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DNR takes up I-73 crossing route Friday
Preferred route will eat into Heritage Trust preserve

By Zane Wilson - The Sun News

The Interstate 73 crossing of a state Heritage Trust preserve is on the agenda for the state Natural Resources Board when it meets Friday at the Yawkey Center near Georgetown.

The proposed highway must cross the Little Pee Dee River on its path from Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., to its end point at S.C. 22. also known as the Conway Bypass.

The least damaging path is across the Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve, and in the 10 months since the preferred route was revealed the two state agencies involved have been trying to resolve how the loss of some of the preserve will be compensated.

The highway route will take 27.2 acres of the preserve and affect 3.9 acres upstream from the bridge and 2.5 downstream.

The Heritage Trust Advisory Board, which meets quarterly, discussed the crossing in October and February but took no action, asking the staff to continue to study possible future costs related to the crossing.

At the October meeting, the board said it would not fight the crossing, but wanted full compensation for the loss of the land as well as future costs such as managing the runoff from the bridge.

The advisory board is not scheduled to meet again until May. Meanwhile, some lawmakers accused the Department of Natural Resources of holding up final work on the I-73 permit.

Rep. Alan Clemmons, R-Myrtle Beach, tried three times to insert a measure in the budget that would use land bought with Conservation Bank money as compensation for the Heritage Trust I-73 crossing.

DNR agency Director John Frampton said there was no intentional holdup and that he would personally handle the negotiations.

On Friday, the DNR board could take action on a proposal if it wishes, but the item is listed as one for information only, said agency spokesman Mike Willis.

Representatives of the state Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration are scheduled to speak.

Also on the agenda, besides regular division reports, is a discussion of conservation easement policy.

The board is meeting at Yawkey Center on South Island as part of its program to rotate meetings around the state, using agency facilities when possible.

If you go

What | State Department of Natural Resources Board meeting

When | 10 a.m. Friday

Where | Yawkey Center, South Island

Directions | Come to South Island Landing at the end of South Island Road and take a ferry or pontoon across.

Call ahead | The meeting is public but anyone who wants to speak is asked to sign up in advance by calling Mike Willis at 803-734-4133.

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