

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

February 27, 2018  
1:15PM

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

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Skains called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M and said the invocation and Mr. David Daigle 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; Mr. Randell Fletcher, Mr. David Daigle, LACD President; Mr. Ed Yerger, and Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter.

Members absent: Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vice Chairman Mr. John Compton, Secretary/Treasurer; and Southern University Agricultural Center Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present: Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC; Mr. Kevin Norton, NRCS State Conservationist USDA-NRCS; Mr. Tim Landreneau, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Easements; Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC, Mr. Ray Reich, LDAF-OSWC, and Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander- LDAF-OSWC

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chairman Skains asked if there were any comments from the public or Commissioners and there were none.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members about the January 10, 2018 State Commission minutes. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the January 10, 2018 State Commission Meeting minutes.

**Motion:** Mr. Yerger made a motion to approve the January 10, 2018 State Commission Meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fletcher 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 at the last meeting he mentioned that some of the districts were behind in earning their farm bill funds. He said that as of January, they have earned 29% of the Farm Bill funds. He said that he had spoken to a few specific districts that were further behind in earnings and two of the districts were behind due to their lack of staffing. Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and there were none.

### Legislative Special Session/State Funding

Mr. Spicer said that it is hard to determine how things will end with the special session. He said that if the legislators do not provide for some new revenue, then we may be in trouble with next year's funding. He said that there have been some discussions on finding a different funding source for the Office of Soil and Water Conservation (OSWC). He said that regular session is scheduled to start on March 12, 2018 and end no later than June, 4 2018.

### District Supervisor Election-June 9, 2018

Chairman Skains asked Mr. Spicer to review the election packet. Mr. Spicer said that we must get the election packet approved by the SSWCC before we can send it out to the districts. He said the nominating period will be from April 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> and the election is scheduled for the second Saturday in June which is June 9, 2018. He said included in the packet is the list of the district supervisors that are up for re-election as well as the statutory requirements. Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and there were none. Chairman Skains asked for a motion to approve the District Supervisor Election packet.

**Motion:** Mr. Fletcher made a motion to approve the District Election Packet. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Mr. Kevin Norton to give the NRCS report. Mr. Norton said that he wanted to start with great news. He said that Mr. Bill Northey was confirmed this morning to serve as USDA Undersecretary of Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). He said that the new Farm Production and Conservation division will include the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). He said that this is an excellent appointment because he has a great appreciation for soil and water conservation as well as the production side of agriculture.

Mr. Norton said that today would be his last day as the State Conservationist for Louisiana for a period of time. He said that he has accepted a detail assignment to the US House Agriculture Committee with Chairman Mike Conway of Texas to work on the Farm Bill. He said that this will be a lot different than the last time he went to Washington, D.C. He said that last time there was an effort to cut 24 to 26 billion from the farm bill which required a major rewrite of all the titles. He said this time it looks to be just some tweaking of the existing farm bill with no major rewrites of any section. Mr. Norton said that he had been told that the House moves legislation fairly quickly and that he doesn't expect his stay to be long. He said that Mr. Claude Ross will become acting State Conservationist. He said that Mr. Ross currently runs the easement programs in Texas and is currently in the NRCS personnel developmental program.

Mr. Norton said that some great things have happened since the last commission meeting. He said that the LSU Agcenter conducted great soil health workshops in Monroe and Alexandria. He said that expectations were greatly exceeded as far as attendance, quality of conversation programs, and general enthusiasm. He said that he has spoken with Dr. Leonard in hopes of making these workshops an annual occurrence. He said that it was a day well spent and he can tell that a lot of effort was put into the workshop including getting program presenters from other states. Mr. Norton thanked Dr. Leonard for the partnership and said that he hoped that they continue the venture annual.

Mr. Norton said that he thinks we are entering a renaissance period in relation to Soil Health in America. He said that it is really exciting to hear the discussions of cover crops and building and enhancing the farming environment.

Mr. Norton said that the "Women in Ag" conference took place last week. He said they had 260 attendees to register and attend the conference. He said that they have suggestion cards and had received nothing but positive feedback and minor recommendations for the next conference. He said that he believes there is a need to move next years' conference to a bigger venue. Mr. Norton said that he wanted to give great thanks to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts that participated in the conference. He said that some of the districts provided financial sponsorship and staff members to assist at the event. He said that Rapides SWCD took on management of the finances and some records. He said that a lot of attendees thanked him for local Soil and Water Conservation Districts sponsoring their attendance. Mr. Norton said that he told them to go back to that Soil and Water Conservation District and thank them personally. He said that there were some scholarships given out and overall it was a great conference. He said that these events are about networking and building positive relationships.

Mr. Norton said that NRCS is expecting another \$400,000 to go into the Farm bill Technical Assistance agreement. He said that if NRCS continues to generate additional funds due to not hiring needed staff or lack of staffing options then more funds will be added to the Assistance Agreement. He said that this year more of the NRCS agreements will be solicited in a more competitive manner. He said that any existing contracts can be modified but all new agreements have to be done competitively. Mr. Norton said that it is possible to have a contract with multiple awards. He said that we want to make the process as smooth as possible staying within the government criteria and policies.

Mr. Norton said February's issue of the Louisiana *Conservation Update* is highlighting Mr. Brian Howard, East Carroll SWCD supervisor and board chairman. He said that his works with cover crops along with other personal experiences are mentioned. He said he wanted to also mention the Acadiana Beef Cattle Producers Field Day scheduled for March 3, 2018 at the Iberia Research Station in Jeanerette, Louisiana and Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts (LACD) and the local districts for presenting the Earth Team Awards. Mr. Norton said that he got a lot of positive response from districts wanting to participate next year and that he feels it fit right in with the LACD Awards programs.

Mr. Norton said that he wanted to mention the Hugh Hammond Bennett Excellence in Conservation award. He said that the Commission members may have noticed the sheet on the tables at the NACD meeting. He said that this would be the first year for this award. He said that listed at the bottom of this sheet is the criteria for the award nominees. He said that this award will start at the local districts and from the pool of local district nominees LACD will select the state nominee. He said that after the state chooses its nominee, that person can advance to the national level. Mr. Norton said that this concluded his report.

Chairman Skains thanked Mr. Norton for his report.

#### Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondence item is a letter from the East Carroll SWCD requesting the Commission approval for Mr. Donavon Taves and Mr. Teddy Schneider to attend the 2018 NACD Fly-In on March 19-21, 2018. Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve out of state travel for Mr. Taves and Mr. Schneider. Chairman Skains requested a motion to approve the request.

**Motion:** Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve East Carroll SWCD's request for Mr. Donavon Taves and Mr. Teddy Schneider to attend the 2018 NACD Fly In Meeting on March 19-21, 2018. Mr. David Daigle seconded and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence item is a cost share agreement from Dugdeмона SWCD. He asked Mr. Joey Breaux to review it. Mr. Breaux said that this is a prospective agreement between US Forest Service and Dugdeмона SWCD for feral hog removal on lands within a mile buffer of the Kisatchie National Forest lands. Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve Dugdeмона SWCD's cost share agreement.

**Motion:** Mr. Randell Fletcher made a motion to approve Dugdeмона SWCD's cost share agreement with the US Forest Service. Mr. David Daigle seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the next item is a letter from NASCA. He asked Mr. Spicer to review the letter. Mr. Spicer said that he wanted to make mention of this and wanted Mr. Norton to review it. Mr. Norton said that two of the big issues in relation to the farm bill are the cotton programs and the Margin Protection program but with the passage of budget resolution, these issues no longer exist. He said that with this increase NRCS won't have to deal with sequestration for the next two years as well an additional \$500 million added to the Emergency Watershed Protection program.

Chairman Skains said the next item is an article on "NACD Responds to President Trump's FY19 Budget Proposal". He said that congress supports conservation programs and have been most vital to protecting and enhancing our natural resources and expects congress to continue to support the conservation programs.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "State Ag Officials Applaud Bipartisan Effort to Give Farmers Certainty Under CERCLA".

Chairman Skains said the next article is "NACD Choose Next President-Elect", Tim Palmer. He said that everyone met Mr. Tim Palmer at the LACD convention held in January.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Conservation Stewardship Program Applications Available in All Six Rice States". Mr. Norton said this is a Regional Conservation Partnership Program project proposal that was awarded to USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited partnership and this is one of several proposals that have been awarded across the state. He said that applications must be received by Friday, March 2, 2018.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Spring Fly-In. He said that Mr. Brad Spicer, Mr. David Daigle, Mr. Britt Paul, along with himself will be attending the Fly-In in Washington D.C. on March 19-21, 2018.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Distinction Inductee Passes Away". He asked Mr. Spicer to review this article. Mr. Spicer said that Mr. Pete Lanaux was an outstanding supervisor in the Crescent Soil and Water Conservation District. He said that Mr. Lanaux did not mind addressing issues at hand and made a real contribution to the district and the landowners within the Crescent SWCD. He said Mr. Lanaux served on the board for 35 years.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Sabine Conservation District Sweeps Awards at Annual Convention". Mr. Spicer said that Sabine SWCD is very active in its community and was awarded at the LACD convention for their outstanding efforts.

Chairman Skains said that the next article is "Louisiana Department of Agriculture rolls out new logo". Mr. Spicer said that there are four new labels: Certified Louisiana, Certified Cajun, Certified Creole, and Certified Farm to Table. He said that the Cajun and the Creole labels have to identify specific Cajun or Creole ingredients contained in the food.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Sugar Professionals Discuss New Techniques, Strategies at Annual Meeting". Mr. Spicer asked Dr. Rogers' Leonard to review the article. Dr. Leonard said that the meeting was held on Feb. 5-7, 2018 by the Louisiana Division of the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists. He said that this was a national meeting held in conjunction with the American Sugar Cane League meeting. He said

that the article highlighted all the various things that they are working on including enhancing quality, cold tolerance, and production practices. He said they also discussed a new weed called Merrill's nightshade that is increasing in population in cane acreage across the state.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Workshops Highlight Soil Health Research". Chairman Skains asked Dr. Leonard to review this article. Dr. Leonard said that along with the soil health workshop, they held soil health field days in Winnsboro, LA and St. Joseph, LA. He said that the workshops were primarily held in side due to the weather. He said that he had recently looked at a 100 year summary of Louisiana's Agriculture Experiment Station and one of the projects that was highlighted was 30 years of cover crop. He said that another project that he thought was interesting was an introduction to a new summer cover crop: the soybean.

Chairman Skains said the last article is "Farmers, Ranchers Set to Gain New Market Opportunities for Improving Soil Health. He asked Mr. Norton if he would review this article. Mr. Norton said that he did not have all the details but he knew that Noble Research Institute is initiating an effort to create a new voluntary environmental service market. He said that it would benefit agriculture producers and improve the environment for all of society.

#### Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Skains said they would now take up resignations, appointments, or reappointments of supervisors. He said there were two resignations and two reappointments this month. Chairman Skains said that he would first report on the resignation of Mr. Allan Ensminger from Crescent SWCD. He asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He asked for a motion to accept the resignation of Mr. Allan Ensminger, appointed supervisor, Crescent SWCD effective February 27, 2018.

**Motion:** Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to accept the resignation of Mr. Allan Ensminger, appointed supervisor, Crescent SWCD effective February 27, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said that we have another resignation from Mr. Terry Smith, elected supervisor, Catahoula SWCD effective February 27, 2018. He asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He asked for a motion to accept the resignation of Mr. Terry Smith, elected supervisor, Catahoula SWCD, effective February 27, 2018.

**Motion:** Mr. Randell Fletcher made a motion to accept the resignation of Mr. Terry Smith, elected supervisor, Catahoula SWCD effective February 27, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

Mr. Spicer said that both of these supervisors were great assets to their districts and their knowledge and contributions will be missed.

Chairman Skains said the Avoyelles SWCD is requesting Mr. Larry Sayes be reappointed to fill his vacant appointed term. The term will begin February 27, 2018 and will expire on February 27, 2021. Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none; he asked for a motion to approve the reappointment of Mr. Larry Sayes to his appointed position on the Avoyelles SWCD board of supervisors effective February 27, 2018 and expires on February 27, 2021.

**Motion:** Mr. Randell Fletcher made a motion to approve the reappointment of Mr. Larry Sayes to his appointed position on the Avoyelles SWCD board of supervisors effective February 27, 2018 and expires on February 27, 2021. The motion was seconded Mr. Ed Yerger and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the LaSalle SWCD is requesting Mr. Sammy Franklin be reappointed to fill his vacant appointed term. The term will begin February 27, 2018 and will expire on February 27, 2021. Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none; he asked for a motion to

approve the reappointment of Mr. Sammy Franklin to his appointed position on the LaSalle SWCD board of supervisors effective February 27, 2018 and expires on February 27, 2021.

**Motion:** Mr. Randell Fletcher made a motion to approve the reappointment of Mr. Sammy Franklin to his appointed position on the LaSalle SWCD board of supervisors effective February 27, 2018 and expires on February 27, 2021. The motion was seconded Mr. David Daigle and the motion passed unanimously.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Skains asked Dr. Rogers Leonard to give a report from the LSU AgCenter. Dr. Rogers Leonard stated that he wanted to remind the Commission of a few things. He said that Mr. Jay Hardwick will be receiving the Southern Cotton Ginners Association AgCenter Award on Thursday at the Mid- South Farm and Gin show. He said the LSU Agcenter is the highlighted institution at this year's show. He said that Mr. Hardwick's farm is nominated for their conservation efforts and support of agriculture.

Dr. Leonard said that some dates to remember include:

March 3<sup>rd</sup> - Iberia Field Day at the LSU AgCenter Iberia Research Station  
March 19<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> - Ag Week  
March 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> - Water Conference in Baton Rouge

Chairman Skains thanked Dr. Leonard for his report.

Chairman Skains said that he wanted to inform everyone that they held a startup meeting at the LACD annual meeting to talk about ways to increase funding for the districts. He said that they are currently reviewing legislation from Minnesota, Missouri, and Iowa to develop some ideas on what we may do in Louisiana. He said that once we have reviewed these documents they will gather their ideas and have a sit down with Commissioner Strain. Chairman Skains said once they present their ideas to Commissioner Strain, they will move on to discuss them with others. He asked for any questions or concerns. There were none.

Chairman Skains asked for any further comments.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, March 27, 2018 at 1:15 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, LDAF Building, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

### **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. Ed Yerger made a motion to adjourn at 2:28 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.



Reggie Skains, Chairman  
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission