

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

February 22, 2022  
1:15 PM  
ZOOM VIRTUAL FORMAT

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY  
VETERANS MEMORIAL 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. Skains gave the invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha Alexander.

**Members and Alternate Members present:**

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, Area IV  
Mr. Ruben Dauzat, Secretary-Treasurer, Area III  
Mr. Jason Nolde, LACD President, Area III  
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate Member  
Mr. Reggie Skains, Area I Member  
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member  
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Alternate Member

**Members Absent:**

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative  
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter  
Mr. Steve Horvath, Area V Member

A quorum was present.

**Others Present:**

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist  
Ms. Phyllis Cart, Acadia SWCD  
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director SSWCC  
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. Crystal Bowman, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Doug Daigle, Lower Mississippi River Sub-Basin Committee  
Mr. Blaise Pezold, Crescent SWCD  
Mr. Michael Schooler, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

**Approval of the Agenda**

Chairman Garber suggested that we revise the agenda to include a discussion about the Legislative Funding resolution and the Gulf Hypoxia resolution. If there weren't any comments, he would ask for a motion to approve the agenda as revised.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comments**

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

### Approval of the minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the January 25, 2022 SSWCC minutes.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

Mr. Breaux said January's Farm Bill total was \$106,085. The total FY 21-22 remaining balance is \$406,467. With 8 months left in the FY, it is expected that districts will expend the remaining balance early. Chairman Garber said he appreciates NRCS and Mr. Kacir's efforts for assisting districts with this program.

### LACD Annual Meeting/ NACD Meeting

Mr. Breaux said everyone should have received the registration packet for the LACD Annual Convention. The pre-registration deadline is March 18, 2022, and there will be no refunds after April 1, 2022. The LACD program is still being constructed with the help of Ms. Amy Robertson-Fusilier and should be finalized soon. The Annual LACD Meeting will take place April 19-21, 2022, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Mr. Breaux emphasized the importance of the LACD sponsorship information that was sent out. This gives districts the opportunity to get their name out and it helps to grow partnerships locally. If potential sponsors have questions that board members can't answer, they should feel free to contact OSWC or any of the LACD officers with their questions. Mr. Spicer said he has spoken to a few previous NRCS State Conservationists, and they are excited to be a part of the meeting. Chairman Garber said he knows it will be difficult for some folks to attend the meeting due to agricultural activities, but we are hoping all the districts send at least one representative from their district.

Mr. Breaux said Louisiana had good representation at the NACD meeting in Orlando, FL. Mr. Breaux said that all the meetings were productive but one of the meetings that stuck out to him was the preparation of their future leadership through the Next Generation Leadership Institute. It seems that some state associations are already prepping or in process of prepping their leadership in the same way. Mr. Breaux said no one from the South Central region is a part of the Leadership Institute, but hopefully in the near future someone will join. Mr. Spicer said when the institute was initially formed, it was discussed that this process would be used by state associations. Mr. Breaux and Mr. Nolde were also able to be a part of a strategizing session for the WOTUS comments that LACD submitted to NACD in January. With the assistance of a former legislative aide, they were able to paraphrase the original resolution and meet NACD requirements. This revised submission was introduced to the resolution committee, and they didn't agree that it properly paraphrased the resolution, so the committee revised it once more and were able to come up with a submission. Mr. Breaux also mentioned an opportunity to speak to the Agriculture Future of America (AFA) group. This group targets college juniors who are interested in agriculture and are on the way to graduating and planning future careers. Chairman Garber said it is important that we assist the leadership program and AFA in supporting the programs because this is helping to create the future for conservation. He asked if Mr. Nolde had any comments regarding NACD. Mr. Nolde said when the leadership originally started it had a different name. He said the program seems to have grown quickly and that he's happy that the program is receiving more financial assistance. Mr. Nolde also mentioned that he was grateful that the resolution changes were submitted but he wishes they could have included more descriptive wording. Chairman Garber said during his presidency of NACD, he spent majority of his time taking a stance on issues as well as working on resolution language. He said since the WOTUS isn't at completion stage, there is a chance for more editing.

Gulf Hypoxia Resolution Draft and Legislative Funding Draft- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director SSWCC

During the last Commission meeting, Mr. Doug Daigle offered to draft a resolution on their behalf to submit to support funding for the Commission and conservation districts in carrying out hypoxia reduction through NRDA or the Infrastructure bill. This resolution along with the Legislative Funding resolution are in the General Counsel's office currently being reviewed. Any edits that come out of the General Counsel's office are

expected to be minor which gives the Commission an opportunity to add more before it is submitted to the Governor's office. Mr. Breaux suggested that Mr. Daigle review the resolution and ask that the Commission approve submitting the resolutions pending further review from Mr. Daigle. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would ask for a motion to approve submitting this resolution after Mr. Doug Daigle has done his final review.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer  
Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Breaux said during the last Commission meeting, he mentioned that The Nature Conservancy reviewed the Governor's draft budget which listed \$10 million to be allocated to the recently approved Louisiana Outdoor Forever fund. The Commissioner suggested that the SWCC create a resolution to request some of those funds. A resolution was created to request \$1 million of non-federal match funds for federal conservation programs and opportunities. The last paragraph of the resolution states:

"Therefore be it resolved, That the SWCC requests to the Louisiana State Legislature a non-discretionary annual addition of \$1,000,000 allocated directly to the Louisiana Soil & Water Conservation District Program to be **earmarked allocated specifically** as the required state match to leverage available **State Conservation Projects and Programs**, Federal Farm Bill technical assistance funds, and additional funds as necessary for non-federal match for watershed project implementation and priority conservation programs."

The Commission members suggested adding and removing some wording to the resolution. Chairman Garber said if there weren't any more comments, he would ask for a motion to approve submitting this resolution with the suggested changes.

**Motion by:** Brad Spicer  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains  
Motion passed unanimously.

### **New Business**

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

Mr. Kacir said they continue to have progress with increasing the staffing in field offices. One office is at 25%, four offices are at 50%, and everyone else is at 75% staffing with the opportunity to schedule visitors by appointment. NRCS has not released the "Back to Work" plan but field offices are waiting patiently.

Mr. Kacir said they extended signups for the CSP program. Individuals who begin contracts in 2015 and 2016 were given waivers by the chief. CSP renewals were completed earlier in the year for individuals who held contracts from 2018. CSP received \$9 million of funding overall which makes Louisiana one of the top funded states. NRCS is also working on ranking its 2022 EQIP applications. Their goal is to fund 80% of the applications by May. They are also planning to ask for an increase in funds. The EQIP Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC) pilot program has just begun which was created by congress through the 2018 Farm Bill. This pilot program was initially started to help EQIP customers transition to CSP. The program gives you the option on how much land you signup, allows you to utilize CSP enhancements, and allows you to receive full EQIP payment for EQIP practices. These contracts could last between 5-10 years. The rollout was done in 4 LARUs:

1. LARU 3 (Zone 1, Area 1)
2. LARU 5 (Zone 1, Area 1)
3. LARU 9 (Area 2)
4. LARU 11 (Area 2)

NRCS is working to get a process down with producers who are willing to take a portion of their property and use it to reduce tillage and incorporate soil health. During this process, they will receive 5 years of management practices which includes reduce tillage, cover crop, and nutrient management.

EWP cleanup from Hurricane Laura and Ida is still in process. Beauregard Parish, Leesville, and Lafayette are some of the areas being worked on. Areas that had damage from Hurricane Ida haven't begin cleanup yet. The process of bids for cleanup of those areas are under way. Some of the areas awaiting cleanup from Hurricane Ida include Livingston Parish and Lafourche Parish.

Mr. Kacir said NRCS did receive 4 requests for the preliminary watershed assessments. These assessments have been submitted to headquarters and NRCS feels confident that these requests will be funded. With approval from headquarters, NRCS will create an agreement for the district to conduct an assessment. Two assessments that were submitted in 2020 are currently in process. These districts were able to consult with some folks in Arkansas who were able to suggest and comment on possible corrections in their draft. NRCS has since added funds to those agreements so that engineers could complete the assessments. There are several levels to the watershed process and there is still a long way left until a contractor is called. NRCS doesn't have a deadline to submit the watershed assessments and they encourage districts to keep submitting. They are hoping to serve more of the underserved communities. These communities may receive more points in the review process which could prioritize these areas and help them to move towards the top of the list.

Mr. Kacir said he recently attended a ribbon cutting at Inglewood Farm in Alexandria. Trailblazer RC&D and Inglewood Farm have teamed up to offer training on growing food and utilize seasonal high tunnel. The location plans to have different field days and workshops to help the community learn more about farming. Urban conservation offices throughout the US were announced recently with New Orleans having one location. There are plans to establish a separate county committee and members have already been selected.

LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter  
No report.

#### District Supervisor Election- Saturday, June 11, 2022

Mr. Breaux said the draft Annual District Supervisor's Election packet has been prepared for the Commission's review. The list with instructions and a blank petition is included in the packet. If a district board has more than 1 candidate interested in the vacant elected position, the board must hold an election on Saturday, June 11, 2022. All districts are also asked to email their election notices with locations to OSWC before April 1, 2022, which is the start of the nominating period. All supervisors who have no opposition will be duly elected at the May SWCC meeting. Mr. Breaux asked that the Commission approve the packet to be emailed out to districts to have it ready for them to discuss at their March board meeting.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the District Supervisor Election packet.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

#### Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Mr. Breaux said there are five resignations this month:

- Caddo SWCD, Mr. Mike Volentine, elected position effective February 22, 2022
- East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Brian Howard, appointed position effective January 13, 2022
- East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Bert Lensing, elected position effective February 11, 2022
- LaSalle SWCD, Mr. Steve Andrews, elected position effective February 22, 2022
- Rapides SWCD, Mr. Richard Melder, elected position effective January 12, 2022

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

- Caddo SWCD, Mr. Mike Volentine, elected position effective February 22, 2022
- East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Brian Howard, appointed position effective January 13, 2022

- East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Bert Lensing, elected position effective February 11, 2022
- LaSalle SWCD, Mr. Steve Andrews, elected position effective February 22, 2022
- Rapides SWCD, Mr. Richard Melder, elected position effective January 12, 2022

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Breaux said there is five appointments this month:

- Caddo SWCD, Mr. Mike Volentine, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Marty Wooldridge, effective February 22, 2022-September 19, 2023.
- DeSoto SWCD, Mr. Allen Joshua Gooden, elected position formerly held by Mr. Ross Allison, effective February 22, 2022-June 30, 2023.
- Dugdeмона SWCD, Mr. J. Paul Johns Jr., elected position formerly held by Mr. Ronald Kenneth Jeane, effective February 22, 2022-June 30, 2022.
- East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Stephen "Bert" Lensing, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Brian Howard, effective February 22, 2022- October 23, 2022.
- LaSalle SWCD, Mr. Steve Andrews, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Sammy Franklin, effective February 22, 2022- February 27, 2024.

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

- Caddo SWCD, Mr. Mike Volentine, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Marty Wooldridge, effective February 22, 2022-September 19, 2023.
- DeSoto SWCD, Mr. Allen Joshua Gooden, elected position formerly held by Mr. Ross Allison, effective February 22, 2022-June 30, 2023.
- Dugdeмона SWCD, Mr. J. Paul Johns Jr., elected position formerly held by Mr. Ronald Kenneth Jeane, effective February 22, 2022-June 30, 2022.
- East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Stephen "Bert" Lensing, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Brian Howard, effective February 22, 2022- October 23, 2022.
- LaSalle SWCD, Mr. Steve Andrews, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Sammy Franklin, effective February 22, 2022- February 27, 2024.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Breaux said there were seven reappointments this month:

- Bodcau SWCD, Mr. Elmore Morris, appointed position effective March 22, 2022- March 22, 2025
- DeSoto SWCD, Mr. Jerry Holmes, appointed position effective March 23, 2022- March 23, 2025
- LaSalle SWCD, Mr. D. Mike Crooks, appointed position effective March 28, 2022- March 28, 2025
- Morehouse SWCD, Mr. Chris Carter, appointed position effective February 24,2022- February 24, 2025
- New River SWCD, Mr. Ricky Roussel, appointed position effective February 28, 2022- February 28, 2025
- Northeast SWCD, Mr. Drew Michael Wiggers, appointed position, effective February 25, 2022- February 25, 2025
- Sabine SWCD, Mr. John Alan Williams, appointed position, effective March 23, 2022- March 23, 2025

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

- Bodcau SWCD, Mr. Elmore Morris, appointed position effective March 22, 2022- March 22, 2025
- DeSoto SWCD, Mr. Jerry Holmes, appointed position effective March 23, 2022- March 23, 2025
- LaSalle SWCD, Mr. D. Mike Crooks, appointed position effective March 28, 2022- March 28, 2025

- Morehouse SWCD, Mr. Chris Carter, appointed position effective February 24, 2022- February 24, 2025
- New River SWCD, Mr. Ricky Roussel, appointed position effective February 28, 2022- February 28, 2025
- Northeast SWCD, Mr. Drew Michael Wiggers, appointed position, effective February 25, 2022- February 25, 2025
- Sabine SWCD, Mr. John Alan Williams, appointed position, effective March 23, 2022- March 23, 2025

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Meritorious Award:

Mr. Breaux said we received two Meritorious Awards Requests:

1. Calcasieu SWCD nominating Ms. Rose Sharbeno, District Secretary, to receive an exceptional performance award of \$250.
2. Calcasieu SWCD nominating Ms. Jesse Louvier, District Technician, to receive an exceptional performance award of \$250.

The Meritorious award nomination packets were reviewed and included the following as requested in PPM#1:

1. Employee's Name
2. Title of Employee
3. Personnel number
4. A successful performance evaluation in the same fiscal year, a job performance plan showing an explanation of the significant achievement and how it benefited the SWCD, the conservation partnership and the district cooperators.
5. The reward amount proposed by the SWCD.

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

1. Calcasieu SWCD nominating Ms. Rose Sharbeno, District Secretary, to receive an exceptional performance award of \$250.
2. Calcasieu SWCD nominating Ms. Jesse Louvier, District Technician, to receive an exceptional performance award of \$250.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Passed unanimously

Correspondence/Articles:

Articles

- Louisiana Climate Action Plan
- Soil Quality Workshop- February 24, 2022-Kody Beavers' Farm in Franklin Parish
- Flooding Fields May Be a Win-Win For Farmers and Birds in the Mississippi Delta
- Kellogg Announces Regenerative Ag Program For Lower Mississippi Basin Rice Farmers
- Louisiana farmers represent U.S. cotton at global conference
- Timber producers told ways to improve wildlife habitat during Ag Expo

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Garber said Mr. Breaux did discuss Soil Health in relation to grazing in one of the articles. He said we should discuss and review possible legislation regarding soil health in Louisiana going forward. He said he serves on the Soil Health Institute board where this is discussed frequently. Soil health can be tied to human health and the subject matter will only get bigger as the time goes. He says working on legislation could explain how districts can play a part in the Soil health area. Chairman Garber asked Mr. Breaux if he had any comments.

Mr. Breaux said it was mentioned at the previous Commission meeting about adapting our current conservation district law to include soil health in some manner. If you review soil health legislation in other states it defines soil health initiatives and programs while others simply emphasize soil health as one of their conservation objectives. After discussion, Mr. Breaux drafted some possible additions to define soil health in our current state law. He was able to meet with the Commissioner and Mr. Todd Parker who recommended some changes. Chairman Garber said this will be good for districts to define soil health and give them more opportunities.

Chairman Garber said he also wanted to discuss some ideas that he had been considering for the Commission. He suggested that one area representative on the Commission give a presentation on what is going on with their area each month. OSWC will be happy to assist every member on any information they may request. Chairman Garber said he will be the 1<sup>st</sup> area representative to present on behalf of Area IV next month. He said after each area gives their presentations over the next few months, then the option for any area representative to give an update will now be a part of the Commission meeting. Another idea that he would suggest is having an open forum that would take place in the Other Business session. This will give Commission members the chance to ask questions or give comments.

#### Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 1:15 PM in the Veterans 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. Reggie Skains made a motion to adjourn at 3:10 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ruben Dauzat and passed unanimously.

  
/s/

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