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

JANUARY 11, 2012
10:30 AM

ST MARTIN/ST LANDRY ROOM
CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL
1801 WEST PINHOOK ROAD
LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**Chairman Fletcher called the regular monthly Commission meeting to order at 10:30 AM and asked Mr. Frazier to give the invocation.

Chairman Fletcher led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**The roll was called by Mrs. Rose Sharbeno.

Members present: Chairman Randell Fletcher, Dr. Ernest Girouard, Mr. Ed Yerger, Mr. John Compton, and Mr. Reggie Skains.

Members absent: Mr. George Guillory and Dr. Paul Coreil

A quorum was present.

Others Present: Mr. Kevin Norton, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist; Mr. Dwight Landreneau, LSU AgCenter; Mr. Bruce Frazier, LACD 1st Vice President/SSWCC Alternate; Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF/SSWCC Executive Director; Mr. Sherrill Sagrera, SSWCC Alternate; Michael Schooler, LDAF; Charlie Dupuy, Chairman, Avoyelles SWCD; George Dauzat, Chairman, Calcasieu SWCD; Donavan Taves, Chairman, East Carroll SWCD; Mrs. Rose Sharbeno, District Secretary, Calcasieu SWCD and Ms. Jean Branton, District Secretary, D’Arbonne SWCD.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**Chairman Fletcher called for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2011 State Commission Meeting.

**Motion:** Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2011 State Commission Meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reggie Skains and passed unanimously.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**Chairman Fletcher said they would next take up Unfinished Business and requested Mr. Spicer to report on the items listed on the agenda.

SWCD Farm Bill Implementation Report
Mr. Spicer said that for the month of November on the new Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement, most districts were on target and several district have earned almost all of the funds allocated to them under the Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement that became effective July 13, 2011. He said the districts were not able to enter their December Farm Bill hours due to not being able to access the database, but that this problem was being corrected.

LACD Annual Meeting
Chairman Fletcher asked Dr. Girouard to give an update on the LACD Annual Meeting. Dr. Girouard to gave a quick review of the agenda.

Dr. Girouard advised that the LACD PAC meeting was scheduled for 1:00 PM in this same room.

Dr. Girouard also advised the LACD Board of Directors Meeting was also being held at 1:30 PM in the St. Martin/St. Landry Room. He said the afternoon Opening Session would start at 4:30 PM in the Grand Ballroom and the Social was scheduled for 6:00 PM in the Madison Room.

Dr. Girouard advised that on Thursday, Ms. Sarah Haymaker, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service would review the USDA/NRCS/District Agreements and that Mr. Jay Grymes, State Climatologist, LSU AgCenter Agricultural (retired), would be speaking on Louisiana Rainfall: Past Trends and Future Possibilities. He said that Dr. Kurt Guidry, Professor, LSU AgCenter, Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness would be speaking on the impacts of 2011 Louisiana drought to Agriculture, Forestry, and Surface Water Systems and Dr. Bill Branch, Agriculture Engineer, LSU AgCenter (retired) would be speaking on surface water use and management.

Dr. Girouard said Mr. Troy Hill, Associate Director, Assistance Program Branch, Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, would be speaking on how to incorporate regulating the Certainty Framework for Agricultural Producers into meeting water pollution and Mr. Tom Christensen, Regional Conservationist-Central Region, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service would also be speaking on the same topic, but from the USDA prospective and on our roll working together with USDA, LSU AgCenter, LDAF, Department of Environmental Quality, USDA/Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. He said that Dr. Paul Coreil, Mr. Kevin Norton and Commissioner Strain would close out the morning session.

Mr. Spicer said that the Master Farmers Awards Luncheon would start at 12:00 Noon and the Standing Committee Breakout Sessions at 1:45 PM.

Mr. Spicer said that Friday morning the Legislative Committee meeting will start at 8:30 AM in the Grand Salon and that Mr. John Larson, NACD Chief Executive Officer would be the first speaker at 8:00 AM.

Dr. Girouard advised the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission that 169 supervisors had registered for the LACD meeting along with 80 NRCS employees; 11 from Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ); 4 from Department of Ag & Forestry and 3 from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Dr. Girouard said it was a pleasure to have Mr. Troy Hill from EPA Region VI, Dallas, Texas office attend the LACD Annual meeting.

Dr. Girouard said he would like to comment on the membership in the LACDE. He said he thought all supervisors should be supporting LACDE by becoming members. He said LACDE had donated $300.00 to PAC for the past couple of years and that each District Board Chairmen should do something about bringing it up at their monthly board meetings and urge board members to become members of LACDE.

Chairman Fletcher and Mr. Yerger also agreed that this discussion should be on the agenda of the district board meetings and that LACDE should send a flyer to each district inviting them to join LACDE.

Mr. Spicer said the best place to bring up LACDE membership at this meting would be the General Business Session on Friday morning.

**NACD Annual Meeting**Mr. Spicer advised that the NACD Annual Meeting was being held in Las Vegas, Nevada at the Cosmopolitan Hotel from January 29 to February 1, 2012. He said as a reminder, if Supervisors attended this meeting, they should be prepared to present a report to their District Board regarding what they gained from attending the meeting. Dr. Girouard said that if Supervisors attended, they needed to make sure they attended the meetings, and did not go just to have fun and a vacation.

Mr. Spicer said two individuals received NACD scholarships to attend the Annual meeting. He said the scholarship covered registration and room costs and that the scholarships were awarded to Joey Breaux, LDAF and Mitzi Dohrman, Vermilion SWCD. He said that travel and meals were the responsibility of the individuals.

Mr. Spicer said that the OSWC reviewed quotes on the District Crime/Bond Insurance of $189.00 a year for $10,000.00 coverage. He said the policy would cover all district board members, district employees and all volunteers and that the deadline for accepting or declining the insurance is January 20, 2012.

Mr. Spicer said the District audits were complete and all audits and financial records were forwarded to the State Auditor’s Office. He said there was only one district with a citing and the OSWC received a copy of the letter on the action taken by the district board to correct the citing.

Mr. Spicer said LDAF has been cut another $1.3 million. He said contrary to past cuts, Commissioner Strain was given the authority to determine where within the department to make budget cuts. He said it appears that the Soil and Water could be looking at a $25,000 mid year cut.

**NEW BUSINESS**NRCS State Conservationist Report
Chairman Fletcher welcomed Mr. Kevin Norton, NRCS State Conservationist and asked him to give his report. Mr. Norton said there would be great discussions on conservation topics taking place all day Thursday and Friday. He said he is pleased that his boss, Mr. Tom Christian, NRCS Regional Conservationist – Central Region will be attending the meeting and will be on the program Thursday morning to discuss the USDA prospection on the Certainty Framework for Agricultural Producers.

Mr. Norton said he will be going back to Washington, D.C. to continue assisting the Senate Ag Committee with language for the new Farm Bill. He said he does not know at this time how long he will be out of the state.

Mr. Norton said he would be attending the NACD Annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada and looked forward to the meeting and seeing as many supervisors as possible.

Mr. Norton gave the State Commission an update on the closings of USDA offices in the State of Louisiana. He said there would be some soil survey and major land resource offices closed and five Farm Service Agency offices. Mr. Norton assured members present that no NRCS/District offices would be closing and where resource offices are closed the work would be handled through other offices in the vicinity.

Mr. Norton said that Chief White was doing his very best to work with their current budget to insure continuing operating through the rest of the fiscal year.

Mr. Norton said that there was rumor that NRCS was pulling out from working with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) but that was not true and that USDA/NRCS would continue working closely with FSA.

Mr. Norton said that the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) totals for each field office were being loaded today and with some substantial increase in funding levels. He said when District Conservationists returned to their office on Monday, they would have their allocations and they need to obligate the funds and complete the contracts immediately.

Mr. Norton said that the budget was $1 million short, but they are working to get additional funds to maintain personnel at the present level. He said there would be no new hiring at this time and as soon as the additional money was received, they would move it to the field offices.

Mr. Norton advised that the National Office would be doing Oversight Evaluations, Civil Rights Reviews, Program and Delivery Practice and Operational Reviews in the field offices in the coming months.

Mr. Norton said he had no specifics at this time on the reorganization.

Mr. Norton said this concluded this report.

Correspondence

Chairman Fletcher said the next agenda item is Correspondence and he asked Mr. Spicer to review the Correspondence with the Commission.

Mr. Spicer said the first item was a news release regarding the sign-up deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program for January 13, 2012. Agricultural producers interested should submit applications by this date to be considered during the first ranking period of 2012.

Mr. Spicer said the second item was a letter from Mr. George Dauzat, Chairman of the Calcasieu Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) thanking Mr. Spicer for taking the time to attend a meeting with Mr. Stephen Waguespack, Chief of Staff for Governor Jindal on Wednesday, December 22, 2011 regarding the proposal to sell water from the Toledo Bend Reservoir. Mr. Spicer said Mr. Dauzat started dealing with the Toledo Bend Reservoir water sale three years ago and that we are now in the best position than we have ever been regarding having public reviews and input. He thanked Mr. Dauzat for his efforts.

Mr. Spicer discussed that the Sabine River Authority (SRA) wanted to sell water from Toledo Bend Reservoir to the State of Texas. He said that Governor Jindal required the SRA to hold public meetings to get the public’s input and to obtain bids. Mr. Spicer said that we should not sell our water until the State has a comprehensive water use management plan that identifies our water needs for the future and if we have the water resources to meet our future needs. He said there are so many unknowns regarding the quantity and quality of our water resources.

Mr. Dauzat took a few moments to discuss the proposed sale of water and thanked Mr. Spicer for commending him but he wanted to thank his secretary, Mrs. Rose Sharbeno. He said that Mrs. Sharbeno has done all the paperwork involved and worked closely with the districts and she was the one responsible for getting all the comment forms to SRA and Governor Jindal’s office. Mr. Dauzat said he was very concerned with the selling of one of our most valuable natural resources.

Mr. Dauzat stated that he did not think it was right for Mr. Jim Pratt to be on the Sabine Soil and Water Conservation District board and with the Sabine River Authority (SRA) at the same time trying to sell our water to another state. He said he felt this was a conflict of interest and that Mr. Pratt should be working to conserve our natural resources, not selling them. He said district supervisors and others should be working toward what is in the best interest of the soil and water conservation and the State of Louisiana.

Mr. Spicer said the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SSWCC) does not have the authority to remove supervisors from district boards except for illegal activities.

Chairman Fletcher said the sale of water to Texas would give SRA revenue of approximately $54 million. He said that he felt this was a real serious political issue because of the individuals that are involved in the proposal to purchase the water.

Mr. Spicer stated that LACD had approved a resolution requesting the State to prepare a comprehensive water management plan for the State and that a bill was filed in the 2009 Regular Session but was withdrawn by its author before it could be heard by the House Agriculture Committee.

Mr. Spicer said that he commends Mr. Dauzat and Mrs. Sharbeno for their hard work and stated that Mr. Dauzat was doing his job as a district supervisor.

Mr. Spicer stated the next item was an email from Dr. John Toliver, a retired Forest Scientist and a resident from Many, Louisiana that was sent to Mr. Stephen Waguespack, Commissioner Mike Strain and Assistant Commissioner Brad Spicer. Dr. Toliver stated that the comments in his email were his own and did not necessarily represent the position of the organizations of which he is a member. Dr. Toliver expressed his concerns and had numerous questions about the sale of huge volumes of water for out of state consumption.

Mr. Skains asked what responsibility was this issue of the Districts and was there any action that the Districts could take on this matter.

Mr. Frazier said that he thought that surface water management should come under the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and that the State Commission should make a recommendation to the State Legislators to enact legislation that would require the adopting of a state water use and management plan.

Mr. Spicer stated that the State Commission has the authority and responsibility to state their position regarding the use and management of the State’s water resources.

Chairman Fletcher called for a motion for the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to have lawmakers author a bill to be put into law at the upcoming legislative session and to approve a motion with language similar to the LACD resolution passed at their annual meeting in 2009 in Lafayette, Louisiana. He said the resolution requested that the State not allow the transfer or sale of water across basin boundaries or for out of state use until there is a State Comprehensive Water Use Management Plan enacted by the Legislature that gives the authority to the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to oversee the management of the use of the State’s surface waters.

**MOTION:** Mr. Skains made a motion for the State Commission to write a bill to be put into law at the upcoming legislative session to adopt a resolution that is similar to the LACD resolution passed at their annual meeting in 2009 in Lafayette, Louisiana requesting that the State not allow the transfer or sale of water across basin boundaries or for out of state use until there is a State Comprehensive Water Use Management Plan enacted by the Legislature that gives the authority to the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to oversee the management of the use of the State’s surface waters. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton and passed unanimously.

Mr. Spicer said the next correspondence was a memorandum notifying the 44 Soil and Water Conservation Districts of the re-election of the SSWCC officers.

Mr. Spicer said the next correspondence was the letter from SSWCC to Dr. Paul Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service thanking him for arranging the State Commission to meet at the LSU Burden Center on December 7, 2011. He said a letter was also sent to Dr. Girouard, LSU AgCenter for providing the meal at their December 7, 2011 meeting and Mr. Keith Normand.

Mr. Spicer said that concluded the Correspondence.

Chairman Fletcher said if there were no questions, that concluded the Correspondence report and they would take up the next agenda item.

Supervisor Resignations/Appointments and Reappointments
Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Spicer to report on the supervisor resignations and appointments.

Mr. Spicer said the respective conservation districts are requesting the State Commission to appoint the following supervisors to fill a vacant position:

Grant SWCD, Mr. Richard Bonner appointed to fill the vacant elected position of Mr. Charles Yerby. Term will begin January 11, 2012 and will expire on June 30, 2013.

Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD, Mr. Michael Smith appointed to fill the vacant elected position of Mr. Thomas Wicker. Term will begin January 11, 2012 and will expire on June 30, 2012.

**Motion:** Mr. Skains made a motion to approve the appointments of supervisors Mr. Richard Bonner, elected position, Grant SWCD and Mr. Michael Smith, elected position, Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sagrera and passed unanimously.

**OTHER BUSINESS**
Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Dwight Landreneau if he would like to address the State Commission.

Mr. Landreneau said that the AgCenter continues to deal with budget cut issues. He said they will absorb another $3.4 million cut in funding and that the funds for operations they had in reserve are gone. Mr. Landreneau said the AgCenter will continue to use funds they receive from fees and will make management adjustments in their efforts to continue to provide the highest standard of service to their clientele. Mr. Landreneau said they expected another round of cuts in July.

Mr. Landreneau said the AgCenter could not file agency bankruptcy and it is a long drawn out process to remove tenured employees which included county agents, 4-H, contract and civil service employees. Mr. Landreneau stated that 67% of their budget is state appropriations.

Chairman Fletcher asked if there was any other business to come before the Commission.

Mr. Skains introduced Ms. Jean Branton, the new secretary for the D’Arbonne SWCD.

**NEXT MEETING**Chairman Fletcher said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for 1:15 PM, Tuesday, February 28, 2012, at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**Chairman Fletcher asked if there were any other comments from the public and there were none.

**ADJOURNMENT**Chairman Fletcher said if there was no other business, he will accept a motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Mr. Skains made a motion to adjourn at 1:00 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ Randell Fletcher

Randell Fletcher, Chairman
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission