

Catawba Lands Conservancy taps former banker Tom Okel as executive director

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Former global banker Tom Okel has been hired to lead the [Catawba Lands Conservancy](#) as its new executive director. Okel worked for two decades at Bank of America Corp., most recently as global head of the bank's syndicated capital markets. He starts work at the environmental and land conservation nonprofit group on Oct. 3.

Okel replaces Dave Cable, [who left in March after a seven-year stint](#). During Cable's tenure, the conservancy started its [Carolina Thread Trail project](#), a connected network of trails and conservation areas across 15 counties in two states.

Carolina Thread Trail Project Director **Ann Browning** has served as the interim director in the meantime. Interestingly, both Browning and Okel once worked together at BofA. Cable's background was also in banking; he previously was director of real estate research and corporate and investment banking at Wachovia Securities.

Browning says leadership skills acquired at a financial institution transfer well to running the conservancy, as does the acumen needed to pull together complicated land transactions.

Plus, she adds, "after having great career in the for-profit arena, it's exciting to have another opportunity to give back to the community."

Okel's background at BofA includes managing a team that tackled the underwriting, structuring, distribution and trading of debt used for corporate acquisitions, leveraged buyouts, recapitalizations and refinancing, according to the conservancy. He is a graduate of Davidson College, where he also serves on the school's board of trustees and board of visitors. Okel holds a master's degree in management from Northwestern University's J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management.

http://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/blog/going_green/2011/09/catawba-lands-conservancy-taps-tom.html?page=2