

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

August 28, 2018
1:15 PM

LSU CENTER FOR RIVER STUDIES
100 TERRACE AVE.
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70802

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 ask Dr. Ernest Girouard to lead in 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. Randell Fletcher, Mr. David Daigle, LACD President; Mr. John Compton, Secretary/Treasurer, Mr. Ed Yerger, Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter.

Members absent: Southern University Agricultural Center Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present: Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC; Mr. Tim Landreneau, Acting NRCS State Conservationist USDA-NRCS, Mr. Kendall Hicks, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist of Field Operations, Dr. Brian LeBlanc, LSU AgCenter, Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC, and LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, 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 any comments from the public or Commission members about the July 24, 2018 State Commission minutes and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the July 24, 2018 State Commission Meeting Minutes.

Motion: Mr. John Compton made a motion to approve the July 24, 2018 State Commission Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle 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 said that as of July, districts have earned 71% of their Farm Bill funds. He said that it is important that all districts continue to report farm bill hours after they have earned all their funds. He said that 10 districts have hit their target or gone above target. Mr. Spicer said a few districts are under target and we will contact to ensure

they are accurately logging Farm Bill work hours. He said that there are only two more months left for districts to earn their Farm Bill allocations. Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and there were none.

District Funding

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *District Funding*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said operating budgets for FY 18-19 are almost ready to be sent out to the districts. He said that the districts received an increase in their funding thanks to Commissioner Strain's efforts and also that there was a small increase in district insurance coverage. He said that he also wanted to mention that the Sworn Financial statements for districts with Revenues under \$75,000 are due to the OSWC by Friday, September 14, 2018. Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and there were none.

LACD Annual Mid-Year Meeting-September 27, 2018

Chairman Skains asked Mr. Spicer to comment on the meeting. Mr. Spicer said that the LACD Mid-Year meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 27, 2018 in Alexandria, LA. He said as agreed to at the last meeting, the SSWCC meeting will be held in conjunction with the LACD Mid-Year meeting. He said that he also wants to remind the Commission members and districts about the LACD Annual Awards' nominations that will be due in the OSWC on November 16, 2018. He said that they must be first submitted to the Area Vice Presidents by November 2, 2018 and after the Area VPs make their nominee selections, they are to send those selections (a small letter with one nominee for each award category) to the OSWC.

Mr. Spicer said that the NACD South Central Regional meeting will be held on September 4-6, 2018 in San Marcos, TX. He said that he plans to attend and has heard that a few others from the districts will be attending the meeting. He said the LACD Coastal Resources Committee meeting will be held in Henderson, LA on September 13-14, 2018.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Acting State Conservationist, Mr. Tim Landreneau to give the NRCS report. Mr. Landreneau said that Mr. Kendal Hicks, Asst. State Conservationist of Field Operations, has joined us for the meeting today. He said that Kevin Norton sends greetings to everyone and looks forward to returning to Louisiana soon.

Mr. Landreneau said the new Farm Bill is progressing through the Conference Committee. He said The Senate and House Ag Committee Leaders have set the first Farm Bill Conference Public Hearing for Wednesday, September 5, 2018.

He said that both Committees remain optimistic that the new Farm Bill may be passed by September 30th.

Mr. Landreneau said all NRCS cooperative agreements for FY 2018 were submitted to NRCS's grants and agreements division for review, including five existing OSWC agreements for extension and/or funding increases, and two new OSWC agreements. He said approval for agreement awards have been coming in and we anticipate the remaining will be awarded in September.

Mr. Landreneau said LA's total EQIP allocation is over \$25.7M. He said \$21.9M has been obligated for 618 contracts on over 113,000 acres. He said this is approximately 82% of our current year funding allocation. He said of the remaining \$3.7M, \$1.7M is in approved status pending signatures. He said additional funding selections and allocations are in process. Mr. Landreneau said LA's total CSP allocation is 213,300 acres. He said 50 contracts have been obligated on 51,628 acres for \$406,766 and 116 contracts are in approved status, pending signature or final obligation. He said an additional 49 applications are in pre-approved status for contract development. Mr. Landreneau said in total, we anticipate obligating 215 new contracts with a total funding level of approximately \$5.4M over the life of the contracts. Mr. Landreneau said 1,616 prior year CSP contract will remain active in FY2019 on 1,546,377 acres with a funding level of \$101.9M. He said WRE tentative funding selections have been completed for FY2019 and NRCS is currently in the process of enrolling

selected easements. He said with the current funding level in FY2019, we are anticipating enrolling 10 WRE easements on 4,200 acres. He said Louisiana currently has 993 closed easements on 307,000 acres.

Mr. Landreneau said that NRCS has received funding to develop a Watershed Plan for the Grant Parish Irrigation project and surveys and modelling are under way. He said NRCS recently submitted a proposal for funding a new watershed plan in Pointe Coupee and Iberville parishes developed by Upper Delta SWCD. He said that NRCS is working on a few projects under the CWPPRA. He said the projects include the 3 LA-39 Coast Wide Vegetative Planting projects that are being implemented, the ME-20 South Grand Chenier marsh creation is out for bid, the Cameron Creole FW introduction design is currently awaiting permits, and Labranche East Marsh Creation will be submitted for construction funding this winter.

Mr. Landreneau said in June, Louisiana was approved to fill 10 vacancies. He said 5 District Conservationists (DC) positions have been filled or tentatively selected along with 5 other state and area level positions. He said that Louisiana was approved to fill 19 additional positions in the upcoming months and that two DC positions have been advertised along with four other positions. Mr. Landreneau said 13 positions remain to be advertised in September. He said NRCS will continue to prioritize their vacancy filling on local customer service needs.

Mr. Landreneau said the July edition of the Louisiana Conservation Update was passed out before the meeting started. He said this edition highlights in the Conservation Update is an article on Mrs. Dezere' Richard, the first female producer to receive the Outstanding Master Farmer Award in Louisiana. He said she and her husband own the Ox Yoke Ranch in Calcasieu parish, where they raise cattle and grow hay. He said Mrs. Dezere' Richard has a true passion for taking care of the land, which she learned from her father, and has a long history of working with NRCS and the Gulf Coast SWCD. Mr. Landreneau said also featured in the August edition of the Conservation Update is a story about the five Puerto Rican students who spent six weeks of their summer in Louisiana working side-by-side with NRCS and SWCD field staff in Amite, Jennings, Opelousas, DeRidder, and the Alexandria State Office. He said the students logged hundreds of hours as Earth Team volunteers and took away a great experience of our culture, agriculture production and conservation techniques.

Mr. Spicer asked if Mr. Landreneau would go over any Tax ID updates. Mr. Landreneau said that we are currently in process of getting a few districts setup to receive their own Tax ID. He said that the issue with district Tax IDs started occurring when districts submit information in the System for Award Management (SAM) system and would get denied because of it being the incorrect name submitted. He said we are currently working on guidance that all districts can use to go about setting up their own Federal Tax ID's and will be sent out to them as soon as the test period is complete. Mr. Spicer said the problem with the district tax IDs is that they are all using the State Committee tax ID but reporting it using the districts name.

Mr. Landreneau concluded his report and Chairman Skains thanked him.

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondence is a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between Vermillion SWCD and the Gueydan Drainage District. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the agreement.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve the agreement between Vermillion SWCD and the Gueydan Drainage District. The motion was seconded by Dr. Ernest Girouard and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is a letter from Tensas-Concordia SWCD requesting the Commission approval for Ms. Zacki Cummings to attend the NACD South Central Convention in San Marcos, TX on September 4-6, 2018. Chairman Skains for any comments from the public and Commission members and there were none. He said if there were no comments, then he would call for a motion to approve Ms. Cummings' out of state travel.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to approve Ms. Zacki Cummings to attend the NACD South Central Convention in San Marcos, TX on September 4-6, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Compton and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is *Changes to the Code of Governmental Ethics*. He asked Mr. Spicer to review this. Mr. Spicer said that the Food and Drink Limit has gone up from \$60 to \$61 per public servant per event. He said all public servants must consume food in the presence of the providers or their representatives. He said that he also wanted to remind employees and supervisors to take their Ethics training online before December 31st.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *National Association of Conservation Districts*. He asked Mr. Spicer to review this article. Mr. Spicer said this article gave ideas of what NACD supported and what NACD was opposed to in the new Farm Bill. He said overall NACD is very supportive of the Conservation Title in the new Farm Bill.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *NASDA Comments on EPA's Definition of Waters of the United States-Recodification of Pre-existing Rule*. He asked Mr. Spicer to review this article. Mr. Spicer said that the article gives reasons why we should not go back to the rule that was put in place in 2015 which violated federalism principles, extended COE 404 jurisdiction wetland, and vaguely defined "other waters".

Chairman Skains said the next article is *Edge-of-field conservation knowledge on the move*. He said that this article discusses Iowa's progress of Redefining the field edge, which is proving the importance of perennial vegetation plantings as a positive step in managing runoff to improve environmental impacts on water bodies receiving runoff from crop land.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *Farmers are drawing groundwater from the giant Ogallala Aquifer faster than nature replaces it*. He said that this article talks about the Ogallala Aquifer, one of the largest underground freshwater sources in the world that is experiencing severe depletion due to extensive withdrawal during droughts.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *State Lawmakers Set Panel to Study Lake Erie's Harmful Algae*. He said that this article is about an executive order calling for a more aggressive approach to limit the amounts of farm fertilizer and manure applied on cropland in Northwest Ohio. He said the nutrient loading of streams feeding the persistent toxic algae blooms in Lake Erie.

Chairman Skains said the last article is *There are many ifs, but the discovery of corn that fertilizes itself could transform agriculture*. He asked Mr. Spicer to review this article. Mr. Spicer said the article discusses a decade long research project by the University of Wisconsin-Madison concerning a variety of corn grown in Mexico that can fix nitrogen in its root system that can be used by the corn plant. This could transform agriculture throughout the world if they can perfect a high yield variety.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments and Reappointments

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

Chairman Skains said that there were 2 resignations this month: Tensas-Concordia SWCD, Mr. Harry Goldman, Appointed position; Crescent SWCD, Ms. Rebecca A. Livaudais, Elected position effective August 28, 2018.

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to accept the resignations of these supervisors.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle called for a motion to accept the resignations of Tensas-Concordia SWCD, Mr. Harry Goldman, Appointed position; Crescent SWCD, Ms. Rebecca A. Livaudais, Elected position effective August 28, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Compton and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said that we also had eight reappointments:

Crescent SWCD, Ms. Rebecca A. Livaudais, reappointed to fill the vacant appointed position formerly held by Allan Ensminger. Term will begin August 28, 2018 and will expire June 21, 2020.

Caddo SWCD, Mr. LeRoy Kirby III, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin November 18, 2018 and will expire November 17, 2021.

Capital SWCD, Mr. John Compton, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin November 23, 2018 and will expire on November 22, 2021

D'Arbonne SWCD, Mr. David Manuel, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin November 18, 2018 and will expire November 17, 2021.

Felician SWCD, Mr. Dan DeLee, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin November 23, 2018 and will expire November 22, 2018.

Iberia SWCD, Mr. Robert Freeman, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin November 27, 2018 and will expire November 26, 2021.

Red River SWCD, Mr. Jarrod Blake McCartney, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin August 31, 2018 and will expire August 30, 2021.

Saline SWCD, Mr. David Nolte, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will begin August 30, 2018 and will expire August 29, 2021.

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to accept the reappointments of Crescent SWCD, Ms. Rebecca A. Livaudais, Term will begin August 28, 2018 and will expire June 21, 2020; Caddo SWCD, Mr. LeRoy Kirby III, Term will begin November 18, 2018 and will expire November 17, 2021; Capital SWCD, Mr. John Compton, Term will begin November 23, 2018 and will expire November 22, 2021; D'Arbonne SWCD, Mr. David Manuel, Term will begin November 18, 2018 and will expire November 17, 2021; Felician SWCD, Mr. Dan DeLee, Term will begin November 23, 2018 and will expire November 22, 2018; Iberia SWCD, Mr. Robert Freeman, Term will begin November 27, 2018 and will expire November 26, 2021; Red River SWCD, Mr. Jarrod Blake McCartney, Term will begin August 31, 2018 and will expire August 30, 2021 and Saline SWCD, Mr. David Nolte Term will begin August 30, 2018 and will expire August 29, 2021.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to accept the reappointments of Crescent SWCD, Ms. Rebecca A. Livaudais, Term will begin August 28, 2018 and will expire June 21, 2020; Caddo SWCD, Mr. LeRoy Kirby III, Term will begin November 18, 2018 and will expire November 17, 2021; Capital SWCD, Mr. John Compton, Term will begin November 23, 2018 and will expire November 22, 2021; D'Arbonne SWCD, Mr. David Manuel, Term will begin November 18, 2018 and will expire November 17, 2021; Felician SWCD, Mr. Dan DeLee, Term will begin November 23, 2018 and will expire November 22, 2018; Iberia SWCD, Mr. Robert Freeman, Term will begin November 27, 2018 and will expire November 26, 2021; Red River SWCD, Mr. Jarrod Blake McCartney, Term will begin August 31, 2018 and will expire August 30, 2021 and Saline SWCD, Mr. David Nolte Term will begin August 30, 2018 and will expire August 29, 2021.

Chairman Skains said that we had one appointment:

Tensas-Concordia SWCD, Mr. Walker Head, to elected position formerly held by Mr. Harry Goldman. Term will begin August 28, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2020.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 27, 2018 at 1:15 P.M. in the USDA Building B Training Room, 3727 Government Street, Alexandria, Louisiana 71302 in conjunction with the LACD Mid-Year meeting.

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 2:10 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

/s/ Reggie H. Skains
Reggie Skains, Chairman
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission