

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

October 25, 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 Chairman Garber 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
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate

Members Absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative
Mr. Jason Nolde, LACD President, Member

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Blaise Pezold, Crescent SWCD
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Jerry Davenport, 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 October 25, 2022 SSWCC agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the September 27, 2022 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement-

Mr. Breaux said the current balance of the FY 21-22 Farm Bill Agreement is \$1,543. This total will be redistributed to Grant (\$1,000) and Crescent SWCD (\$543). NRCS was able to increase the Farm Bill yearly budget from \$925,000 to \$1,024,990 beginning with the FY 22-23 year. Using the same farm bill allocation formula as last year, each district has a base allocation of \$5,500. Beyond the base, the workload analysis consists of 3 year running averages of active contracts and unfunded applications. 6 districts did see a decrease from last year's farm bill allocation. Mr. Breaux said these districts can improve their future allocation amounts by effective outreach efforts and OSWC is always available to assist districts with these efforts. Mr. Garber suggested that OSWC staff follow up with the 6 SWCDs whose allocations decreased, to work with them on enhancing their farm bill allocation earning potential. Mr. Spicer suggested that OSWC reach out the district conservationists assigned to each field office to get more assistance on outreach efforts. Mr. Kacir said another way to help district with outreach is making sure implementation has begun by making phone calls, and just staying in touch. He suggested having some of the district staff reach out producers with reminders while getting to know the producer personally. Mr. Giering said he appreciated Mr. Phillips encouraging Natchitoches to do more outreach and work to receive more contracts. Mr. Kacir said NRCS was able to add funds to FY 23, but he believes there will be challenges to adding more farm bill funds next FY.

Area 5 SWCC Election Convention

Mr. Breaux said the Area 5 State Convention was held prior to this meeting. The newly elected Area V members are:

Area V Member: Mr. Steve Horvath, Capital SWCD

Area V Alternate member: Mr. Chris Martin, Feliciana SWCD

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the Area V election results.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

Resolved, Steve Horvath, Capital Soil and Water Conservation District will serve as the Area V Member of the State Commission and Mr. Chris Martin, Feliciana Soil and Water Conservation District will serve as Area V Alternate Member of the State Commission with their terms beginning October 25, 2022 and expiring October 25, 2025.

CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Garber said the Commission received 4 SWCD CPA Agreements:

- Capital SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.
- St. Landry SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.

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

- Capital SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.
- St. Landry SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, L.L.C. The cost is \$575.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

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

Mr. Kacir said FY 23 has begun and NRCS received their budget based on the continuing resolution. EQIP and CSP funds were made available, but some programs will receive funds later than normal. The Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) program decreased in funding while the Conservation Stewardship program (CSP) increased in funding. NRCS is also currently processing CSP payments for producers who requested their payments in this calendar year and plans to begin processing producers who requested payment in calendar year 2023 in January. CSP renewals are also being reviewed and producers are getting notified so they can choose to renew or terminate their contract. NRCS hopes to have this process done by the end of the calendar year. NRCS's first round EQIP signup deadline is November 18, 2022. Producers should have gotten the notification about a week ago.

Last week, NRCS held a national leadership team meeting in Detroit, Michigan. The two main topics of discussion were the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds and Climate Smart commodities funding. The Climate Smart Commodities funding includes \$2.8 billion that will be used to create a market for products that used climate smart conservation practices. Larger grants have been selected and deliverables for the grants are being created. Applicants requesting \$2 million or less are still being reviewed and will be chosen soon. NRCS is expected to receive approximately \$19.5 billion from IRA. IRA requires that the funds be spent within 3 years. Mr. Kacir said that NRCS should start receiving some funds within the last quarter of FY 23 and more funds are expected until FY 26. Producers receiving funds from though IRA will have to have conservation practices in place by September 30, 2031. Contracts will be voided on October 1, 2031. With these upcoming IRA funds, NRCS could double its budget for all programs which will cause more opportunities for producers and more contracts to be processed in field offices. Mr. Giering asked will IRA specify the specific practices or programs that it will fund. Mr. Kacir said headquarters are working on these answers but there will be specifics. Mr. Garber asked Mr. Kacir how districts will staff for the extra workload. Mr. Kacir said NRCS will have to team up with districts and maybe add employees to NRCS existing agreements such as the Targeted Watershed Technician agreement.

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

Dr. Salassi said a couple of the LSU research stations are working on expanding their sugarcane footprint. A year or so ago, LSU was able to plant 11 acres of sugarcane at the Dean Lee Research Station. Over 3-6 years, the LSU AgCenter hopes to have planted at least 50-60 more acres of sugarcane. LSU was also able to transfer 35 acres around the Iberia Research station from cattle to sugarcane. Currently the AgCenter operates using 4 funding sources that are stable and are not expected to increase. The LSU AgCenter is in process of getting a group of staff members together that can aggressively work on competitive national grants.

Dr. Salassi wanted to remind the Commission members of a few upcoming events:

- October 27, 2022- Acadiana Beef and Forage Field Day-Abbeville, LA
- November 9-11, 2022- Prescribed Burn Workshop for timberland- Hammond, LA
- January 18, 2023- LSU Precision Ag conference- Alexandria, LA
- January 31-February 1, 2023- 26th Annual National Conservation Systems conferences- Crowne Plaza hotel- Baton Rouge- www.nctd.net

Dr. Salassi said that concluded his report.

OSWC Report- Feral Swine Pilot Program

Mr. Phillips shared his report about the Feral Swine Pilot. (See attached).

Mr. Breaux wanted to introduce Mr. Jerry Davenport who is the newest member of the OSWC. Mr. Davenport transferred to our section from Medical Marijuana. Mr. Davenport has been assisting with Feral Swine and will focus primarily on water resources.

Mr. Breaux said OSWC was able to apply for some Hypoxia reduction funds made available through EPA. The approved agreement will total approximately \$4 million over a 5-year period and will focus on the alluvial plain in the Ouachita basin. OSWC has also been contacted about a project opportunity with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in Northeast Louisiana. This project focuses on residue management and cover crops. EPA and GOMA are asking for our assistance with these efforts, but no project timeframes have been specified. Mr. Kacir recommended that these opportunities be closely coordinated to ensure the most effective use of all available programs, including EQIP.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there is 1 resignation this month:

- Ms. Jennifer Coats, Capital SWCD, appointed position, effective October 17, 2022

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

- Ms. Jennifer Coats, Capital SWCD, appointed position, effective October 17, 2022

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said we have 3 appointments this month:

- Mr. Paul Dickson, Caddo SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Mike Volentine, effective October 27, 2022- June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Allen Evans, Caddo SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Jacob Rumbaugh, effective October 27, 2022-June 30, 2024.
- Mr. Willis Nelson, East Carroll SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Donavon Taves, effective October 25, 2022- October 19, 2023.

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

- Mr. Paul Dickson, Caddo SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Mike Volentine, effective October 27, 2022- June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Allen Evans, Caddo SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Jacob Rumbaugh, effective October 27, 2022-June 30, 2024.
- Mr. Willis Nelson, East Carroll SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Donavon Taves, effective October 25, 2022- October 19, 2023.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Articles:

- NACD Announces Launch of District Grants Application Period
- A wetter world is changing farm country. Can growers adapt?
- California Department of Water Resources: State Collaborates with Farmers to Conserve Water, Provide Critical Habitat for Migratory Birds in the Delta

- Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences: Research helps develop remote sensing as tool to assess conservation implementation

Commission Goals- Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman of SWCC

Chairman Garber said the Commission will plan to discuss the Program Development goal at the December 6th meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 6, 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 3:18 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reggie Skains and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

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