

January 8, 2014

773 Whispering Marsh Drive
Charleston, SC 29412

The Honorable W. Brian White, Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
South Carolina House of Representatives
525 Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Mr. White:

I am contacting you on behalf of the South Carolina Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Our membership includes more than 150 highly trained and dedicated professionals from a diverse range of fields, including wildlife biologists, scientists, and land managers. Our expertise ranges from the sustainable use of wildlife and ecosystems, to managing public lands, conserving wildlife on private lands, recovery of endangered species, restoring degraded habitats, and managing our state's abundant wildlife resources. Our core values include a strong interest in wildlife and their habitats, a love of the outdoors, and a deep appreciation of the intrinsic value of our state's natural resources and their conservation. We are also part of the larger international professional organization, The Wildlife Society.

Our organization is concerned about a provision in Bill S. 535 that creates the "Clemson University Enterprise Division." Specifically, Section 59-119-1140, (A) (2) of the Clemson University Enterprise Act states: **It (the Enterprise Division) may sell, lease, convey, exchange, and otherwise dispose of any real or personal property and other assets upon terms and conditions it considers appropriate.**

Through the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937, Clemson University was granted administration of 23,000 acres of woods and farmlands surrounding the university and was charged to;

*"develop a program of land conservation and utilization, in order to thereby correct maladjustments in land use, and thus assist in controlling erosion, **reforestation, preserving natural resources, protecting fish and wildlife**, developing and protecting recreational facilities, mitigating floods, preventing impairment of dams and reservoirs, developing energy resources, conserving surface and subsurface moisture, protecting watersheds and navigable streams, and protecting the public lands, health, safety, and welfare, **but not to build industrial parks or establish private industrial or commercial enterprises.**" (emphasis added)*

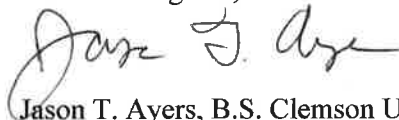
The stewardship of these lands, now encompassing 17,500 acres known as the Clemson Experimental Forest (CEF), was entrusted to the university in 1954 and has been expertly managed by professional foresters and staff from the Department of Forestry and Office of Land Management since the late 1950's. Each of the 15 goals set forth in the Bankhead-Jones Act has been met or exceeded, while providing a living laboratory for thousands of future foresters, wildlife biologists, and natural resources land managers that have received their formal education and field training at Clemson University. The property has 98 miles of shoreline on a 56,000 acre federally-owned lake with rolling green fields, woodlands and ponds teeming with wildlife. Scenic waterfalls and miles of mountain bike, horseback-riding, and pedestrian trails provide outstanding public recreation facilities and offer fantastic mountain views of the Blue-Ridge escarpment. Decades of work by foresters, wildlife biologists, and other natural resource professionals applying science-based management practices have brought the property to its premier status.

In keeping with the original intent of the Bankhead-Jones Act, we suggest revising Section 59-119-1140, (A) (2) of the Clemson Enterprise Act to exempt lands of the CEF by inserting the following (*italicized text*):

It (the Enterprise Division) may sell, lease, convey, exchange, and otherwise dispose of any real or personal property and other assets upon terms and conditions it considers appropriate. ***This Act shall not apply to lands that are owned by Clemson University and generally known as the Clemson Experimental Forest and Farms.***

We further request the management of the CEF not be transferred as an asset to the Enterprise Division. These outstanding lands should continue to be managed by those trained in natural resource management. We are concerned that this Act, as currently drafted, could be interpreted to allow the CEF to be transferred to the Enterprise Division. Once transferred, the division could sell some or all of the property in opposition to the provisions of the Bankhead-Jones Act. Further, we are concerned that the Enterprise Division will not have the appropriate expertise in natural resource land management to adequately manage the vast resources of the CEF. By adding clarifying text to the Act, the intent of the legislation would be clear and the status quo management and ownership of the CEF would be maintained.

With kind regards,



Jason T. Ayers, B.S. Clemson University '96
President
S.C. Chapter of The Wildlife Society

cc: S.C. House of Representatives
David H. Wilkins, Chair, Clemson University Board of Trustees
James P. Clements, President, Clemson University