



Tom Okel picked to lead Catawba Lands Conservancy

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Davidson College grad and trustee worked previously at Bank of America. He also will lead Carolina Thread Trail project



The Catawba Lands Conservancy, which works to protect land across the Greater Charlotte region, has named 1984 Davidson College grad and former Bank of America executive Thomas W. Okel as executive director.

Mr. Okel takes over on Oct. 3, replacing Dave Cable, who announced in March he was leaving the post.

Mr. Okel said in a press release that he's eager to work with the conservancy and help guide the Carolina Thread Trail project – an effort in 15 counties in North and South Carolina to develop a regional network of trails and "conservation corridors."

"I have lived in this area, on and off, for over 30 years and I have a great appreciation for the Conservancy's work in the preservation and stewardship of natural lands. These efforts have had a tremendous impact on so many aspects of our quality of life. With the Carolina Thread Trail there is the opportunity to make an even greater impact on this region.

Mr. Cable is not entirely out of the picture. He served on the search committee that picked Mr. Okel and is serving the conservancy as an adviser, a spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Here's the conservancy's news release issued Tuesday afternoon:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 12, 2011

Catawba Lands Conservancy hires Tom Okel as new Executive Director

Former Bank of America Executive focuses leadership skills on advancing land conservation and connecting lives to nature through the Carolina Thread Trail

CHARLOTTE – Catawba Lands Conservancy has named Thomas W. Okel as its new Executive Director.

Tom joins the Conservancy after a twenty year successful career with Bank of America, where he most recently served as the Global Head of Bank of America's Syndicated Capital Markets division. In this capacity, he managed a team of individuals responsible for the underwriting, structuring, distribution and trading of debt used for corporate acquisitions, leveraged buyouts, recapitalizations and refinancing.

"I am thrilled to have this opportunity to work with Catawba Lands Conservancy and the Carolina Thread Trail. I have lived in this area, on and off, for over 30 years and I have a

great appreciation for the Conservancy's work in the preservation and stewardship of natural lands. These efforts have had a tremendous impact on so many aspects of our quality of life. With the Carolina Thread Trail there is the opportunity to make an even greater impact on this region. I look forward to joining such a great organization," said Tom.

Tom has served in many leadership positions in the community, having chaired the board of Kindermourn, served as Assistant Treasurer of Myers Park Presbyterian Church, and as Co-Chair of Critical Home Repair with Cross-roads Corporation for Affordable Housing. A graduate of Davidson College with a BA in Economics, Tom serves on the Davidson Board of Trustees and Board of Visitors. He also holds a master's degree in management from J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University.

Board President Tommy Lee stated, "The Conservancy is extremely pleased to have Tom join us as Executive Director. The Conservancy and the Carolina Thread Trail will benefit tremendously from Tom's leadership and commitment to executing our mission in the region. We're looking forward to the impact that Tom's appointment will have as we enter into our next phase of growth as an organization."

Tom officially assumes

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