

OFFICE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

April 23, 2019
1:15 PM

VETERAN'S AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BLVD.
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Skains called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. and gave the invocation and Mr. Larry Sayes lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander.

Members and Alternate Members present:

Mr. Reggie Skains- Chairman
Dr. Ernest Girouard-Vice Chairman
Mr. David Daigle- LACD President
Mr. John Compton- Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Larry Sayes
Mr. Ed Yerger

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Ms. Amanda Mathis, NRCS State Conservationist
USDA-NRCS
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director
SSWCC

Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter_
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Skains asked if there were any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members about the March 26, 2019 State Commission minutes and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the March 26, 2019 State Commission Meeting minutes.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to approve March 26, 2019 State Commission Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Sayes and passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Skains said they would now take up Unfinished Business and asked Mr. Spicer to review the agenda items with the State Commission.

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

Mr. Spicer reported that OSWC increased farm bill funding for all the districts. He said the increased funds are from the NRCS/OSWC Targeted Watershed account. He said the district employees need to be sure to charge all their farm bill activities to their farm bill accounts. He said that districts have earned over 80% of their initial funding as of March. Ms. Mathis said she would work with OSWC to make sure districts are funded for their farm bill assistants.

Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions regarding the farm bill agreement and there were none.

Legislative Regular Session/State Funding

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *Legislative Regular Session/State Funding* and asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said there are two upcoming events scheduled. He said there is a Senate Breakfast scheduled for April 17th that he plans to attend. He said there is also a House Breakfast scheduled for April 30th. He said at the April 30th Breakfast, Commissioner Strain will read Governor Edwards' Soil and Water Stewardship Proclamation. He said Soil Stewardship Week is from April 28th- May 5th. Mr. Spicer said he is following a number of bills regarding coastal management and ground water management. He said there is also a bill to add LDAF to the governor's watershed initiative. Chairman Skains asked Dr. Leonard when the LSU AgCenter Fete and Reception was scheduled. Dr. Leonard said it is scheduled for May 14th.

District Supervisor Election- June 8, 2019

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *District Supervisor Election*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said that OSWC hadn't received many petitions as of yet. He said that there are currently 4 vacant positions. He said that at this time it appears there will be an election in Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD on June 8, 2019. He said OSWC will assist the Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD in organizing their election.

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NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Acting NRCS State Conservationist, Ms. Amanda Mathis to give the NRCS report. Ms. Mathis said Louisiana recently received its full year allocation for the ACEP-WRE program. She said five million dollars was received for continued restoration and enhancement work on existing WRP easements. She said \$17.2 million was received for enrollment of new Wetland Reserve Easements in 2019 and continued service to existing WRE easements. She said Louisiana currently has over 280 ACEP-WRE applications with a funding need in excess of \$125,000,000.

Ms. Mathis said obligations for the EQIP 2019 program have begun. She said Louisiana will have \$22.9M available for all state/local/national initiatives and local allocations. She said signups for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) have been announced and all applications are due May 10th. She said the 2019 Conservation Innovation Grant program proposals are due May 31, 2019. Ms. Mathis said NRCS wants to encourage SWCDs to use the CSP program. She said NRCS is still soliciting applications for eight specific conservation needs identified in the announcement of program funding for technical assistance in Louisiana. She said this opportunity will remain open until May 10, 2019.

Ms. Mathis said the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration (CWPPRA) Technical Committee met on April 11 to select candidate projects for Priority Project List 29. She said of the 11 projects selected, NRCS is the federal sponsor of three: Northeast Turtle Bay Marsh Creation in Barataria Basin, Southeast Pecan Island Restoration in Mermentau Basin and Mermentau Basin Wetland Inundation Relief in Mermentau Basin. She said these projects will go through evaluation by the engineering workgroup and environmental workgroup this summer. She said up to four projects will be selected for Phase 1: engineering & design in the fall.

Ms. Mathis said work will begin next week on the first agreement with Livingston Parish for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) expanded authority. She said the documents for the second agreement have been submitted to the sponsor for review and signature.

Ms. Mathis said Upper Delta SWCD will be soliciting for an engineering firm to prepare the Watershed Plan for the Upper Terrebonne Basin WS Project. She said the Town of Plain Dealing submitted an application to develop a rehab plan for the three structures in the Upper West Fork Cypress Bayou Watershed. She said NRCS should receive notification of the projects selected for funding in the next couple of weeks.

Ms. Mathis passed out the April Conservation Update which tells the story of Mr. Steve Stephens from Catahoula Parish. She said he was an early adopter of the WRP program and now his 235 acre wetland easement is playing host to numerous wildlife species.

Ms. Mathis stated that her tenure as Acting State Conservationist is coming to a close on May 4th so this was her last SSWCC meeting. She thanked everyone for making her time here so enjoyable and commented on the strength of the conservation partnership in Louisiana. She announced that Mr. Tim Landreneau will be returning as the new Acting State Conservationist following her.

Chairman Skains and Mr. Spicer thanked Ms. Mathis for her hard work and dedication to Louisiana during her tenure. Chairman Skains also thanked her for her report.

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondence is a memo to the district chairmen regarding the future board supervisors. He said the memo was made to be distributed to the districts to have discussions on how current supervisors play a vital role in selecting future supervisors as well as helpful guidance in selecting great candidates. He said board members have a responsibility to their districts to ensure they get quality individuals as board members. Dr. Girouard said that the role of a supervisor goes beyond spending one hour a month at a meeting. He said that the role can sometimes be very overwhelming but also be a rewarding experience. He said that there was once a set meeting for orientation of new supervisors and that we should work towards getting to that point again. Mr. Spicer said that he hopes that the proposed memo and attachments will be a step in that direction. Dr. Leonard said the idea of abbreviated training can be successful. He said abbreviated training involves short videos and would not be a long process. Mr. Spicer said we need to work towards finding effective ways to train supervisors and make sure they are aware of their responsibilities as district supervisors and that they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities as elected or appointed public officials.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is the Commissioner's response the Waters of the United States (WOTUS). He said the comments are in response to U.S. EPA's and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) revised definition of jurisdictional wetlands and classification of prior converted cropland.

Chairman Skains said the next five items are resolutions and bills being debated in the current Legislative Session. He said the first one is a resolution by Senator Thompson reestablishing the Lake Providence Watershed Council. He said they are requesting board members be governmental and non-governmental stakeholder agencies and organizations.

Chairman Skains said the second resolution urges and requests the Commissioner of Conservation to study the necessity of declaring an Area of Groundwater Concern or a Critical Area of Groundwater Concern in the Baton Rouge area. He said the resolution requests the Commissioner of Conservation to submit a report providing a recommendation for the role and necessary actions required of the Capital Area Groundwater Conservation Commission in any plan to preserve and manage the groundwater resources in Baton Rouge.

Chairman Skains said the third resolution urges and requests continued support for the efforts by the state and others in the Mississippi River Basin to work together toward achieving the goals of the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan to reduce of the hypoxia zone along the state's coast. He said this resolution was presented by Representative Zeringue.

Chairman Skains said the fourth item is a bill to amend House Bill 558 by Representative Hodges. He said this bill renames the Floodplain Evaluation and Management Commission and expands the scope of the commission's authority.

Chairman Skains said the last bill for review is by Senator Thompson. He said this bill places the Rural Water Infrastructure Committee in the governor's office. He said this committee will help to develop and implement a comprehensive rural water infrastructure plan to address deteriorating rural public water supply systems and protect the interests, health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Louisiana.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is about the NACD South Central Meeting. He said the meeting is scheduled for July 21-23, 2019 in Thackerville, OK. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said that if any of the Commission members are planning to attend to please let us know because we may have to reschedule the July SSWCC meeting because it is currently set on July 23, 2019.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is a letter of support from CPRA regarding the revised proposed definition of the Waters of the United States (WOTUS). He said the CPRA is saying that the revised definition is a significant improvement over the current rule introduced in 2014. He said they are also requesting clarification of the definition of prior converted cropland and to make it consistent with the 1985 Farm Bill definition.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *USDA Release the 2017 Census of Agriculture*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said this article covers the newly released final results of the census. He said the census is taken every five years. He said this information is used in developing the Farm Bill and other farm policies. He said for the first time this year the census will include information on military service, food marketing practices and on-farm decision making. Chairman Skains said the next handout also includes the actual 2017 Census numbers for Louisiana. He said the commission members can review them at their convenience.

Chairman Skains said the last article is the US Army *Central Review*. He said Louisiana has two proposed legislation bills: one is requiring every fire resistant material applicator undergo training to apply fire-resistant material according to manufacturer specifications and register with the office of the state fire marshal annually and the second is requiring certain facilities to implement a fence-line air monitoring system after receiving three compliance orders for air permit violations. He said the members can review the legislation at their convenience.

Supervisor Resignations/Reappointments/Appointments

Chairman Skains said they would now take up resignations, reappointments, and appointments of supervisors.

Chairman Skains said there are two resignations this month: St. Martin SWCD, Mr. Alfred Guidry, elected position; effective June 30, 2019 and Lower Delta SWCD, Mr. Eugene Woods, appointed position; effective May 4, 2019.

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or the Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to accept the resignations of Mr. Alfred Guidry, elected position; effective June 30, 2019 and Lower Delta SWCD, Mr. Eugene Woods, appointed position; effective May 4, 2019.

Motion: Mr. John Compton made a motion to accept the resignations of St. Martin SWCD, Mr. Alfred Guidry, elected position; effective June 30, 2019 and Lower Delta SWCD, Mr. Eugene Woods, appointed position; effective May 4, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the Commission should write Mr. Woods a thank you letter for his many years of services. Mr. Spicer said that he agreed as well as the other commission members. He said that OSWC will write a letter to Mr. Woods and review it with the commission members at the next meeting.

Chairman Skains said there are three reappointments:

Motion: Mr. John Compton made a motion to accept the resignations of St. Martin SWCD, Mr. Alfred Guldry, elected position; effective June 30, 2019 and Lower Delta SWCD, Mr. Eugene Woods, appointed position; effective May 4, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the Commission should write Mr. Woods a thank you letter for his many years of services. Mr. Spicer said that he agreed as well as the other commission members. He said that OSWC will write a letter to Mr. Woods and review it with the commission members at the next meeting.

Chairman Skains said there are three reappointments:

Boeuf River SWCD, Mr. Everette Calloway, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began May 1, 2019 and end May 1, 2022.

LaSalle SWCD, Mr. Mike Crooks, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Tem will begin March 28, 2019 and end March 28, 2022.

Plaquemines SWCD, Mr. Larry Rousselle, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin May 28, 2019 and end May 28, 2022.

Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these reappointments.

Motion: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve the reappointments of Boeuf River SWCD, Mr. Everette Calloway, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began May 1, 2019 and end May 1, 2022; LaSalle SWCD, Mr. Mike Crooks, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Tem will begin March 28, 2019 and end March 28, 2022; and Plaquemines SWCD, Mr. Larry Rousselle, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin May 28, 2019 and end May 28, 2022. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Compton and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business this month.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 28, 2019 at 1:15 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

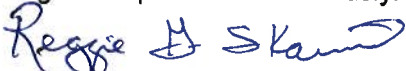
PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Skains asked if there were any other comments from the public or Commission members and there were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Skains said if there was no other business or comments from the public or Commission members, he will accept a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. John Compton made a motion to adjourn at 2:18 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.



/s/ Reggie Skains

Reggie Skains, Chairman

State Soil and Water Conservation Commission