

**§ 136-123. Restoration, preservation and enhancement of natural or scenic beauty.**

(a) The Department of Transportation is hereby authorized and empowered to acquire by purchase, exchanges or gift, the fee-simple title or any lesser interest therein in real property in the vicinity of public highways forming a part of the State highway system, for the restoration, preservation and enhancement of natural or scenic beauty; provided that no lands, rights-of-way or facilities of a public utility as defined by G.S. 62-3(23), or of an electric membership corporation or telephone membership corporation, may be acquired, except that the Department of Transportation upon payment of the full cost thereof may require the relocation of electric distribution or telephone lines or poles; provided further, that such lands may be acquired by the Department of Transportation with the consent of the public utility or membership corporation.

(b) No landscaping or highway beautification project undertaken by the Department or any other unit of government may use oyster shells as a ground cover. The Department or any other unit of government that possesses oyster shells shall make them available to the Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Marine Fisheries, without remuneration, for use in any oyster bed revitalization programs or any other program that may use the shells. (1967, c. 1247, s. 2; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1; 2007-84, s. 1; 2008-198, s. 4; 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)