it not a Heritage Preserve or Heritage Site, the protective provisions of this chapter being supplemental thereto.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 12; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-130. Enforcement; penalties.**

 1. Enforcement officers of the Natural Resources Enforcement Division of the Department of Natural Resources, park rangers, and forestry rangers, as well as all other state and local law enforcement officials, shall have authority to enforce the provisions of this chapter.

 2. The Attorney General shall enforce the rules and regulations of the board of the department both as they apply to those areas dedicated as well as those that are subsequently made a part of the corpus of the South Carolina Heritage Trust. In exercise of this authority, the Attorney General may, among other things and at the request of the board of the department, bring an action for injunctive or declaratory relief in any court of competent jurisdiction.

 3.(a) Any person violating the provisions of this chapter where the damage to the property does not exceed five hundred dollars is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not more than one hundred dollars or be imprisoned not more than thirty days for each offense.

 (b) Any person violating the provisions of this chapter where the damage to the property exceeds five hundred dollars is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not less than five hundred dollars nor more than five thousand dollars or be imprisoned not more than six months, or both, for each offense.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 13; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.

**SECTION 51-17-140. Heritage Trust properties; approval by county delegation.**

 No acquisition may be made under this chapter in any county without written approval of a majority of the county delegation in the county where Heritage Trust properties are to be acquired.

HISTORY: 1976 Act No. 600 § 14; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994; 2000 Act No. 387, Part II, § 87, eff June 30, 2000; 2019 Act No. 72 (H.4010), § 1, eff May 16, 2019.

**SECTION 51-17-150. Annual report.**

 The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, as trustee for the Heritage Land Trust Fund, shall report annually to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Senate Finance Committee detailing acquisitions in the previous year by the Heritage Land Trust Fund and planned acquisitions for the next five years.

HISTORY: 1986 Act No. 540, Part II, § 10B; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1282, eff July 1, 1994.