

## Deal reached on I-73 compensation package

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The S.C. Heritage Trust Advisory Board voted today to approve a compensation package from the S.C. Department of Transportation to mitigate the impact on the Little Pee Dee River for Interstate 73, said Barry Beasley, the board's director.

Under the terms of the deal, the Heritage Preserve Trust will receive \$2,500 an acre for 300 acres — a 10-to-1 ratio — as replacement for the 30 acres of the Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve that will be used for the crossing of I-73 at S.C. 917 on the Marion-Horry county line.

Once the deal for the 30 acres along the river is finalized, SCDOT can apply for the federal permit for the 30-mile section of I-73 scheduled to be built between Interstate 95 and S.C. 22.

Plans are for part of the 30-mile southern leg of I-73 in South Carolina to cross the Little Pee Dee River. The I-73 path is slated to run parallel to the S.C. 917 bridge on the border of Marion and Horry counties before it connects to S.C. 22 near Aynor.

The state Department of Natural Resources board, which meets later this month, also must approve the deal.

The S.C. Budget and Control Board must OK the package, too.

That should happen in the next two months, said state DNR Director John Frampton, who spoke with the Morning News about the project last month.

Frampton said the deal also has to survive legal challenges from preservation and conservation groups.

The interstate, if it is built, ultimately will run from Myrtle Beach to Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. It will cross six states — Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia and the Carolinas — and traverse 60 miles in four Pee Dee counties.

The interstate could take up to 10 years to build and cost \$2 billion. So far, about \$100 million has been identified to fund I-73.

The interstate is No. 5 on the U.S. Department of Transportation's list of priority roads. The project has been put on a fast track by the SCDOT, which named it as the state's No. 1 transportation priority.

The Environmental Impact Study for I-73, which typically takes about five years, is expected to be completed in three years.

For information on the proposed route for I-73 in the Palmetto State, visit [www.I73inSC.com](http://www.I73inSC.com).