

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

October 28, 2025
1:15 PM

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY
VETERANS MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Garber called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. "Clay" Alexander. Mr. Skains attempted to participate virtually but had technical difficulties and was unable to participate in the meeting.

Members and Alternates present:

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, Area IV Member Mr. John Pat Boudreaux, Area I Alternate

Mr. Steve Horvath, Vice Chairman, Area V Member Mr. Price Gay, LACD President, Member

Mr. Marlin Lemoine, Area III Alternate Mr. Chris Carter, Area II Alternate

Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter Member Dr. Crystal Vance-Rogers, Southern University Ag Center, Alternate

Mr. Reggie Skains, Secretary-Treasurer,
Area I Member (Virtual)

Members Absent:

Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate Member

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Joey Breaux, SWCC Exec. Director
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Clay Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

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

Approval of October 28, 2025 minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the September 30, 2025 SWCC meeting minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Price Gay

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the October 28, 2025 SWCC meeting agenda

Motion by: Mr. Chris Carter

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

Mr. Breaux reported that the September 2025 Farm Bill Agreement Total Drawdown was \$94,499 with a remaining balance of \$77,159.

The new Farm Bill agreement was executed prior to the Federal Shutdown that began on October 1, 2025. However, with the shutdown in place, districts are not able to draw reimbursement from this or other NRCS agreements such as the LARU technician, Program Support Specialists, and the Watershed Planner agreements.

Area V SWCC Election Results

Chairman Garber said the State Commission Area V Election Convention took place earlier this morning.

The voting results of the Area V Election Convention are:

Area V State Commission Member- Steve Horvath, Capital SWCD

Area V State Commission Alternate- Chris Martin, Feliciana SWCD

Chairman Garber asked if there were any public or Commission comments and there were none. He asked for a motion to approve the election results.

Motion by: Mr. Price Gay

Seconded by: Mr. John Pat Boudreaux

Motion passed unanimously.

Resolved, Mr. Steve Horvath, Capital Soil and Water Conservation District will serve as the Area V Member of the State Commission and Mr. Chris Martin, Feliciana SWCD will serve as the Area V Alternate member of the State Commission with their terms beginning October 28, 2025 and to expire on October 28, 2028.

Out of State Travel

Chairman Garber said we had 1 out of state travel request this month:

- Crescent SWCD is asking permission for Blaise Pezold, Danny Milojevic, Erica Johnson, Don Knuppel, and Nina Ockman to attend the 2026 NACD Annual meeting on February 15-19, 2026 in San Antonio, TX.

Chairman Gaber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the out of state travel request:

- Crescent SWCD is asking permission for Blaise Pezold, Danny Milojevic, Erica Johnson, Don Knuppel, and Nina Ockman to attend the 2026 NACD Annual meeting on February 15-19, 2026 in San Antonio, TX.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Marlin Lemoine

Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

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

LSU has been actively educating its faculty on research security and export control. This initiative focuses on managing the release of research data and information that may have intellectual property implications. In recent years, the federal government has emphasized protecting institutions like LSU from potential threats posed by adversarial nations.

Recently, President Trump signed an executive order affecting H-1B visa applications. The H-1B visa allows non-U.S. citizens with approved petitions to work in the United States. Under the new policy, the application fee has dramatically increased from \$6,000 to \$100,000. Given the new costs, LSU is now exploring alternatives, such as the O-1 visa, which is designated for individuals with “extraordinary ability” in fields like science, education, business, athletics, the arts, or film and television. According to Dr. Salassi, the O-1 visa requires more extensive documentation, but the university is evaluating all available options. The cost for an O-1 visa generally ranges from \$1,500 to \$15,000.

LSU is working with a few different entities to create food boxes. These food boxes will help families who are unable to receive SNAP benefits during the Government Shutdown.

Upcoming field days:

- November 1, 2025- Southeast Region Beef, Forage, and Wildlife Field Day-Idlewild Research Station-Clinton, LA

OSWC Update

Mr. Breaux said the National Nonpoint Source Training Conference is taking place at the Hilton Hotel downtown today and tomorrow. He gave a welcome presentation this morning and will be presenting later in the program today. The OSWC staff has been a great help in planning and conducting the program and the meeting is going great. Mr. Breaux mentioned the Environment and Health Council of LA Conference will be held on November 6, 2025 at the Nicholls State University Coastal Center. The program includes great speakers and topics, including Commissioner Strain. Mr. Breaux also mentioned the Gulf Coast SWCD Water Festival took place last week in Lake Charles. Many district staff came from other nearby SWCDs to assist with the event.

Chairman Garber asked about NRCS funding for districts and if OSWC has received any updates from districts. Mr. Phillips discussed the different scenarios happening with each NRCS agreement. He advised that districts were notified via email about funding pauses happening during the Government Shutdown. Chairman Garber asked about any follow-up communication and Mr. Phillips said there hasn't been any follow-ups to the email sent October 1, 2025. Chairman Garber said it would be a good idea to reach out to districts to get an update on their district employee status and Mr. Phillips agreed.

Mr. Phillips also mentioned districts have new payment options to pay their monthly payroll invoice. Districts can choose to pay by credit card or e-check/ACH payment. If the district uses a credit card for their payment, there is a \$2.50 + 2.5% fee. If the district uses an E-Check/ACH payment, the fee is \$2.50.

Supervisor Waivers/ Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there is 1 re-appointment this month:

- Mr. Reggie Skains, D'Arbonne SWCD, appointed position, effective November 18, 2025- November 18, 2028.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the SWCD supervisor re-appointment for:

- Mr. Reggie Skains, D'Arbonne SWCD, appointed position, effective November 18, 2025- November 18, 2028.

Motion by: Mr. Chris Carter

Seconded by: Mr. Price Gay

Motion passed unanimously.

SWCC Goals

Chairman Garber asked the Commission members if they have any comments and there were none. He said that he wanted to review and discuss the proposed election changes (previously discussed in September) in the December meeting so that they can be ready to be presented at the LACD meeting in January.

Correspondence

- Farm Progress: Nebraska Farmer: 5 Practical nonchemical ways to fight weeds
- Soil and Water Conservation Society: Assessing the need to grow natural resources professionals' competencies beyond conservation
- Long-term biochar use boosts soil health and soybean yields, study finds
- Soil and Water Conservation Society: Impacts of water conservation cost-share programs on irrigated rice extensification and intensification in critical groundwater areas of the Arkansas Delta
- Bacteria attached to charcoal could help keep an infamous 'forever chemical' out of waterways
- Farm Doc Daily: Swampbuster Stands, Part 2: The Constitutionality of Conservation Compliance

Other Business

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next state Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 2, 2025 in the LDAF Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806.

Public Comment

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: At 2:26 P.M. Mr. Price Gay made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Pat Boudreaux and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

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