

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

July 26, 2022
1:15 PM

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY
VETERANS AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Garber called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Steve Horvath gave the invocation and Mr. Ed Giering lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

Members and Alternate Members present:

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, Area IV
Mr. Steve Horvath, Vice-Chairman, Area V
Mr. Reggie Skains, Area I Member
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Alternate Member
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate Member
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Member
Mr. John Alan Williams, Immediate Past President, LACD
A quorum was present.

Members Absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative
Mr. Ruben Dausat, Secretary-Treasurer, Area III
Mr. Jason Nolde, LACD President, Member

Others Present:

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| Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist | Ms. Machel Hall, Attorney General's Office |
| Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director | Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC |
| Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC | Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC |

Public Comments

Chairman Garber asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none.

Approval of the agenda

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the July 26, 2022 SSWCC agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the June 28, 2022 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said June's Farm Bill total was \$35,372. The total FY 21-22 remaining balance is \$108,029 with 3 months remaining. An additional 2 districts depleted their farm bill funds, bringing the total to 24 districts having over-earned. NRCS recently approved an amendment to add \$500,000 to the Farm Bill agreement. These funds will be used to increase farm bill funding for districts in FY 22-23. Additionally, OSWC was able to distribute approximately \$7,465 in unused state allocation funds to districts that had over-earned in Farm Bill, and \$250,000 was added to the Program Support Specialist (PSS) agreement.

SWCD Proposed Budget- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said OSWC has not gotten the official budget for the districts. Discussions were held with accountants in LDAF's Office of Management and Finance and district funding will likely be at the same level as last fiscal year due to District insurance increasing by approximately \$8,000 last fiscal year and the Office of State Uniform Payroll (OSUP) has begun charging LDAF for their services which cost \$4,000 last fiscal year and is expected to be the same or higher this fiscal year.

NACD South Central Meeting- Baton Rouge, LA- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said the NACD South Central Meeting is scheduled for August 28-30, 2022 in Baton Rouge, LA. He said registration info along with a draft agenda has been emailed out to the region. The last few times that Louisiana hosted the South-Central Meeting, the Red River Compact was a topic of interest to the participants and is again a planned agenda item. Mr. Mark Davis who has spoken at prior NACD meetings will be returning for this year to discuss water policy and the Red River Compact along with Ed Knight of LDOTD. Also included on the program is a discussion about Feral Swine Pilot Project successes and challenges which includes speakers from each state.

CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Garber said the Commission received three SWCD CPA Agreements:

- Calcasieu SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Windham & reed, LLC. CPA. The cost will not exceed \$3,000.
- Lafayette SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Windham & reed, LLC. CPA. The cost will be \$750.
- St. Martin SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Windham & reed, LLC. CPA. The cost will be \$1,500.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these engagement requests:

- Calcasieu SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Windham & reed, LLC. CPA. The cost will not exceed \$3,000.
- Lafayette SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Windham & reed, LLC. CPA. The cost will be \$750.
- St. Martin SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Windham & reed, LLC. CPA. The cost will be \$1,500.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

Out of State Travel

Chairman Garber said we received an out of state travel request from Morehouse SWCD for Mr. Taylen Jarrell to attend an NRCS-sponsored Prescribed Fire Training Class in Lubbock, TX on July 24-30, 2022.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the out of state travel request.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Ms. Machelle Hall-Attorney General's Office

Ms. Hall introduced herself as an attorney in the Lands and Natural Resources section of the Louisiana Attorney General's Office. She said she wanted to speak to the Commission regarding the Red River Compact. The Red River Compact includes all tributaries into the Red River as well as all the waterways flowing across the Arkansas/Louisiana Border. The Compact parties include Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. New Mexico also contributes water through Texas, but they are not an official party. There has been an ongoing dispute between Louisiana and Arkansas for many years over the bayous in the Reach IV portion of the Compact. The way that the Reach IV portion of the Compact is written makes it difficult to measure and enforce. Ms. Hall said records from when everything began for Reach IV are insufficient. Arkansas has free use of the water in this Compact, but they must allow 40% of the weekly runoff to flow into Louisiana, but Ms. Hall said there are constraints that make it difficult to model the weekly flows. Due to position changes in state agencies and subsequent effects on overall communication, it has been difficult to acquire useful data. Ms. Hall is working to get as much data as possible to assist with efforts of revising the Red River Compact. Mr. Giering suggested that she reach out to US Geological Survey for this information. Ms. Hall said that she could be reached at 225-326-6031 for anyone that could assist with these efforts or has any questions.

NRCS State Conservationist Report- Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist

Mr. Kacir said NRCS is working to wrap up funding with EQIP being approximately 85% complete and CSP is approximately 50% complete. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) is also beginning work on 3 projects in Louisiana. The biggest RCP project is a forestry initiative project shared between Arkansas and Louisiana to improve shortleaf and longleaf pine habitats. NRCS is also working with Morehouse SWCD to create a National Water Quality Initiative program which will include Bayou Bartholomew.

NRCS is continuing to hire new candidates in various areas of the state including technicians that will begin work in August. NRCS also plans to advertise for 10 Natural Resource Specialists and 10 Soil Conservationists as well as several engineers.

10 districts have submitted watershed plan proposals and 9 are developing preliminary investigation feasibility reports. NRCS has gotten approval to fund a \$7 million project on Southern University's campus to fix erosion issues. NRCS also has 2 Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) agreements that just received extensions (Vernon and Deridder/Beauregard). NRCS has approximately \$90 million in EWP agreements from Hurricane Ida. Damage surveys are still being submitted to headquarters and are being reviewed.

Mr. Kacir said Mr. James Tillman, NRCS Sr. Regional Conservationist, plans to speak at the NACD South Central Meeting in August. He asked the Commission for topics that Mr. Tillman can discuss. Mr. Breaux mentioned him speaking about the Infrastructure Bill and what lies beyond it and EQIP funds in the future. Mr. Kacir said he would like to hear about the outlook for watershed programs. Mr. Skains mentioned hearing about the 2023 Farm Bill and Mr. Kacir added that he would like to hear about the future of Feral Swine in the 2023 Farm Bill.

LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter

Dr. Salassi reported that the Northwest Region Director, Dr. Pat Collier, retired a few months ago leaving the position vacant. Dr. Ron Strahan, associate professor in the AgCenter School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences, will fill the position which will oversee 3 research stations in the Northwest region. LSU plans to add a faculty position at the Hill Farm Research Station as well as a Poultry Extension Agent. He said the Patrick

Taylor Foundation grant is about to expire and there are plans to ask for a renewal in November. If the grant is renewed, LSU may include some rice farms as part of the grant initiative.

Dr. Salassi wanted to remind the Commission members of a few field day dates:

- August 18, 2022- Sweet Potato Research Station Field Day- Chase, LA
- September 20, 2022- Sugarcane Field Day- Napoleonville, LA

Dr. Salassi said LSU publishes the LA Agriculture Magazine 4 times a year. He said they usually publish 2 “focus” issues which focus on a particular topic and 2 “general” issues. The Winter 2022 focus issue was on invasive species and LSU has plans to do the next focus issue on conservation Best Management Practices.

Dr. Salassi said that concluded his report.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there are 3 resignations this month:

- Mr. Jacob Marceaux, Calcasieu SWCD, appointed position, effective July 27, 2022
- Mr. Charles House, Catahoula SWCD, appointed position effective July 26, 2022
- Mr. Jeremy Slade, Catahoula SWCD, elected effective July 26, 2022

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these resignations:

- Mr. Jacob Marceaux, Calcasieu SWCD, appointed position, effective July 27, 2022
- Mr. Charles House, Catahoula SWCD, appointed position effective July 26, 2022
- Mr. Jeremy Slade, Catahoula SWCD, elected effective July 26, 2022

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 4 appointments this month:

- Mr. Mike Lavergne, Calcasieu SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Jacob Marceaux, effective July 28, 2022- July 27, 2025.
- Mr. Jeremy Wood, Catahoula SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Jeremy Slade, effective July 26, 2022- June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Jeremy Slade, Catahoula SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Charles House, effective July 26, 2022- March 28, 2023.
- Mr. Lewis Lauve, Rapides SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Edwin Lashney. Effective July 26, 2022- June 30, 2025

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the appointments of:

- Mr. Mike Lavergne, Calcasieu SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Jacob Marceaux, effective July 28, 2022- July 27, 2025.
- Mr. Jeremy Wood, Catahoula SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Jeremy Slade, effective July 26, 2022- June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Jeremy Slade, Catahoula SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Charles House, effective July 26, 2022- March 28, 2023.
- Mr. Lewis Lauve, Rapides SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Edwin Lashney. Effective July 26, 2022- June 30, 2025.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Articles:

- U.S. Army: Central Review of Environmental Legislative and Regulatory Actions
- Fine Ants and Other Burning Problems
- LSU Researchers Moving Closer to Feral Hog Bait
- Supreme Court's EPA ruling upends Biden's environmental agenda
- Supreme Court's EPA ruling is a win for the Country
- Letter to Mr. Ronald Paille of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from Ms. Korey Pham of LSU AgCenter Entomology Department- Quality Control of salvinia weevil production

OTHER BUSINESS

Area Reports- Area V- Mr. Ed Yerger

Chairman Garber asked Mr. Ed Yerger to review the Area II's report. Mr. Yerger reviewed the highlights from Area II (attached)

Chairman Garber wanted to discuss a few Commission goals including district personnel management and employee job descriptions, a possible virtual option for supervisor training, and district funding. He said he knows funding has been up and down for many years but wants the Commission's help in securing more funding sources. He said we should also encourage and assist districts with developing stronger partnerships. Chairman Garber also wanted to discuss the districts' future involvement in the LA Outdoors Forever program. Mr. Breaux said appointments have been made for the program that include him being appointed to the Oversight Committee for Agriculture and Forestry and Mr. Theron Phillips has been appointed to the Technical Reference committee. Mr. Breaux said applications for these funds will be highly competitive and focused on specific conservation projects on the ground. He said ideally districts will develop multiple applications based on resource needs derived from stakeholder input such as from their locally led meetings. These applications would describe the specific resource needs, the specific funding needs, staff, and materials, etc. needed to address the resource need. Chairman Garber would like the Commission to think about these goals and concerns and be prepared to discuss them in upcoming SWCC meetings.

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 23, 2022 at 1:15 PM in the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

Adjournment

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

Motion: Mr. Brad Spicer made a motion to adjourn at 3:24 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Horvath and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, State Soil and Water Conservation Commission