



SCAN

SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSOCIATION OF
NATURALISTS



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PO Box 24911, Columbia, SC 29224

February 2026

Happy February! Hopefully everyone has been safe and warm despite the interesting winter weather.

Winter Storm Fern neglected to start on our scheduled Annual Meeting. Thus, we will be holding two Zoom events, one for the Annual Business Meeting (elections, financials, etc.) at 7pm on Tuesday, March 3rd, and Sharleen Johnson's presentation, "Pollinating Wasps and Native Plants in Coastal South Carolina" at 6:30pm on Wednesday, March 4th. Please plan to join us and enjoy both events! Neither event should last longer than an hour. Please [REGISTER HERE](#) and we'll email you the meeting links.

We have a fantastic trip scheduled for this month to Lee Falls Natural Area, Sumter National Forest in Oconee County. While still a little early for spring plants, we should have plenty of birds and scenery (mountains! waterfall!) to gander at. Join us near Walhalla! Maybe we will be rewarded with some fungi and lower plants (liverworts, anyone?) in the moist areas.

I want to also remind everyone that we will have SCAN's 50th Anniversary Gala in July in lieu of the typical trip. We are planning to have it at the SC State Museum where Rudy Mancke was first Naturalist and started SCAN. Even if you don't typically make trips anymore, please plan on celebrating the 50th Anniversary with us. Put it on your calendar and stay tuned for more information.

Lee Morris, President

Membership Dues

Have you renewed your membership and signed the trip waiver form? Membership dues allow us to keep the website up and running, publish our once-a-decade records reports, and cover the costs of hosting the annual meeting and symposium each January.

SCAN dues are only \$12 a year - *that's just \$1 per trip!* A membership makes a great gift for all the naturalists in your life. SCAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, meaning all dues and donations to are tax deductible. Dues can be [paid online via PayPal on the SCAN website](#) or through a membership and waiver form mailed to our PO Box (form attached to this newsletter). *Don't delay, renew today!*

During the Business Meeting, we will vote on increasing dues to align with the rising prices of services needed to maintain the website, higher event venue prices, and greater publishing costs.

*Gordon Murphy, Treasurer
Board of Directors*

TUESDAY, MARCH 3 | 7PM – 8PM | ANNUAL MEETING

- **Approval of 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes**
- **Treasurer's Report**
- **Election of Officers** – Nominations will be accepted from the floor, provided that the nominee has agreed prior to the nomination.

Officers

President	Lee Morris
Vice President	Scott Wietecha
Secretary	Kim McManus
Treasurer	Kate Hartley
Database Manager	Tom Austin
Historian	Gordon Murphy
Webkeeper	Kim McManus

Regional Directors

Northern	Todd Johnston
Western	Ron Ahle
Southern	Tom Austin
Eastern	Caroline Eastman
Central	Dave Kastner and Marty Kastner

- **2025 Field Trips in review**
- **2026 Itinerary of field trips**
- **Old Business**
- **New Business**
 - Dues
 - Gala

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 | 6:30PM – 7:30PM | SPEAKER PRESENTATION

Sharleen Johnson, Native Plants to the People, LLC

Subject of Talk: Pollinating Wasps and Native Plants in Coastal South Carolina

Bio: Formally trained as an ecologist and science educator, Sharleen Johnson's passion for adding habitat value to developed landscapes led her to launch Native Plants to the People LLC in March 2022. Her missions are to increase the local availability of diverse native plants and to help people actively engage with the natural world through presentations about native plants and wildlife, pollinator ecology, and sustainable landscaping. Prior to launching her native plant business, Sharleen worked for nine years as a marine ecologist for the SC Department of Natural Resources, previously working in non-profit medical research and as a high school science teacher. Teaching is once again becoming a key part of her working life; this year Sharleen developed and taught a semester-long Applied Ecology (Managing Landscapes for Biodiversity) course at the College of Charleston and began teaching classes for Clemson's Certificate in Native Plant Studies.

[REGISTER HERE FOR BOTH MEETINGS](#)

Lee Falls Natural Area

Oconee County, SC

GPS Coordinates: 34.894077, -83.082024

Sumter National Forest; Andrew Pickens Ranger District

Saturday, February 28, 2026, 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Lee Falls is often described as one of the most beautiful waterfalls in South Carolina and is considered one of the top botanical areas near Walhalla, SC. The Lee Falls Hiking Trail is an easy-moderate 1.5-mile hike (one way) that provides scenic views of mountain pines and hardwoods. The Tamassee Creek cove offers a rich mountain ecosystem with plants like **Oconee bells**, **bulblet ferns**, and various **mosses**, while its fauna includes **white-tailed deer**, **black bears**, **bobcats**, numerous **warblers**, and unique amphibians, typical of the Blue Ridge foothills habitat. The area's damp, secluded trail supports lush undergrowth and attracts diverse wildlife, making it a great spot for salamanders and nature viewing. Hardwood forest communities along Tamassee Creek and its tributaries include beech forest, mesic oak-hickory forests, hardwood bottoms and abundant rhododendrons. The hardwood bottoms and associated steep slopes are characterized by mature tulip trees, high wildflower diversity and abundant bird life. Tamassee Creek is a small stream with primarily gravel and bedrock substrate that could contain interesting fish species such as the rosyface chub, yellowfin shiner and turquoise darter as well as amphibians such as dusky salamanders. It is also an excellent area for odonates and therefore a good site for a dip net.

The trail to Lee Falls begins along the road into the wildlife clearing behind the gate. This is the first of four such wildlife clearings that can be pretty soggy if there have been recent rains. Adjacent to these wildlife clearings are numerous small streams with associated small valleys that could be excellent areas for aquatic insects and herps. In 0.2 miles, reach the first of five crossings of Tamassee Creek. *(If Lee Falls has good flow, a shallow wade may be required at all stream crossings. On the day that Angela and I visited in January, no wading was necessary until just in front of the waterfall.)* Continue to walk through the second and third wildlife clearings before reaching a second Tamassee Creek crossing at 0.55 miles. One final clearing follows, after which the trail turns into a nice, gentle single-track path. At 1.0 miles, the trail becomes more difficult due to the many trees that fell during the recent hurricane. Be prepared to do a lot of ducking under fallen trees. The path continues straight along a Tamassee Creek tributary and turns left across the tributary. At 1.25 miles, the trail bears left and instantly crosses Tamassee Creek for the third time. The trail closely follows Tamassee Creek the rest of the way to Lee Falls, crossing it twice more and becoming increasingly steep and rocky, and covered with downed trees. The last part of the path has some minor rock scrambles and a pool crossing (approximately 1.5 feet deep). The waterfall can be seen from this spot, but to get a clear view of the Falls, it will be necessary to wade through the pool. Finally, climb to the base of the amazing Lee Falls at 1.5 miles.

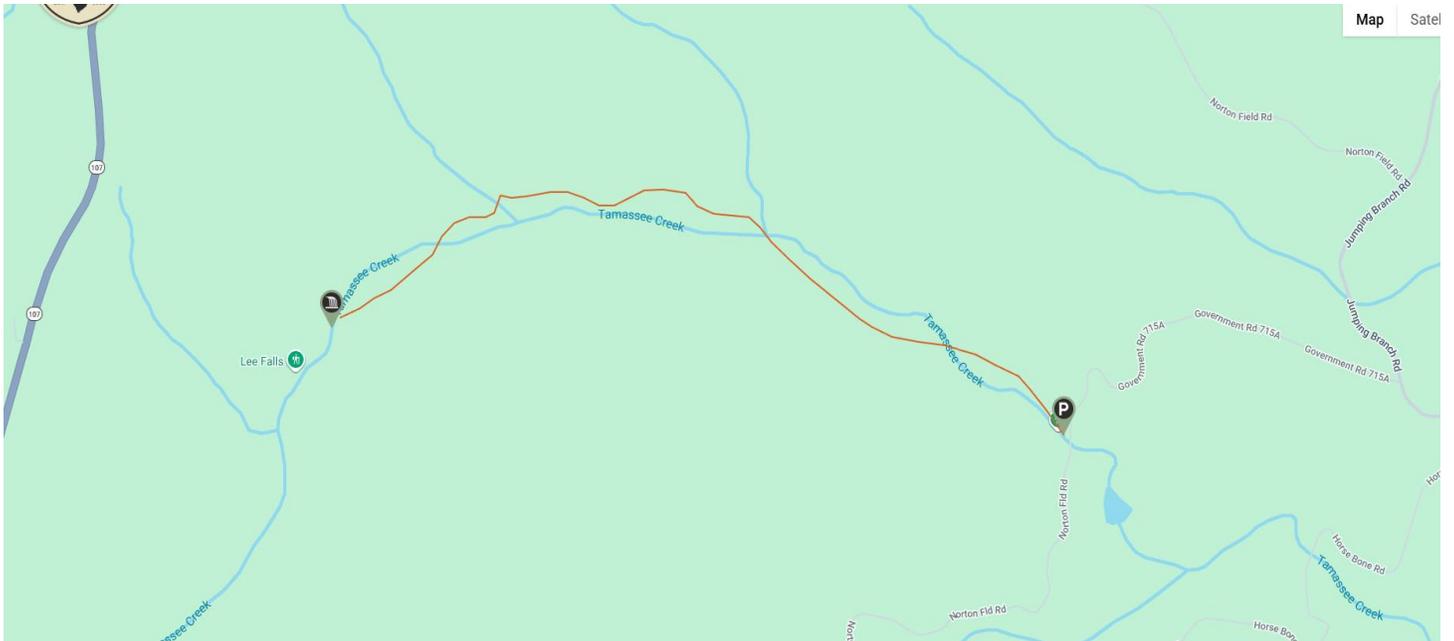
The 80-foot free-fall at Lee Falls is absolutely breathtaking. At Lee Falls, Tamassee Creek falls in sheer twin drops over a giant, mossy cliff into a small pile of rocks. The creek then cascades steeply downstream and out of sight. A scenic cascade just below the main waterfall complements the scene nicely. Lee Falls is surrounded by lush splash and spray greenery resembling a setting out of the tropics. Even the jagged cliffs at the falls appear largely green due to liverworts and mosses! This habitat is rich in salamander species common to the Blue Ridge Escarpment. To reach the best close-up views of Lee Falls, you may need to scramble over large boulders. Lee Falls is beautiful even when it's just a trickle.

There are other recreation opportunities in the area for wildlife and plant viewing including the Station Cove Falls Trail and the Yellow Branch Falls Trail. Both of these trails are easy and provide excellent examples of mountain cove habitat. If you plan to extend your trip to two or more days, you can camp or reserve cabins at Oconee State Park. You can also find accommodation at Roadway Inn & Suites.

DIRECTIONS:

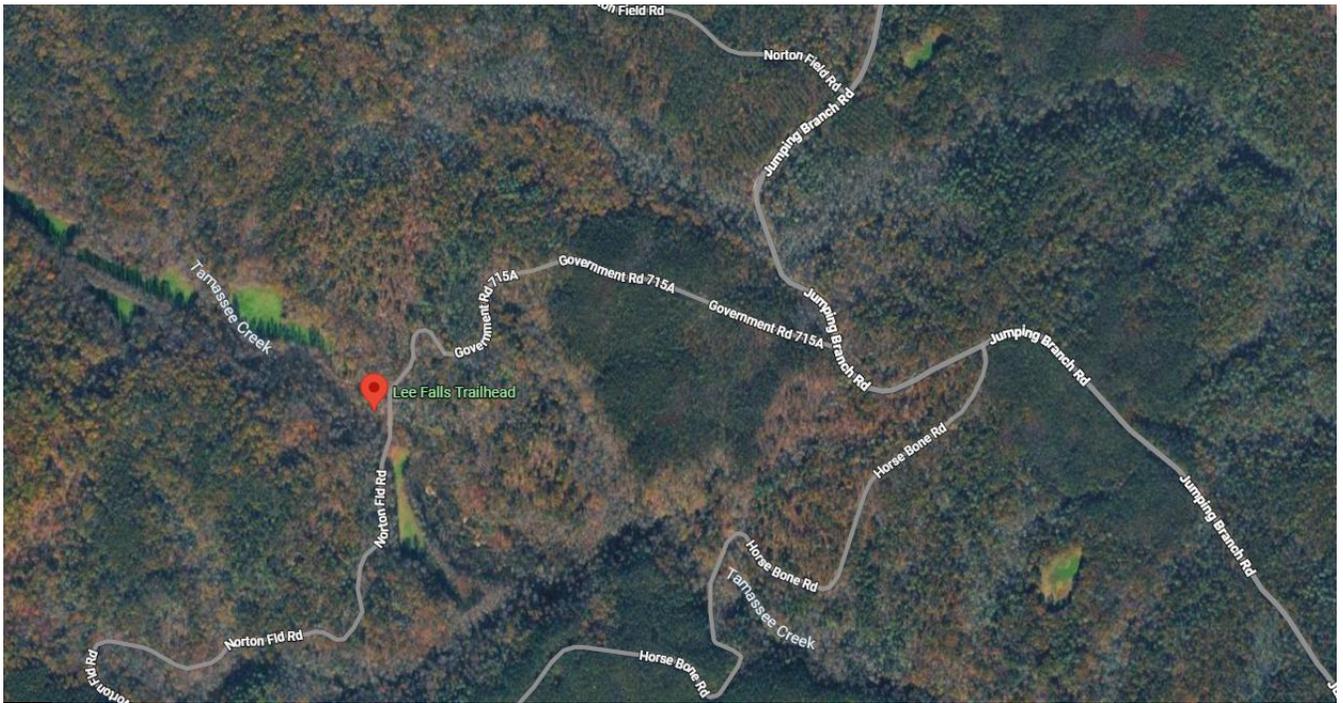
- 1) From the intersection of SC 11 (Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway) and SC 28 at Walhalla, drive NORTH on SC 11 for 8.3 miles and turn LEFT (west) onto Cheohee Valley Road (Oconee County S-37-375).
- 2.) Drive 2.3 miles and turn LEFT onto Tamassee Knob Road (S-37-95).
- 3.) Drive .5 mile and turn RIGHT (northwest) onto Jumping Branch Road.
- 4.) Drive 1.5 miles and turn LEFT (northwest) onto FS 715A (gravel road). (Pass FS 715 on the left and continue 0.2 miles to FS 175A.) **The post road marker is missing the top half and only shows the 5A portion of the FS-715A.**
- 5.) Drive 0.5 mile to parking area on the RIGHT (just before small bridge over Tamassee Creek).

Trip Leader: Ron Ahle



Trail Map provided by SCTrails.net

~Ron Ahle



Photos from January 2026



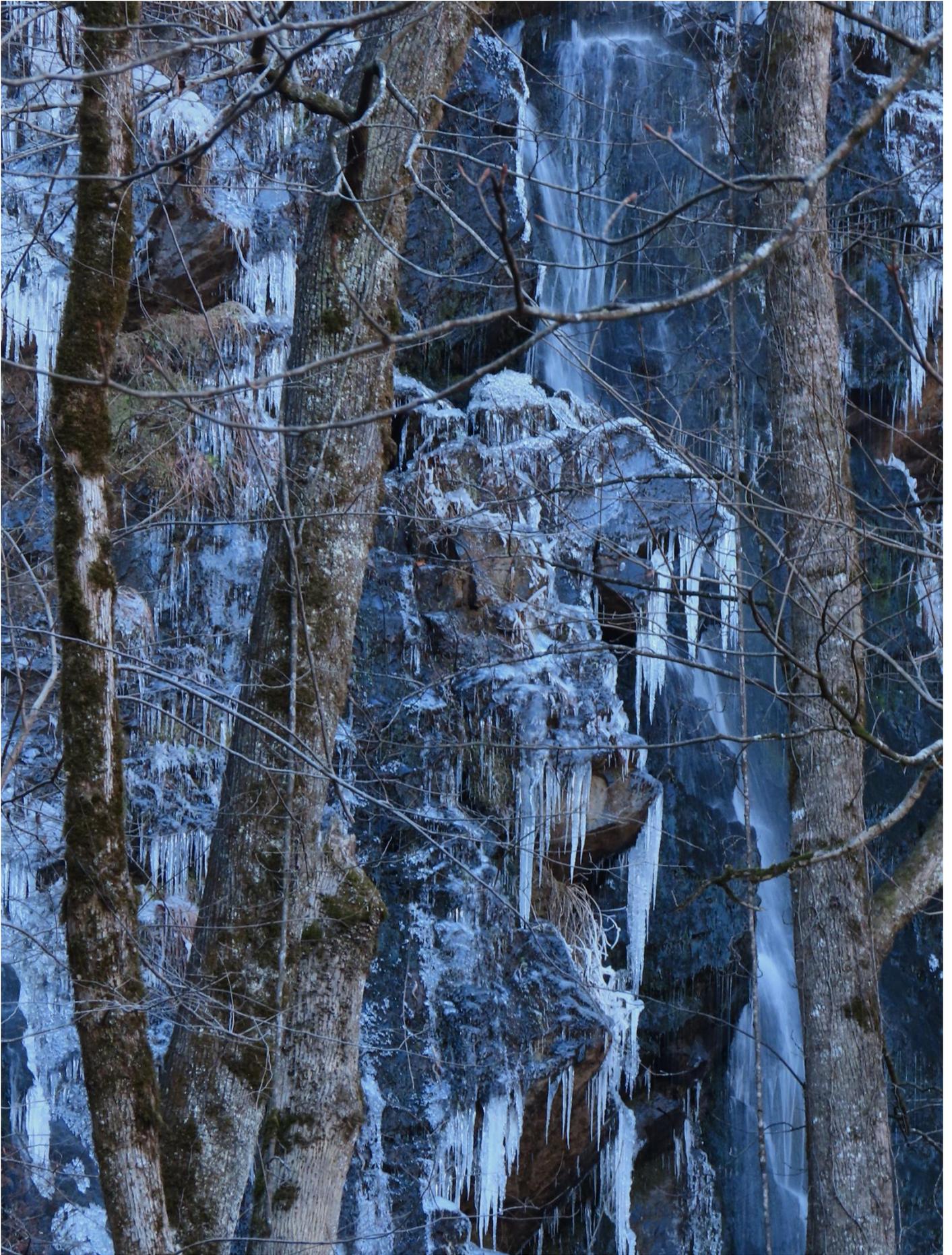
Tamassee Creek (photo by Ron Ahle)



Wildlife clearing (Photo by Ron Ahle)



Bluebird in cavity (photo by Ron Ahle)



Lee Falls (photo by Ron Ahle)

Membership Form – 2026

SCAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Membership dues and donations are tax deductible.

Choose Your Membership Type:

- 1 Year – \$12
- 2 Years – \$24
- 3 Years – \$36
- Lifetime – \$324 (10% discount)

Add \$5 × the number of years for each additional household member.

Lifetime dues are \$135 per additional household member.

Member Information

Name(s): _____ New Member Renewal

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Add my contact info to the SCAN Member Directory:

- Email
- Phone
- City
- Do not share my info

Emergency Contact Information

Name: _____

Relation: _____

Phone: _____

Optional Donation

- I wish to make an additional tax-deductible gift to SCAN

Amount: \$ _____

- Cash
- Check
- Item
- Property
- Bequest

Other: _____

Join or Renew Online:

 <https://www.scnaturalists.org/membership/>

 Scan the QR code to join or renew instantly.



WAIVER OF LIABILITY

In consideration for receiving permission from the Association to participate in any field trip/event, I agree as follows:

I understand the nature of the terrain and/or waterbodies and the type of field trips/events which I will be participating in, and I am capable of safely undertaking these field trips/events.

I understand the dangers involved in taking these field trips/events in remote locations and agree to take all reasonable precautions to avoid injury to myself and others and damage to property in connection with my activities.

I am engaging in the field trips/events at my own risk, and acknowledge that the Association makes no warranties or representations, express or implied, regarding the condition or safety of the terrain or the equipment provided by the Association, for the purposes of the field trips or any other purpose.

On behalf of myself, my heirs, successors and assigns, I hereby forever release, indemnify and hold the Association, its officers, directors, employees and agents, harmless from and against any and all claims, liabilities, losses, damages, costs and expenses arising from or in any way related to my participation in the field trip. I intend this release to be effective, regardless of whether the claim of liability is asserted in negligence, strict liability in tort, or other theory of recovery.

I agree to go into only those areas authorized by the Association and to comply with all Association rules concerning these field trips/events.

I grant the Association permission to take photographs and video recordings of me and to display, publish or otherwise use any photographs, video recordings, or any other media associated with the field trip, including any media which contains my image or likeness, for the Association's purposes. I also consent to the use of my name in connection with such images. I release, indemnify and hold harmless the Association and its officers, directors, agents and employees from any and all claims which may result at any time by reason of the use of my image and name, including, without limitation, claims of privacy. My heirs, executors, administrators and assigns shall be bound by this consent and release.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have thoroughly read and understand this form, and that the statements that I have made in it are all true and that I am at least 18 years of age, or, if I am not 18 years of age, the signature and consent of my parent or legal guardian is included below.

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Parental Consent for Participation by Minors

I am the parent or legal guardian of _____, who has my permission to participate in the field trips referenced above. I make all of the representations and agree to all of the terms specified above with respect to my child's or ward's participation in these activities.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____