

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

July 28, 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 1:30 P.M. Mr. Reggie Skains 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, Member
Mr. Ed Yerger, Member
Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Member

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director SSWCC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

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

New Director/Assistant Commissioner

Dr. Girouard welcomed Mr. Joey Breaux who is now serving as the new Director of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and the Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Soil and Water Conservation. Mr. Breaux said no one will ever fill Mr. Spicer's shoes but he will do his best. Chairman Girouard asked were there any comments from the Commission and there were none.

Approval Of The Minutes

Chairman Giroaurd called for a motion to approve the June 10, 2020 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains
Second by: Mr. Steve Horvath
Passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

- Farm Bill total remaining funds on agreements ending September 30, 2020 is over \$140,000.
- Prior to Covid-19, districts were earning \$70,000-\$75,000 a month. In the last few months, districts have been earning between \$30,000- \$40,000 a month. There may be a small balance but we will send something to the districts to make sure that they are doing everything they can to make sure they are earning their Farm Bill funds.
- Discussions have started about to the new Farm Bill agreement. The agreement is shaping up to be \$1,000,000 per year for 3 years with a possible option to add a 4th year. NRCS is requesting that districts report their hours as well as the types of activities being performed. These reportable activities are very similar to Farm Bill activities as were discussed in DSL training several years ago. The list currently being developed would be a list that a farm bill employees could check off, and this can be reviewed at board meetings.
- Mr. Kacir said the new agreement is set to start on September 30, 2020.

District Funding- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

The districts will have the exact same allocation as last FY which is \$1,685,292. We have an estimated cost of insurance based on last year's figures but we are currently waiting on response from Turrentine insurance company to see if there are any updated forms that we should be sending out to the districts. Dr. Girouard asked for a motion to approve the proposed district allocation formula for state funds for FY 20-21.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Second by: Mr. Larry Sayes

Passed unanimously.

Mr. Skains asked if the formula based was on workload. Mr. Breaux said all districts are allocated a \$25,000 base allocation. He said any districts that have additional offices would receive an extra \$17,500 and districts that have additional parishes or partial parishes receive \$1,250. After these calculations, the workload percentages are introduced for each district.

Supervisor Elections-Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

As of this morning, OSWC has received 10 petitions. There have been several reminder emails sent out to them to make sure to get petitions postmarked prior to July 30, 2020. If supervisors do not submit their nominating petitions in time, their elected position will become vacant for the term. However, the Commission is then able to appoint a new candidate to fill the vacant elected position. Mr. Skains asked whether or not a supervisor that hasn't completed his petition on time would be eligible for this appointment. Mr. Breaux said they would not be eligible to fill that vacancy because they did not complete the nominating petition process as the incumbent.

New Business

NRCS State Conservationist Report- Mr.Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist

- NRCS has two new computer systems: Conservation Desktop and the Conservation Assessment Resource Tool (CART)
- 600 EQIP applications have been selected for funding but only 2% have been obligated.
- 450 CSP applications are currently being reviewed and are on the way to being obligated.
- 700-800 CRP contracts to write for FSA to obligate by September and most are renewals.
- 7 new Soil Conservationists and 1 returning Engineer
- CSP and CSP-GCI payments will start to be processed in November and December.
- NRCS will soon announce 13 LA Resource Unit District Conservationists. They will announce the opening to Louisiana for 10 days and open the position nationally afterwards. They are hoping to have their new DCs in training by October.

Engagement Letter Approval

Chairman Girouard said the first correspondence item is an engagement letter from St. Martin SWCD requesting approval from the Commission to enter into a contract with Maraist & Maraist, CPA LLC to conduct the district's FYE June 30, 2020 audit at the cost of \$1,200. Chairman Girouard asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He said if there were no comments, then he would call for motion to approve St. Martin SWCD entering into a contract with Maraist & Maraist, CPA LLC.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath
Second by: Mr. Alan Williams
Passed unanimously.

Correspondence- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

LA Farm Bureau Outstanding Young Farm Woman: "Somebody Needs to Feed the World"

Mrs. Danielle Fruge-Vail, Secretary of Gulf Coast SWCD, won the Louisiana Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Outstanding Young Farm Woman award. Her and her husband have 2,000 acres of rice and cattle. Ms. Vail said "Having Faith that you know that you were put here for a purpose to do it. You will need to continue to do it, because there's nobody behind you to replace you. We know the struggle that there's just not a whole lot there. Somebody needs to feed the world".

Invasive Species Impacting Crops

The LSU AgCenter recently reported the invasive apple snail has been negatively impacting the crawfish and rice crops in southwest Louisiana. They are an invasive species that in the US started in Florida and have made their way to Louisiana's rice and crawfish ponds. The pesticides that would be used to kill the snails would also kill the crawfish.

During this Hurricane Season, USDA Offers New and Improved Insurance Options

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recently introduced a new crop insurance hurricane endorsement that covers a producer's underlying crop insurance policy's deductible when your parish is within or adjacent to the area of sustained hurricane-force winds. The Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index (HIP-WI) covers 70 crops and has recently helped those who dealt with natural disasters in 2018 and 2019.

WOTUS Update: Finalized Navigable Waters Protection Rule and Current Litigation

Under the new 2020 rule, the definition of lakes and ponds has been clarified, and now excludes "artificial lakes and ponds that are not jurisdictional impoundments and that are constructed or excavated in upland or non-jurisdictional waters.

U.S. Army Central Review of Legislative & Regulatory Actions

- HB 181: extends cooperative endeavor agreements for use of surface waters. Proposed law retains present law but extends the final termination date.
- HB869: relates to requirements for permitting a medical waste incineration facility. This bill authorizes the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to issue a permit for medical waste facilities only in parishes with populations less than 50,000 according to the latest decennial census.
- HR 19 and SR 14: approves the annual state integrated coastal protection plan for fiscal year (FY) 2021, as adopted by Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board
- SB 117: re-creates the Department of Natural Resources
- SB 353: provides for carbon sequestration.
- SB 386: establishes the Commission for Louisiana's Energy, Environment, and Restoration.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

- Chairman Girouard said there are 3 supervisor resignations. The resignations are Capital SWCD, Mr. Leeland Lee (elected)- effective July 28, 2020; Lafourche- Terrebonne SWCD, Mr. Roland Bourgeois

(appointed)- effective June 18, 2020; and Rapides SWCD, Mr. Jim Harper (elected)- effective July 10, 2020.

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to approve these resignations.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains
Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath
Passed unanimously.

- Chairman Girouard said there are 3 supervisor appointments for three year terms.

The appointments are: Capital SWCD, Mr. David Hoover, replacing Mr. Leeland Lee (elected) effective August 1, 2020- June 30, 2021; Lafayette SWCD, Mr. Danny Hebert, replacing Mr. Sidney Bowles (elected) effective July 28, 2020- June 30, 2021; and Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD, Mr. Andre Danos, replacing Mr. Roland Bourgeois (appointed) effective July 28, 2020- June 11, 2022.

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to approve these appointments.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath
Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger
Passed unanimously.

- Chairman Girouard said there are 3 supervisor reappointments for three year terms.

The reappointments submitted for three year terms are: Calcasieu SWCD, Mr. Preston Broxson, effective July 27, 2020- July 27, 2023; Lower Delta SWCD, Mr. John Gay, effective July 28, 2020- May 4, 2023; and Rapides SWCD, Mr. Max Johnston, effective July 28, 2020-June 26, 2023.

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

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger
Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath
Passed unanimously.

Feral Swine Project- Mr. Joey Breaux, Executive Director, SSWCC

Natchitoches SWCD, Dugdeмона SWCD, and Gulf Coast SWCD have hired technicians to work on the Feral Swine Project. Tensas Concordia is on the way to hiring a technician as well. The purchases of equipment such as trucks and UTVs has been delayed due to COVID, but the traps are easy to purchase. The vehicles and UTVs are being purchased on state contract and there has not been adequate inventory to supply the equipment needed.

OSWC is also looking to develop an agreement with the LSU AgCenter to conduct pre and post feral swine activity surveys similar to what was done previously in 2014 and to also conduct outreach in the feral swine pilot areas. There has been some draft deliverables prepared to help start the agreement. Dr. Salassi said the AgCenter did get a copy of the survey that Dr. Tanger used previously and this saves a lot of time. He said the issue maybe identifying the population to survey. Mr. Breaux said they are planning to revise page 2 of the standard SWCD/Feral Swine cooperative agreement to include an addendum that requires the cooperator to participate in the survey.

LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi

Dates to Remember:

1. September 1, 2020- Sweet Potato Field Day (Virtual)-Rayne, LA
2. August 11, 2020- Louisiana Master Farmer's Phase 1 Training- H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station- Rayne, LA

OTHER BUSINESS

LACD Mid-Year Meeting- Mr. Alan Williams

Due to the pandemic, the mid-year meeting will not be held as an in person meeting this year. The only other option would be to hold virtual meetings for each standing committee. The possible platforms we could use include Zoom or Google Meets. OSWC and Committee Advisors will assist in planning and leading the meetings. During these meetings, the committee can develop draft resolutions and plan speakers for the full January meeting. January's Annual LACD meeting may also be a virtual meeting but it would consist only of a 2-3 hour business meeting.

Mr. Breaux said at the last SSWCC meeting the members requested that we gather a list of districts who often request attendance waivers for supervisors who don't meet the attendance requirements. He said the list has 6 names from area 1, 2, and 4. Chairman Girouard recommended that we make a list of ideas to respond to the waivers appropriately. He said he spoke with Mr. Tim Palmer, NACD President, and he said this is a national problem.

Next Meeting

Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 25, 2020 at 1:15 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

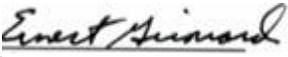
Public Comments

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 2:19 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