

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

September 1, 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 1:15 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

Public Comments

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

Approval of the agenda

Chairman Giroaurd called for a motion to approve the September 1, 2020 Agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

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. Ed Yerger

Motion 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 approximately 109,000.
- With one month remaining, OSWC plans to draw the remaining balance from the agreement and distribute the funds to districts that have over earned.

District Funding- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Budget letters have been sent out to the districts along with requests for budget revisions from those districts. We are currently waiting for one or two districts to submit their final revisions.

LACD Annual Mid-Year Meeting- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said he had been in touch with Mr. Alan Williams, LACD president, regarding options for conducting the LACD mid-year meeting. He said that they concluded that each standing committee could conduct its own virtual meeting, and follow the meetings up with reports on concerns and potential resolutions, to the full LACD membership in preparation for the LACD annual meeting. He said these meetings will be conducted between early September and mid-October. The LACD annual meeting format is still undetermined due to COVID concerns, but planning for an in-person meeting will proceed and a final determination on format will be made in October. Mr. Breaux asked were there any questions and there were none.

Area 1 and 2 State Convention-Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Area 1 and 2 convention has previously been held at Delta Community College in Monroe, LA as well at the Lomax Hall at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, LA and most recently at the former location. With this in mind the SWCC would return to Lomax Hall in LA tech campus for this year's convention to be held in conjunction with the Commission meeting on October 27, 2020. Another great Ruston location option for the convention would be at the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's building. With the Commission's approval, the SWCC Area 1 and 2 election convention information will be sent to the districts once the location is set. Mr. Skains offered his assistance in selection of a meeting location if necessary.

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to have the Area 1 and 2 Convention information prepared to be sent out by the end of the month.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

SWCD absentee waivers

At the previous Commission meeting, the members requested that Mr. Breaux research suggestions of different actions that could be used in response to high and increasing frequency of absentee waiver requests. The Commission's current policy for absentee waivers is that the district board submits a letter requesting that the board member be reinstated. However, the supervisor's handbook states that the individual board member submits their own waiver request letter directly to the Commission. Mr. Breaux said that in consultation with the Texas and Oklahoma Conservation Commissions, they have a policy requiring that the board member appear in person in front of the Commission to request reinstatement.

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to have the individual board members whose board meeting absences exceeded the required minimum, send reinstatement waiver requests letters to the Commission and to their district boards.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Breaux asked Chairman Girouard if he would like OSWC to draft a memo to send out to districts. Chairman Girouard agreed and Mr. Breaux said OSWC will draft a memo for Chairman Girouard to approve to send to the districts regarding this change.

CPA-SWCD Engagements-

Chairman Girouard said we have 3 SWCD CPA Engagement letters:

1. Caddo SWCD entering into agreement with J. Aaron Cooper, LLC- \$575 fee
2. Iberia SWCD entering into agreement with Maraist & Maraist, CPA- \$1,200 fee
3. St. Landry SWCD entering into agreement with J. Aaron Cooper, LLA- \$575 fee

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these engagement letters.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

- Chairman Girouard said there are 2 supervisor resignations. The resignations are St. Landry SWCD, Mr. Richard Hollier (appointed)-effective August 17, 2020 and West Carroll, Mr. Sam Ross (elected)-effective August 13, 2020.

Chairman Girouard said there is 1 supervisor appointment for a three year term: West Carroll SWCD, Mr. Blake Elliott (elected) - effective August 25, 2020-June 30, 2021

Chairman Girouard said there are 4 supervisor reappointments for three year terms. The reappointment submitted for three year terms are: Caddo SWCD, Mr. Marty Wooldridge, effective September 19, 2020-September 19, 2023; Feliciana SWCD, Mr. Chris Martin, effective September 19, 2020-September 19, 2023; Red River SWCD, Mr. Johnny Taylor, effective August 30, 2020- August 30, 2023; and Saline SWCD, Mr. Billy Joe Vise, effective August 30, 2020- August 30, 2023.

Chairman Girouard said the listed below are forty four districts with forty candidates that had no opposition for the 2020 Supervisors Election. He said the term of office for the candidates listed below would start September 1, 2020 and expires June 30, 2023

Elected Supervisors

DISTRICT	DISTRICT NO.	SUPERVISOR
Acadia	20	George Guillory
Allen	37	VACANT
Avoyelles	17	Chad Tassin
Bodcau	43	Danny Martin
Boeuf River	14	William Shane Hart
Bogue Chitto-Pearl River	7	Michael Thompson
Caddo	5	Kyle Dill
Calcasieu	9	Jason Nolde
Capital	33	Bernell Muse
Catahoula	34	H.C. Peck
Crescent	26	Blaise Pezold
D'Arbonne	2	Patricia Avery

DeSoto	39	VACANT
Dorcheat	3	Joe Robinson
Dugdemona	8	Steven Bates
East Carroll	15	Teddy Schneider
Evangeline	30	Anthony Rozas
Feliciana	1	VACANT
Grant	10	Dennis Courtright
Gulf Coast	22	Jim Dupont
Iberia	21	Brad Judice
Jefferson Davis	44	Scott Romero
Lafayette	28	Eddie Lewis
Lafourche-Terrebonne	19	Robert "Bob" Pitre
LaSalle	35	Mike McCartney
Lower Delta	24	Grant Crochet
Madison	36	Jack M. Varner
Morehouse	11	Clay Costello
Natchitoches	38	Ed Giering
New River	23	Ozane Gravois
Northeast	13	Charles M. Watson
Plaquemines	42	VACANT
Rapides	12	Bennie Ross Harper
Red River	40	Daniel Snead
Sabine	4	James Pratt
Saline	6	Stacy Conly
St. Landry	29	Fred Lavergne
St. Martin	27	Daniel Richard
St. Mary	18	Alton Broussard
Tangipahoa-St. Helena	32	Kent Blades
Tensas-Concordia	16	Walker Head
Upper Delta	25	Mark Engemann
Vermilion	41	Christian Richard
West Carroll	31	Cullen Kovac

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the 2 resignations, 1 appointment, 4 reappointments, and the elected supervisors listed.

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

Mr. Breaux asked Chairman Girouard if he would like OSWC to draft a special recognition letter to Mr. Hollier to recognize him for his many years of service. Chairman Girouard agreed and Mr. Breaux said OSWC will draft a letter and email a copy to Chairman Girouard for review.

New Business

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

Mr. Kacir said Hurricane Laura added an extra bit of challenge to ending the fiscal year for NRCS. EQIP currently has been obligated 50% and CSP has a 20% obligation. NRCS is working to complete CRP plans for FSA which included approximately 400 renewals and 160 new applications. There were widespread power outages due to Hurricane Laura. Currently NRCS has 5 offices that do not have power: Leesville, DeRidder, Colfax, Alexandria, and Lake Charles (most damage). NRCS is hoping to assist local parish offices with EWP

funds. Poultry parishes have been trying to buy fuel for their generators and have had difficulties. FEMA has stated that they will not pay for fuel so different agencies have been reaching out to provide emergency loans for farmers. The forestry industry has lost huge amounts of quality timber and it has been difficult to get people out to clean up the areas. Mr. Skains said that he wanted to commend Commissioner Strain on his speedy efforts to assist poultry farmers and respond in the best possible way.

Correspondence- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

National Association of State Agencies (NASCA) Newsletter- "Mike's Monthly Missive"

Mr. Mike Brown who is a leader in NASCA wrote this newsletter with a big dedication to Mr. Brad Spicer. He talks about Mr. Spicer's many years of service to Louisiana as well as being a long time member of NASCA. The newsletter also gives a farewell NRCS Chief Matt Lohr who is heading back to Virginia to run his farming operation.

Governor Edwards Signs Executive Orders to Address Climate Change and Enhance Coastal Resilience

Governor Edwards signed 2 executive orders at the CPRA meeting 2 weeks ago. The first order dealt with the state's climate initiative developing a state Climate Initiative Taskforce. The taskforce would study and make recommendations to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions. Mr. Breaux will be serving on this taskforce. The second executive order is the Coastal Resilience Initiative which gives steps to improve state government by coordinating adaption efforts more comprehensively across state agencies. Each agency has appointed a resilience coordinator which will be Commissioner Strain for Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Louisiana Conservation and Commodity Updates-August 2020; Issue 8

This newsletter written by Dr. Naveen Adusumilli discusses some key items and statistics happening in Louisiana. Key items in this issue show the amount of food assistance payments farmers are receiving from the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). Livestock is leading with 4,786 applications at a cost of \$20,742,894. Another item the newsletter mentions is that congress included \$300 million in the CARES Act for the fishing industries. This could help address lost revenue for aquaculture producers, mainly crawfish producers who lost 81 cents/lb. on average during last season.

USDA assistance available for crawfish farmers hurt by pandemic

Crawfish farmers can now apply for assistance from a USDA program to compensate for losses related to the coronavirus pandemic. The program helps producers deal with economic issues caused by the low prices and the inability to move crawfish. It will help close the gap between revenue currently generated and missed generated funds throughout the year. The program pays producers 65 cents for every pound of crawfish caught on January 15-April 15, 2020.

Rice Conservation Program Renewed for 7 Million

The Mid-South Graduated Water Stewardship Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) led by USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited has been renewed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture with a \$7 million dollar award from NRCS. Most partnership program opportunities focus on water management, nutrient management, and winter habitat for wildlife. The Nutrient Management Conservation Practice 590 in South Louisiana also got renewed. Timelines for these renewal projects are expected to begin in early 2021 and important information will be shared soon.

LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi

Currently LSU agents are working to assess the damage done by Hurricane Laura.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, 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. Alan Williams made a motion to adjourn at 2:09 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