

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

September 19, 2019
1:15 PM

USDA BUILDING B TRAINING ROOM
3727 GOVERNMENT STREET
ALEXANDRIA, LA 71302

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. David Daigle lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

Members and Alternate Members present:

Mr. Reggie Skains- Chairman
Dr. Ernest Girouard-Vice Chairman
Mr. Chris Carter
Mr. Larry Sayes
Dr. Tommy Vitrano
Mr. Ed Giering
Mr. David Daigle- LACD President_

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative
Mr. Ed Yerger
Dr. Roger Leonard, LSU AgCenter

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Tim Landreneau, Acting NRCS State Conservationist USDA-NRCS
Dr. Tara Smith, LSU AgCenter
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC
Mr. Jacob Marceaux, Calcasieu SWCD Supervisor
Mr. Jason T. Nolde, Calcasieu SWCD Supervisor
Mr. John Alan Williams, 1st Vice President of LACD and Sabine SWCD Supervisor
Mr. Anthony Butler, Capital SWCD Supervisor
Mr. Steve Horvath, Capital SWCD Supervisor
Mr. Donavon Taves, East Carroll SWCD Supervisor
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members about the August 27, 2019 State Soil and Water Conservation Commission minutes and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the August 27, 2019 State Commission Meeting minutes.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to approve August 27, 2019 State Soil and Water Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Sayes 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 reported there is approximately \$192,000 balance in the Farm Bill Agreement that ends September 30, 2019. He said this balance includes funds for the Targeted Watershed Technicians. Mr. Spicer said the OSWC has received the amended contract for Farm Bill adding \$750,000 to the current balance. He said the districts have done a good job submitting hours as requested. Mr. Spicer asked were there any questions and there were none.

Area 5 State Election Convention

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *Area 5 State Election Convention*. He reminded the Commission that the Area 5 Election Convention will take place on October 22, 2019 at 11:00am in the LDAF Veterans' Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA. He said that he also wanted to remind Area 5 districts that they must select a delegate and alternate and submit their names to OSWC by October 11, 2019.

New NRCS Cooperative Agreements

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *New NRCS Cooperative Agreements*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had an updates. Mr. Spicer said there were no new updates besides the previously mentioned \$750,000 addition to the Farm Bill agreement. Mr. Landreneau said NRCS is currently working on approving two additional agreements. He said the first agreement provides for four new Program Support Specialists (PSS) and one Water Resource Technician and the second agreement would cover the Targeted Watershed technicians that are currently under the Farm Bill agreement.

LACD Annual Mid-Year Meeting Report

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *LACD Annual Mid-Year Meeting-September 19, 2019*. He asked Mr. Daigle if he had any comments on this. Mr. Daigle said the meeting was well attended and a great success. He said there is a great amount of interest coming from all committees on a wide range of topics. He said there were three proposed resolutions: two from the Coastal Resources Committee and one proposed by both the Legislative and the Resource Conservation Planning and Application committees. Chairman Skains said the Annual meeting will be held in Baton Rouge at the Crowne Plaza hotel on January 8-10, 2020.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Acting NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, Mr. Tim Landreneau to give the NRCS report. Mr. Landreneau said there were a lot of great accomplishments this year with the Farm Bill programs resulting in significant conservation practices being applied.

Mr. Landreneau said EQIP is approximately 98% completed. He said this includes 673 contracts with 145,000 acres. He said by the end of the week they should be completed. He said CSP including RCPP has 145 applications that have been selected for funding which is based on a total allocation of \$18.6 million dollars. He said 62 contracts have been obligated on 47,000 acres of land. Mr. Landreneau said this is what field offices are primarily working on going toward the end of their fiscal year. He said 405 applications have been selected

under the Grassland Conservation Initiative (GCI) for funding of about \$3.7 million dollars. Mr. Landreneau said NRCS is close to 90% completion and has 350 contracts covering over 31,000 acres of land. He said NRCS is in the process of completing 34 new Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) on 5,800 acres. Mr. Landreneau said WRE is funded at \$17.5 million dollars. He said the RCPP announcement was recently posted on grants.gov. He said there is a 90 day proposal period which means the proposals must be in by December 3rd. He said the announcement has more details than in previous years which include many changes. Mr. Landreneau said NRCS is excited about the Conservation Planning and Program Kickoff meetings that are scheduled on October 1st and 2nd. He said the meetings will cover some of the planning and technology tools NRCS plans to put into effect. He said the October 1st meeting is in Monroe, LA and the October 2nd meeting is in Lafayette. He said NRCS encourages all district staff to attend the meeting. He said NRCS is also excited about a leadership development program. Mr. Landreneau said this is going to be a tri-state program which will include Mississippi and Tennessee. He said we are currently waiting for the chief's signature which is expected within the next week. He said if this timeline happens, they will open this program up for applications for GS-11 or GS-12 positions around the first week of October. He said each state will have 7 participants. He said they will be doing their program tasks as part of their normal job schedules as well as working on special projects and having the opportunity to be detailed to the other two states.

Mr. Landreneau said in this month's *Conservation Update* is about two farmers with small farming acres. He said Ms. Elosie Austin, a farmer from Grand Cane, Louisiana, discusses her fond memories of milking dairy cows and helping her father work on their 80 plus acre farm. He said she worked as a teacher for 20 years and worked for the State of Louisiana for another 25 years when she decided to come back to her first love of Agriculture. He said Mr. Donnie Brown is known in Colfax, LA for anything livestock related. Mr. Landreneau said Mr. Brown has over 100 acres of land and has 70 head of sheep and 30 lambs. He said these two farms have been working with their local USDA offices as well as SWCDs to get the assistance needed to improve their farming operations.

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

Supervisor Election Results/Resignations/Reappointments/Appointments

Chairman Skains said they would now take up supervisor resignations, reappointments, and appointments.

Chairman Skains said there is one resignation request this month from Capital SWCD, Ms. Jennifer Coats, elected position, effective September 19, 2019. He asked for comments from the public and the Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to accept the resignation from Capital SWCD, Ms. Jennifer Coats, elected position, effective September 19, 2019.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to accept the resignation of Ms. Jennifer Coats Capital SWCD, elected position, effective September 19, 2019. The motion was seconded by Dr. Tommy Vitrano and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said there were two reappointments this month:

East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Brian Howard, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began October 23, 2019 and expire October 23, 2022

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 motion to approve this reappointment.

Motion: Mr. Chris Carter made a motion to approve the reappointment of East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Brian Howard, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began October 23, 2019 and expire October 23, 2022. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Sayes and passed unanimously.

Madison SWCD, Mr. Ed Yerger, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began October 25, 2019 and expire October 25, 2022.

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 motion to approve this reappointment.

Motion: Mr. Chris Carter made a motion to approve the reappointment of Madison SWCD, Mr. Ed Yerger, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began October 25, 2019 and expire October 25, 2022. The motion was seconded by Dr. Tommy Vitrano and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said there are two appointments this month:

Chairman Skains said the first appointment request is from Capital SWCD requesting Ms. Jennifer Coats to fill the vacant appointed position formerly held by Mr. John Compton. Term will begin September 19, 2019 and expire November 22, 2021. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve this appointment.

Motion: Mr. Larry Sayes made a motion to approve the appointment of Ms. Jennifer Coats to fill the vacant appointed position formerly held by Mr. John Compton. Term will begin September 19, 2019 and expire November 22, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the second appointment request is from Capital SWCD requesting Mr. Burnell Muse to fill the vacant elected position formerly held by Ms. Jennifer Coats. Term will begin September 19, 2019 and expire June 30, 2020. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve this appointment.

Motion: Dr. Tommy Vitrano made a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Burnell Muse to fill the vacant elected position formerly held by Ms. Jennifer Coats. . Term will begin September 19, 2019 and expire June 30, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondence item is an out of state travel request from Crescent SWCD; Ms. Rebecca Livaudais, Mr. Irvin Dares III, Mr. Blaise Pezold, Mr. Henry George Schlorff, and Ms. Nina Ockman requesting approval to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 8-12, 2020 in Las Vegas, NV. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the out of state travel request from Crescent SWCD.

Motion: Dr. Tommy Vitrano made a motion to approve the out of state request from Crescent SWCD; Ms. Rebecca Livaudais, Mr. Irvin Dares III, Mr. Blaise Pezold, Mr. Henry George Schlorff, and Ms. Nina Ockman to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 8-12, 2020 in Las Vegas, NV. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *Creating Healthy Soil Lessens the Impact of Drought and Flooding. Will Farmers Support It*. Mr. Daigle said during the NACD South Central Meeting, Mr. Jimmy Emmons reported that many soils have lost 50% of their water absorption capacity. Chairman Skains said the article discusses what can be done to improve soil health. He said some of the ways include expanding the use of fall or winter cover crops, diversifying crop rotations, reducing tillage and using compost, manure, biochar or other soil amendments.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *The Tilling Catch 22: Erosion VS. Superweeds*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments on this. Mr. Spicer said the article discusses a wheat farmer; Mr. Ron Juris, from the inland farming area in the Pacific Northwest. He said Mr. Juris is trying to address the issues associated with erosion, cover crops, and control of superweeds.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is the 2020 NACD Annual Meeting announcement. He said the meeting will take place at Bally's Las Vegas Hotel and Casino. He said the group room rate is \$159 and this does not include taxes or resort fees. He said NACD is accepting breakout meeting topics but there is a September 6th deadline and it has passed. Chairman Skains said NACD is doing the First Timer Scholarships

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Chairman Skains said the last correspondence item is the *NACD Stewardship Program*. He said this year's Stewardship week theme is "Where Would We Bee Without Pollinators? He said pollinators form the foundations for a healthy and sustainable future for food and the environment. He said it is important that we work to help pollinators enhance native habitats and protect against species declines. He said Stewardship week will be April 26- May 3, 2020.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Skains said they would now take up Other Business. He asked Dr. Tara Smith if she had any comments. Dr. Smith said there have been discussions on field days related to the Patrick Taylor project. She said one of the field days occurred last week and there is another scheduled for September 24th at the Hardwick farm. She said the field day will focus on reducing nutrient runoff in crop fields. She said the Central Region Beef and Forage Field Day is scheduled on October 17th in Alexandria, LA. Dr. Smith said there has been a lot of discussion around the hemp farming. She said they have tentatively scheduled a statewide educational meeting on November 13th in Alexandria, LA and they have scheduled another Precision Ag Workshop on January 23, 2020.

Dr. Smith said that concluded her updated and Chairman Skains thanked her.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 22, 2019 at 1:15 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

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: Dr. Tommy Vitrano made a motion to adjourn at 2:18 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

/s/ Reggie Skains 
Reggie Skains, Chairman State Soil and Water Conservation Commission