



HIGHLANDS
BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

HBF Board of Trustees Spring 2026 Meeting

A meeting of the HBF Board of Trustees will be held on Wednesday, April 15th at 3:00 pm via Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81511498205?pwd=81hp9aeFzyKj9KlERGqBvCOzq97vog.1>

AGENDA

1. Call to order (Tom)
2. Approval of Minutes from December meeting
3. Operations Update (Jamie/Marissa)
 - a. NC closure
 - i. Construction begins Aug. 24th
 - ii. Last day NC open – Aug. 15th
 - iii. Moving stuff, people and animals – week of Aug. 17th
 - iv. NC open w/minimal daily programs/Staff cleaning up – Aug. 10th
 - v. Last week/day of programming – Aug. 3rd (8th last day)
 - b. New Staffing
 - i. Education Specialist – Alex Waite
 - ii. 4 Naturalist and 1 NC staff
 - c. New platform conversions
 - d. Annual Report and Spring Campaign
 - e. Successful summer camp registration
 - f. Zahner Lecture Series
4. Nature Center/Programming Updates (Maddie/Alex)
 - i. Volunteer Program
 - ii. Spring Programs/Hours
 - iii. Summer Camps/Programming
5. Finance Update (Bob/Jamie)
 - a. 2025 EOY Budget
 - b. 2026 Budget - 1st Quarter
 - c. Investments
 - d. 2026 Audit in progress
6. Development Update (Keller/Jamie)
 - a. Events update
 - i. Soiree
 1. Location – Flat Mtn. Farm
 2. Date - Tuesday, July 28th
 3. PPR, Epting and Parking secured
 - ii. Patron Party
 1. Location – Elizabeth & David Martin's
 2. Date - Wednesday, June 17th



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7. Strategic Planning Update (Gayle)
 - a. Plan Approval
 - i. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gzelvFVxMM7uYcbul4JVDJ5uxiPZuYFmjiwW4kV2Tlc/edit?usp=sharing>
8. Nomination Committee (John/Jennie)
 - a. Board Nominations – process and deadlines
9. Highlands Biological Station update (Jason)
10. Adjournment

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

April 2 – Nature Center Open Th-Sat, 10-4

April 15 – Spring Trustee Meeting 3 PM (Virtual)

May 25 – Nature Center Opens for Summer Hours (M-Sat, 10-5)

June 25 – Annual Membership Meeting + Summer Trustee Meeting 3 PM

June 17 - Patron Party

July 28 – Summer Soiree

August 15th to EOY – Nature Center Closed for Renovations

October 4 - Highlands on the Half Shell/Oktoberfest

October 21 – Fall Trustee Meeting 3 PM

October 27 – Enchanted Forest Halloween

November 26 & 27 – HBF Office Closed

December 9 – Winter Trustee Meeting 3 PM (Virtual)

December 21 - January 1 – HBF Office Closed



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**HBF Committee Reports
2026 Spring Board of Trustees Meeting**

FINANCE

Members: Bob Strickland (Chair/Treasurer), Tom Holmes, John Mitchener, John Helmer, Jim Milby, Jim Landon, Kent Wittman, Jamie Creola, and Justin Souma (Investment Manager)

The Finance Committee met and reviewed the 2025 EOY financials (Budget and Investment Accounts) and discussed 2026 1st quarter Budget and Investments, and the Executive Committee did the same. First quarter included: Amy Patterson pledge #2 - \$111K in February, Quarterly Investment distribution of \$21,737.

**See 2025 and 2026 Budget and Investment documents sent in January (2025) attached to the Spring Board mtg. email (2026, 1st quarter).

Balance Sheet 03.31.2026

First Citizens Operating \$81,705

First Citizens Gateway \$8,650

Investment Overview:

Operations account \$2,275,477

North Campus account \$613,743

Sanger account \$135,744

Scholarship account \$248,146

HBF transitioned to 4 new platforms in 2026 - a donor and volunteer database (Bloomerang), camp/program platform (Ultra Camp), payroll system (ADP), and Gift Shop platform (Clover). These new systems will enable us to provide better customer service and ease, as well as streamline many antiquated processes. Marissa has worked hard on the transition and communicating with our supporters.

DEVELOPMENT

Members: Keller Torrey (Chair), Jennie Stowers, Lindy Harrison, Lisa Armstrong, Bill Bush, Jim Landon, Martha Stibbs, Ruthie Edwards, David Martin, and Jamie Creola

The Development Committee and Soiree sub-committee met, and a lot of work has been done on both the Patron Party and Summer Soiree (catering, rentals, etc.). This year's Soiree will be held at Flat Mountain Farm.

Soiree and Patron Party:

Soiree

- a. Location – Flat Mtn. Farm
- b. Date - Tuesday, July 28th
- c. PPR, Epting Catering and Parking secured

Patron Party

- d. Location – Elizabeth & David Martin's home



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e. Date - Wednesday, June 17th

2025 Annual report was finalized, and an eblast/link went out last week (beginning of April). The Spring Campaign (virtual/SM) began this week and was announced via eblast – goal of \$20K for free programming.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Members: Karen Patterson (Chair), Jennie Stowers, Jonnie Swann, Leslie Manning, Carol Stewart, Catharine Seay, Jason Love, Rada Petric, Maddie Wikstrom, Alex Waite, Marissa Nieddu, and Jamie Creola

The Education Committee met to discuss the upcoming Zahner Lecture series and summer programming. The 2026 Zahner Lectures series has been finalized and we're very excited. See below:

June 11th

Weird and Underappreciated Arthropods of North Carolina

Dr. Matt Bertone, Entomologist and Director, NC State Plant Disease and Insect Clinic (NCSU)

June 18th

Story: Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Conservation, and the Science Inside the Nest

Lauren D. Pharr, Ph.D., Postgraduate Researcher, North Carolina State University

June 25th

The Blue Wall: What we know--and don't know--about southern Appalachia's enigmatic weather-making landform

Philip S. Prince, Ph.D., Project Geologist, Appalachian Landslide Consultants, PLLC, Virginia Tech Department of Geosciences

July 9th

Southern Appalachian Freshwater Resilience and Recovery Post-Hurricane Helene

Julie DeMeester, Ph.D., Director of Freshwater and Coastal Programs, The Nature Conservancy, North Carolina Chapter

July 16th

The Venomous Snakes of Western North Carolina

Carlton Burke, local naturalist and wildlife rehabilitator, Carolina Mountain Naturalists

July 23rd

Andres Michaux in North America: Revealing the Botanical Treasures of the Carolinas

Dana Beach, Founder and former Executive Director, SC Coastal Conservation League, Board Member, Butler Parklands

July 30th

Connecting Appalachia: Wildlife Connectivity, Corridors, and Road Crossings



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Liz Hillard, PhD, Senior Wildlife Biologist-Appalachian Region for Wildlands Network

August 6th

Plastic Pollution on the Plateau: An Overview of Microplastics Research in the Southern Appalachians

Jason Love, Associate Director of Highlands Biological Station, Western Carolina University,

Staffing Update:

In January, Alex Waite rejoined HBF as our second Education Naturalist – replacing Julie who left at the end of November. We've also hired 4 Summer Naturalist and an additional Naturalist to help with Nature Center operations now that we are running week-long, day long camps and increased programming. These staff will join us toward the end of May and be with us through mid-August.

Maddie and Alex have been busy with Nature Center operations/programming – Jan-March we were open twice a month on weekends, are now open every week Th-Sat until Memorial Day, when we will resume summer hours (M-Sat, 10-5). Alex has restarted outreach programs with our community partners, including the library, Boys and Girls Clubs in Highlands and Cashiers, and the Gordon Center. Maddie has been busy developing and launching our first Volunteer Program for Adults and Youth. Orientations and trainings begin this spring.

Summer Camp registration was smooth (w/new software). We met our revenue projections already and have approximately 10 slots left.

As mentioned earlier, the Nature Center will be closing mid-August for repair/replacement work of all the windows and doors. Below is the schedule:

NC closure

- a. Construction begins Aug. 24th
- b. Last day NC open – Aug. 15th
- c. Moving stuff, people and animals – week of Aug. 17th
- d. NC open w/minimal daily programs/Staff cleaning up – Aug. 10th
- e. Last week/day of programming – Aug. 3rd (8th last day)

Grant and grant reporting has begun. See below:

Grants

- a. A Friends - granted @ \$25K
- b. Church of Good Shepherd – application in April, hear in June
- c. CWO – July 15
- d. Highlands Community Fund – moved to Spring 2027

Reports

- e. Submitted to COGS and A. Friends
- f. CWO - submit in May, HCF at the end of year

STRATEGIC PLANNING



HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Members: Gayle Watkins (Chair), Leslie Manning, David Martin, Bob Strickland, Lisa Dailey and Jamie Creola

Much work was done by Gayle, Allison and Jamie to provide a draft Strategic Plan based on comments at December's Board meeting and subsequent versions/comments in 1st quarter. A final draft was shared with the Board and will be voted on at the Spring Board meeting.

A big thank you to Gayle for her leadership and work on the process and document. Also, to the committee and our consultant, Allison Jordan. Lastly, to the Board for their participation and thoughtful comments during the process.

NOMINATING

Members: John Mitchener (Chair), Jennie Stowers, David Martin, Lindy Harrison, Lisa Armstrong, Tom Holmes, and Jamie Creola

Term 1 ending in 2026: Linda Barlow, Lisa Dailey, Lindy Harrison, Jim Landon

Term 2 ending in 2026: Lisa Armstrong, Frank Langford, Alex Smith, Carol Stewart, David Martin, Jennie Stowers

Please submit nominees to Jamie at jamie@highlandsbiological.org. Nominating policies and procedures attached.

The Nominating Committee will be meeting at the end of April. Following, the committee will meet to review nominees and propose a slate of trustees and officers. **Deadline for submitting nominations is May 15.**

The Nominating Committee will send approved nominees to the Executive Committee for review by May 30. The slate will be sent to the full board by June 10 and voted on at the annual membership meeting on June 24.

The following criteria should be considered when making HBF Trustee nominations:

1. The nominee is supportive of the HBF mission.
2. The nominee is willing to share his/her volunteer time, talents, energy, and resources with HBF.
3. The nominee will demonstrate a fiduciary responsibility to HBF.
4. The nominee will help fill HBF's need for a well-rounded board with balanced talents and professional experience.