

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

June 26, 2018
1:15 PM

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 gave the invocation and Mr. Daigle to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha 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, and 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. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC, Mr. Ray Reich, LDAF-OSWC, and 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 May 22, 2018 State Commission minutes. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the May 22, 2018 State Commission Meeting minutes.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to approve the May 22, 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 six districts have earned all of their allocated 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 as of May, districts have earned 64% of their Farm Bill funds. He said that there are a few districts that we will contact to ensure

they are accurately logging Farm Bill work hours. Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and there were none.

Legislative Regular Session/State Funding

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *Legislative Regular Session/State Funding*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said that the House and Senate just passed a 0.45% sales tax. He said because a temporary 1% sales tax will end on June 30, 2018, this will result in a 0.55% reduction in sales tax revenues. He said that a 0.55% reduction will not have any effects on the district funding levels.

Chairman Skains asked Dr. Leonard if he had any comments. Dr. Leonard said that it is important to note that higher education is still working under 2017's budget and that they are not fully funded. He said that there are mandatory increases required by the state every year that are not accounted for and those will have to come out of the budget. He said that these increases become quite substantial when adding benefits and employee related salary adjustments. Chairman Skains asked what percentage would affect the AgCenter's costs? Dr. Leonard said that the AgCenter normally knows the percentage but not this year due to the Civil Service changing the way that they structure salary increases. He said that it is no longer a mandated 3 or 4 percent and that it is now a sliding scale based on the employee's work efforts. He said that he feels pretty good about this and that the AgCenter will be able to maintain its current operations. He said that they will not be doing a lot of expansion and they will not be filling positions quickly unless there is a critical need in the state. Dr. Leonard said that thankfully this is a multi-year tax and that the AgCenter does not have to worry about a mid-year cut.

Chairman Skains thanked Mr. Spicer and Dr. Leonard for their comments.

NACD South Central Region Meeting

Chairman Skains asked Mr. Daigle and Mr. Spicer to comment on the meeting. Mr. Daigle said that he was recently on a conference call and they were working out details for the meeting. He said the dates are September 4-6, 2018 in San Marcos, Texas. Mr. Spicer said that he also wanted to mention the NACD summer meeting will take place on August 3-9, 2018 in Williamsburg, VA. He said that they have some great conservation and historic site tours set up. He said that Williamsburg is a great place to having a meeting because it has some great history of the early colonial period.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Acting State Conservationist, Mr. Tim Landreaneau to give the NRCS report. Mr. Landreaneau said that Kevin Norton sends greetings to everyone and looks forward to returning to Louisiana soon. He said while Mr. Norton remains on detail to the House Ag Committee, he will serve as Acting State Conservationist for the next 120 days, or until Mr. Norton returns if less than 120 days. He said during this period, Dustin Farmer will serve as Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Easement Programs. Mr. Landreaneau said Melanie Oliver has been brought in from Oklahoma on detail to serve as Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs for the next 90 days while Scott Edwards continues his detail as National EQIP Program Manager in DC. Mr. Landreaneau said they have also been able to fill two key positions. He said Kendal Hicks, from Arizona, has been selected as Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (NRCS Area I) with a start date of July 22nd and Ms. Theresa Killings, from New York, has been selected as Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy with a start date of August 5th. He said five District Conservationist positions are currently being advertised: Marksville, Many, St. Joseph, Ferriday, and Amite, along with five other state and area level positions. He said they have been approved for an additional round of hiring that is anticipated in July or August, but it is not yet known how many vacancies LA will receive approval to fill.

Mr. Landreaneau said the House did pass the Farm Bill last Thursday afternoon by a vote of 213 to 211 and was forwarded to the Senate. He said the Senate will replace the House Bill with the Bill that was passed by their Committee on June 13th. He said a Cloture vote should occur in the Senate on Monday evening of the 25th. Mr. Landreaneau said this will allow debate to proceed on their Bill. He said they will face several amendments and

will likely take a couple of days to complete their work. He said they are expected to pass the Senate Bill this week. He said the process of the House and Senate putting the two Bills together has yet to be outlined by the Committee chairs and ranking members. He said they have all indicated a desire to have the conference report ready as soon as possible. Mr. Landreneau said there are significant differences in the House and Senate versions of the Conservation Title to be worked out in conference.

Mr. Landreneau said several of LA's NRCS Leadership Team had the opportunity to attend Farm Bureau's annual conference last week in New Orleans. Mr. Landreneau said that the meeting was very successful and that there is a strong presence of SWCD members among Farm Bureau committees and leadership.

Mr. Landreneau said NRCS received eighteen proposals through the 2018 Announcement of Program Funding (APF). He said thirteen priority proposals have been selected amounting to \$1,616,250 and are currently under agreement development with partners. He said other completed agreements and amendments are ongoing.

Mr. Landreneau said so far in FY 2019, we have obligated over \$15M to 444 contacts on over 74,000 acres, which is approximately 60% of our current year funding allocation for EQIP. He said field offices are continuing to fund applications from local application pools, and are making additional funding selections from the statewide initiative application pools that recently closed. He said currently NRCS has 474 applications that are being processed for eligibility and ranking for CSP. He said Louisiana has an allocation of 131,211 acres for enrollment in FY2019 and that funding selections will begin in July.

Mr. Landreneau said Wetland Reserve Easement (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, NRCS are anticipating enrolling 10 easements on 4,200 acres. He said Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program is continuing to coordinate with The Conservation Fund for application and enrollment of an Agriculture Land Easement in Vermillion Parish. He said the project was initiated through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and would potentially be the first ALE in Louisiana. He said this project is also serving as a platform to develop future ALE projects in Louisiana.

Mr. Landreneau said the June 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 Mr. Benny Archie, Poultry Producer in Union Parish. He said the article highlights Mr. Archie's innovative conservation work in managing poultry litter.

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

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondences for review are engagement letters from Iberia SWCD, Lafayette SWCD, St. Martin SWCD, and Vermillion SWCD. Mr. Spicer said these districts all had Chip Cantrell, CPA and needed to change to a different CPA because Chip Cantrell, CPA was no longer on the LLA (Louisiana Legislative Auditor) list. He said that Iberia SWCD, Lafayette SWCD, and St. Martin SWCD are requesting to enter into contract with Maraist and Maraist CPA in St. Martinville, LA to conduct their district's FYE (Fiscal Year Ending) June 30, 2018 audit at a cost of \$1,000-\$1,200 and Vermillion is requesting to enter into contract with Langlinas Broussard & Kohlenberg in Abbeville, LA to conduct their FYE June 30, 2018 audit at a cost of \$1,000. Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members about the engagement letters and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the engagement letters.

Motion: Mr. Fletcher made a motion to approve the engagement letters from Iberia SWCD, Lafayette SWCD, and St. Martin SWCD to enter into contract with Maraist and Maraist, CPA in St. Martinville, LA to conduct their FYE June 30, 2018 audit at a cost of \$1,000-\$1,200. Dr. Ernest Girouard seconded the motion and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the engagement letter for Vermillion SWCD to enter into contract with Langlinas Broussard & Kohlenberg in Abbeville, LA to conduct their FYE June 30, 2018 audit at a cost of \$1,000.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to approve the engagement letter from Vermillion SWCD to enter into contract with Langlinas Broussard & Kohlenberg in Abbeville, LA to conduct their FYE June 30, 2018 audit at a cost of \$1,000. The motion was seconded by John Compton and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the first article is 'Most distressed': Drinking Water Systems? Governor's panel identifies 10 to start overhaul". Mr. Spicer said this article discusses the huge maintenance problems that Louisiana has with small drinking water systems. He said that most systems are at least 50 years old and are in communities that are shrinking rather than growing. He said that these communities don't have resources to maintain their communities including their water systems. He said that the governor has put together a panel to start working on the 10 most troubled systems. Mr. Spicer said that in the last 3 years, we have had 20 systems that had lead detected at levels higher than EPA maximum of 15mcg/liter and EPA is currently trying to lower standards to 10mg. He said that most of the troubled areas are in North Central Louisiana. Chairman Skains said as Mayor of Farmerville that he has dealt with a lot of water quality regulations for his city because they own their own water system. He said that they have received letters requesting that Union Parish consolidate all of their water systems. He said that he believes that they will never be able to meet their regulations. He said that this will become a problem for other water districts as well. Mr. Spicer said that he attended a symposium last fall dealing with the water system issues including lead. He said one of the many problems is that many smaller communities don't have anyone in charge of their water systems. Dr. Leonard said that he had been watching St. Joseph and they didn't decrease lead levels inside the houses but after they put the entire infrastructure in, it stops at the meter. He said many of the homes were built in the 1940s and 1950s and there are still lead pipes in these homes. He said that there are no grant programs to help people replace those pipes currently. He said you may not receive the results you are looking for unless you go in to try to replace the entire home system. Chairman Skains said that his town has to submit water samples every year to test for lead and they have never failed the tests.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Governor Announces New Watershed Council; citing Acadiana efforts to get funding for Vermillion dredging". Mr. Spicer said this is another effort that is critical. He said that the article looks at trying to reduce the flood risk rather than paying for the impacts after the flood. He said that he believes that there are a lot of areas in the state that can, with small investments, reduce flood hazards rather than dealing with the huge costly damages after a flood. Dr. Girouard said that a regional group from Alexandria meets regularly and has a grant to study drainage on a regional basis. He said that they have agreed to start working on their study from the bottom and work their way up. He said that Lafayette and St. Martin have passed a big tax that was originally devoted to animal control and their libraries and has now been dedicated to cleaning drainage. He said that with the tax passing, the group now has to work from the top down. Dr. Girouard said they are looking to dredge the Vermillion River and he said that this is easier said than done. He said that there are certain parts of the river that are very shallow especially around the bridges. He said that they have not tested the sediment that they have taken out the river. He said that in Northeast Louisiana, they started taking sediment out of the small lakes and placing it on the interior of the wall which was wrong choice and he said that same thing will happen with the Vermillion River.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "NASDA's 2018 Farm Bill Analysis". He said that these points were covered by Mr. Landreneau earlier. He said that everyone is welcomed to review this article at their leisure.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Dry wells, sinking land and fears of a global food crisis". He asked if Mr. Spicer had any comments. Mr. Spicer said that this is summary of where we are and where will be going if we don't address water management issue in Louisiana and through the USA and the World. He said reduction in the quality and amounts of groundwater available are growing problems throughout the world including some areas in Louisiana. He said as discussed in their article, their problem surface subsidence resulting from not

recharging aquifers from which water is being removed. He said surface subsidence has become a serious problem in some areas of California with subsidence rates over three inches a year.

Mr. Spicer said that he had been working with a group on the Toledo Bend Reservoir regarding how to continue funding operation and maintenance of the reservoir. He said that they had a 50 year contract when the lake was constructed and that contract ended two years ago. He said that Toledo Bend wasn't able to negotiate another long term contract but the power company did offer a five year contract. He said that Toledo Bend will probably not get another power company contract because it is too costly for the power company. He said that Toledo Bend is looking for another financial source to maintain the reservoir and looking at the possibility of selling water.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Skains said they would now take up resignations, reappointments, and appointments of supervisors. He said that the first item is a letter from Bogue-Chitto SWCD. He said that they held their election Saturday, June 9, 2018 and there were 103 votes counted. He said that there were two candidates in the district election. He said that Mr. Murdock Brumfield was the election winner, pending State Commission approval. Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there was none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve Mr. Murdock Brumfield as the winner of the Bogue-Chitto SWCD election.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve Mr. Murdock Brumfield as the winner of the Bogue-Chitto SWCD election. The motion was seconded Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

RESOLVED, Mr. Murdock Brumfield is the winner of the Bogue- Chitto SWCD election. His term will begin July 1, 2018 and expire June 30, 2021.

Chairman Skains said that there were 4 resignations this month: Dorcheat SWCD, Mr. Joseph Beatty, Elected position; Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Mark Heinen, Elected position; Vermillion SWCD, Mr. Leland "Dale" Vidrine, Elected position; West Carroll SWCD, Mr. Steve Rye, Elected position.

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. John Compton called for a motion to accept the resignations of Dorcheat SWCD, Mr. Joseph Beatty, Elected position; Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Mark Heinen, Elected position; Vermillion SWCD, Mr. Leland "Dale" Vidrine, Elected position; West Carroll SWCD, Mr. Steve Rye, Elected position. The motion was seconded by Dr. Ernest Girouard and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said that we also had one reappointment: Allen SWCD, Mr. Thomas Mayes, Appointed position.

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to accept the reappointment of Mr. Thomas Mays.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to accept the reappointment of Mr. Thomas Mayes, Allen SWCD, Appointed position. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Compton and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Skains asked Dr. Leonard if he had any comments. Dr. Leonard said that he wanted to let everyone know that the Louisiana Master Farmer Program was recognized in the Delta Farm Press and listed some of the field agent trainings that everyone is welcomed to attend.

Mr. Joey Breaux said that Upper Delta SWCD and Pointe Coupee Parish are partnering with Iberville and another parish to submit a proposal for funding for a plan to implement a watershed protection and flood

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. Compton made a motion to adjourn at 2:13 P.M. The motion was seconded by Dr. Girouard and passed unanimously.



/s/ Reggie Skains

Reggie Skains, Chairman

State Soil and Water Conservation Commission