

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

February 26, 2020  
1:15 PM

VETERAN'S AUDITORIUM  
5825 FLORIDA BLVD.  
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Girouard called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Steve Horvath gave the invocation and Mr. Alan Williams lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

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

Members and Alternate Members present:

Dr. Ernest Girouard - Chairman  
Mr. Steve Horvath-Vice Chairman  
Mr. Larry Sayes- Secretary-Treasurer  
Mr. John Alan Williams- LACD President  
Mr. Reggie Skains  
Mr. Ed Yerger

Members absent:

Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter  
Southern University Agricultural Center  
Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist  
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chairman Girouard asked if there were any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA-**

Chairman Girouard requested that we move the "Review SSWCC Director Position Applications" to the last item on the agenda. He called for a motion to accept this change.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger  
Second by: Mr. Alan Williams  
Passed unanimously

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Chairman Giroard requested a correction be made on page 3; line 15 to remove the word "travel". Chairman Giroard called for a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

**Motion by:** Mr. Steve Horvath.

**Second by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Passed unanimously

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement-Brad Spicer, Executive Director, SSWCC**

- Farm Bill total remaining funds is approximately \$370,000.00

#### **NACD Spring Fly-In- March 25, 2020- Brad Spicer, Executive Director, SSWCC**

- This meeting provides the states' conservation leaders the opportunity to meet with their congressional delegation to promote the interests of conservation districts on Capitol Hill. It is an opportunity to meet with Congressional members and convey the importance of the USDA Farm Bill and the tremendous values of the voluntary, locally-led conservation efforts at the state and local levels.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **District Travel Request**

- Chairman Giroard said the Sabine SWCD is requesting approval for out of state travel for Mr. John Alan Williams to attend the 2020 NACD Spring Fly-In being held in Washington, D.C. on March 25, 2020. Chairman Giroard called for a motion to approve the travel request.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Passed unanimously

#### **Supervisor Resignations/Reappointments/Appointments**

- Chairman Giroard said there are three resignations: Mr. Robert Freeman- Iberia SWCD-effective February 12, 2020, Mr. Jerome Cantrelle -Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD- effective February 20, 2020, and Mr. Jerry Robinson- Northeast SWCD- effective February 23, 2020. Chairman Giroard asked for a motion to approve these resignations.

**Motion by:** Mr. Larry Sayes

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Passed unanimously.

- Chairman Giroard said there are 10 supervisor reappointments for three year terms.

He said three of the reappointments require the Commission to approve meeting attendance waiver requests. These supervisors are: Mr. Charles House- Catahoula SWCD- March 28, 2020-March 28, 2023; Mr. Richard Fontenot-Evangeline SWCD- March 20, 2020-March 20, 2023; and Mr. Jason Waller-Morehouse SWCD- February 26, 2020- February 24, 2020. Chairman Giroard request the Commission review the waiver request letters and asked for a motion to waive the attendance requirements and reappointment these supervisors.

**Motion by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Passed unanimously.

The other reappointments submitted for three year terms are: Ms. Annette Blount- Northeast SWCD- March 22, 2020- March 22, 2023; Mr. Glen Caldwell- DeSoto SWCD, March 23, 2020-March 23, 2020; Mr. Randell Fletcher-Grant SWCD-March 28, 2020- March 28, 2023; Mr. John Pat Boudreaux-Sabine

SWCD-March 24, 2020-March 24, 2023; Mr. Richard Hollier-St. Landry SWCD; Mr. Jeffrey Durrand-St. Martin SWCD, March 26, 2020-March 26, 2023; and Mr. Richard Netterville- Tensas-Concordia SWCD-April 24, 2020- April 24, 2023.

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to approve these reappointments for a three year term.

**Motion by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Passed unanimously.

- Chairman Girouard said there are three appointments this month: Mr. Benson Langlinais-Iberia SWCD-March 1, 2020-November 26, 2021; Mr. Jason Richard-Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD-March 1, 2020-June 30, 2021; and Mr. Ethan Poland-Northeast SWCD-February 26, 2020-February 24, 2023. Chairman Girouard called for a motion to appoint the three nominees.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Passed unanimously.

Correspondence-Chairman Girouard

David Daigle Recognized for Conservation Excellence

- Mr. David Daigle, Former LACD President and Calcasieu SWCD Chairman, has been named the winner of the NACD 2020 Hugh Hammond Bennett Award. Mr. Daigle runs a successful cattle and Longleaf pine timber production operations on his farm in Southwestern Louisiana.

Louisiana Industrial Hemp Program regulations finalized: LDAF issues first industrial hemp license in the state

- LDAF is the state's regulatory authority for the Industrial Hemp Program and is responsible for regulating production, processing, and transportation of industrial hemp grown in Louisiana. Any person growing, handling, transporting or processing industrial hemp or hemp seed is required to possess a current license issued by the LDAF.

HUD Approves Louisiana's Action Plan for \$1.2 Billion in Flood Mitigation Funds

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has approved the state's Action Plan to implement flood mitigation projects under the \$1.2 billion in Community Development Block Grant Flood Mitigation funds. This will allow Louisiana to move forward to drastically reduce flood risk.

USDA and EPA Announce Continued Commitment to Support Rural Water System

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that would help rural water systems face the challenges of upgrading aging infrastructure and address workforce shortages, increasing costs, limited management capacity and declining rate bases.

USDA Agriculture Innovation Agenda: Secretary Perdue Announces New Innovation Initiative for USDA

- The Agriculture Innovation Agenda is a USDA department-wide initiative to align resources, programs, and research to better position American agriculture to meet future global demands. The USDA Agenda has four specific components: to develop a U.S. Ag-innovation strategy that aligns and synchronizes public and private sector research, align the work of customer-facing agencies by integrating innovative technology and practices into USDA programs, conduct a review on USDA productivity and conservation data, and will set benchmarks for USDA accountability.

Louisiana Commodities and Conservation Newsletter: February 2020; Issue-2- Mr. Chad Kacir and Mr. Brad Spicer

- EQIP and RCPP-EQIP signups end on March 6, 2020. CRP general signups will end on February 28, 2020. Two water quality initiatives: the Mississippi River Basin Health Watershed Initiative (MRBI) and the National Water Quality Initiative should provide \$17.5 million to producers in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and ten other states.

Where rural and urban Americans divide on the environment—and where there’s common ground

- Duke University’s Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions conducted a two year study with the University of Rhode Island, the University of Wyoming, Hart Research Associates and New Bridge Strategy that involved extensive outreach to rural voters, focus groups with more than 125 rural voters and in depth interviews with 36 rural leaders. Polling results indicated rural voters to be relatively knowledgeable about environmental policies and the potential economic trade-offs that come with them.

NRCS State Conservationist Report- NRCS State Conservationist, Chad Kacir

- Mr. Kacir reported the EQIP signup deadline is March 6, 2020. CSP deadlines are coming soon and renewals are being reviewed and NRCS program allocations have been announced: EQIP- \$21 million, CRP-New Contracts- 17 million dollars and renewal Contracts- 10 million, and CSP -8.6 million dollars. NRCS is attempting to fill 800 positions nationwide. Louisiana has a new staffing limit of 201 which is up from 196. Louisiana has 170 employees staffed currently.

NRCS hopes to encourage upcoming college graduates to apply for some of the open Soil Conservationists and Soil Technician positions.

Chief Lohr has announced the Conservation Ag Mentoring Program (CAMP). This program will ask producers and district supervisors to be a mentor to some of the newer employees coming into the district offices. NRCS’s new mission statement is “We deliver conservation solutions so Ag producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.”

NRCS’s new vision statement is “A world of clean abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving Ag communities through voluntary conservation.”

A newly revised Memorandum of Agreement has been sent to Commissioner Strain for his signature and a new Unfunded Cooperative Agreement has been created and sent to districts for their signature. This agreement has been sent to districts nationwide to account for district use of items in the NRCS offices such as phones, internet, and the space they occupy.

Mr. Kacir announced that Mr. Kris Davis, former District Conservationist from the Opelousas Field Office, is the new Assistant State Conservationist of Field Operations in Area II taking the place of Mr. Randolph Joseph.

Review SSWCC director Position Applications

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to go into executive session.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

**Seconded by:** Mr. Alan Williams

Passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion come out of executive session.

**Motion by:** Mr. Alan Williams

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to come back into regular session.

**Motion by:** Mr. Alan Williams

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard said in the executive session they discussed interviewing the three candidates for the SSWCC Director's position in the Veteran's Auditorium on March 17<sup>th</sup> prior to the State Commission meeting. Mr. Yerger said he recommends beginning interviews at 11:00 a.m. and moving the Commission meeting to 2 p.m. Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to have the interviews for the Director position begin at 11:00 A.M. and end at 12:15 P.M. and the State Commission meeting began at 2:00 p.m.

**Motion by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

**Seconded by:** Mr. Alan Williams

Passed unanimously.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 2:00 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chairman Girouard asked if there were any other comments from the public or Commission members and there were none.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Motion:** Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to adjourn at 2:50 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Horvath and passed unanimously.

/s/ Dr. Ernest Girouard



Dr. Ernest Girouard, Chairman State Soil and Water Conservation Commission