

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

April 27, 2021
1:15 PM

5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Girouard called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Steve Horvath gave the invocation and Mr. Ed Giering lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha Alexander.

Members and Alternate Members present:

Dr. Ernest Girouard – Chairman
Mr. Steve Horvath-Vice Chairman
Mr. John Alan Williams- LACD President
Mr. Jason Nolde- LACD 1st Vice President
Mr. Larry Sayes- Secretary- Treasurer
Mr. Reggie Skains- Area I Member
Mr. Ed Yerger- Area II Member
Mr. Brad Spicer- LDAF Alternate Member
Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate Member

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Michael Schooler, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha “Clay” Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director SSWCC
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Caitlin Joubert, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

Chairman Girouard asked if there were any comments from the public or from Commission members. Mr. Breaux said he wanted to introduce Ms. Caitlin Joubert and to welcome her back to the Office of Soil and Water team. Ms. Joubert worked with Soil and Water from 2014-2016. Her role will be working with districts as well as helping with OSWC.

Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the April 27, 2021 SSWCC agenda.

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Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the March 23, 2021 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

The Farm Bill reporting system closed April 10th for the March reporting period. The March Farm Bill total was \$63,506. Districts have used a total of \$281,571 for year 1 of the Farm Bill contract. OSWC and LDAF IT have recently completed a reporting system for Targeted Technicians and Program Support Specialists that mirrors the Farm Bill reporting system. Mr. Theron Phillips has already given a training session to the Target Technicians and Program Support Specialist via Zoom. The recording of the training was emailed out to those who were unable to attend the live training.

Legislative Regular Session/State Funding- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux stated the funding for OSWC and districts looks stable for this year. Districts have been doing an excellent job at following up with contacts to complete their Grassroots reports. Commissioner Strain has taken a big interest in these efforts and OSWC has given him a portfolio with copies of district Grassroots reports so that he can distribute them.

Mr. Breaux said there has been some new policy legislation that he has been reviewing. HB 647 creates the Delta Agriculture Research and Sustainability District. The object and purpose of district is to promote and encourage agricultural research and sustainability to stimulate the economy through commerce, industry, and research and for the utilization and development of natural and human resources of the area by providing job opportunities. The legislation includes Tensas, Madison, and East Carroll Parish. The SWCDs that are in the parishes listed in the legislation have been contacted by OSWC to inform them about this bill.

District Supervisor Election- June 12, 2021- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Districts have prepared and submitted notices for their elections. The nominating period ends on April 30, 2021. Districts must submit a nominating petition that must be post marked prior to May 1, 2021. OSWC has received 9 completed petitions in office and none of the districts have come forward with more than one candidate for their elected position.

New Business

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Girouard said we have five districts this month with candidates that did not meet the board meeting attendance requirements in the past year. He said we have received letters from Boeuf River, Mr. Elliot Colvin; Caddo SWCD, Mr. Mike Volentine; East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Stephen Lensing; Lower Delta SWCD, Mr. Frank Sotile; and Natchitoches SWCD, Mr. James Wagley.

Chairman Girouard said he reviewed letters from each district board and each supervisor. Each board considered the above referenced candidates very good board members and is requesting the attendance requirement to be waived. Mr. Skains said he reviewed the letters from the boards as well as from the supervisors themselves. He believed that the supervisor letters could have been more detailed. Mr. Breaux said to add more specific guidelines, the Commission could create some more criteria to inform supervisors and districts of what is expected when these letters are sent. The Commission could form a small Ad hoc committee to discuss adding specific criteria. The Ad hoc committee members will be Mr. Brad Spicer, Mr. Reggie Skains, and Mr. Joey Breaux.

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to waive the attendance requirements for from Boeuf River, Mr. Elliot Colvin; Caddo SWCD, Mr. Mike Volentine; East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Stephen Lensing; Lower Delta SWCD, Mr. Frank Sotile; and Natchitoches SWCD, Mr. James Wagley.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard said there are 2 resignations this month: Red River SWCD, Mr. Jason Anderson, effective April 5, 2021 and Tangipahoa St. Helena SWCD, Ms. Carolyn Falgout, effective April 8, 2021.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the resignation of Red River SWCD, Mr. Jason Anderson, effective April 5, 2021 and Tangipahoa St. Helena SWCD, Ms. Carolyn Falgout, effective April 8, 2021.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Alan Williams

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard said there is one appointment this month: Catahoula SWCD, Ms. Carolyn Fannin, effective April 27, 2021- March 28, 2024.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the appointment of Catahoula SWCD, Ms. Carolyn Fannin, effective April 27, 2021- March 28, 2024.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Alan Williams

Motion passed unanimously

Chairman Girouard said there are 5 supervisor reappointments for three year terms: Bogue-Chitto SWCD-Mr. James Rogers- effective May 24, 2021-May 24,2024; Jefferson Davis SWCD- Mr. Joseph Tupper- effective June 11, 2021- June 11, 2024; Lafayette SWCD-Mr. Eddie Blanchard- effective June 10,2021- June 10, 2024; Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD- Mr. Hank Schumacher- effective May 24, 2021- May 24, 2024; and St. Martin SWCD- Mr. Judy Robin-effective April 27, 2021- March 26,2024.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the reappointments for Bogue-Chitto SWCD-Mr. James Rogers- effective May 24, 2021-May 24,2024; Jefferson Davis SWCD- Mr. Joseph Tupper- effective June 11, 2021- June 11, 2024; Lafayette SWCD-Mr. Eddie Blanchard- effective June 10,2021- June 10, 2024; Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD- Mr. Hank Schumacher- effective May 24, 2021- May 24, 2024; and St. Martin SWCD- Mr. Judy Robin-effective April 27, 2021- March 26,2024.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Alan Williams

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence

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

Mr. Kacir said the National Conservation Planning Partnership Organization has been in contact with several agencies to discuss reinvigorating conservation planning. There have also been discussions on whether to increase the levels of Conservation Planners and their certification levels. Changes have been taking place nationwide to form a more uniform Conservation Planner certification requirement list. A meeting took place a month ago that included several partnership agencies such as LDAF, LSU, and Wildlife and Fisheries to help brainstorm the next steps for conservation planners. It is imperative that the recently hired Conservation

Planners know how to do specific tasks such as resource assessments, identify resource concerns, and relay to producers what the conservation practices will address the resource concerns. Mr. Kacir said that we do not have any certified conservation planners in our state.

Mr. Breaux agreed and said that he participated in a Conservation planning reinvigoration conference call hosted by Mr. John Pitre that focused on renewal of the partnership's conservation planning and delivery capacity, which should create opportunities for districts. Mr. Kacir said if districts had certified conservation planners, they would be able to assist with other programs with different producers. Mr. Breaux said he believes districts would approve the process of certifying a conservation planner in their offices.

To become a certified conservation planner and be able to sign conservation plans a Technical Service Provider (TSP) must complete the following training:

- Modules 1-5 of the NRCS Conservation Planning Course in AgLearn, or an equivalent course approved by NRCS, such as the TSP Orientation and Conservation Planning Course.
- Modules 6-8 of the NRCS Conservation Planning Course offered by any NRCS State Office or equivalent course approved by NRCS.
- Introduction to the Field Office Technical Guide (AgLearn)
- Cultural Resources Training, Part 1 (AgLearn)
- Erosion Prediction Software Training provided by any State NRCS Office.
- Develop a Resource Management System Plan that is field reviewed by NRCS.

Mr. Kacir also wanted to mention the Cooperative working agreement. He said it may be time to review the agreement to make sure nothing has changed and that they are using correct terminology in the agreement. Mr. Kacir asked about thoughts on the Cooperative working agreement. Mr. Breaux said the districts involved in the Coastal Re-Vegetation agreement use the working agreements consistently. He said OSWC can send the Commission a copy of an example agreement. The delay with a lot of landowners is that it may look too contractual to them not realizing that it is a non-binding agreement. Natchitoches SWCD was the first district to expand their cooperative agreement for their district requirements. Natchitoches added an addendum to the agreement that gives requirements and expectations of both parties. OSWC has used Natchitoches' example to create specific addendums for the salvinia weevil work that is being done statewide. The addendum supports an existing MOU between OSWC, LDAF, SWCC, and the LSU AgCenter recognizing the relationship at a local level. This allows landowners to access the weevils produced by LSU. Without the MOU, landowners wouldn't be getting access to weevils. Districts that have become unfamiliar to the cooperative agreement should spend a portion of their board meeting reviewing it and familiarizing themselves with the document. Mr. Breaux said he could first send out an example to the Commission members to review it and take action on it after the next Commission meeting. Many landowners feel that conservation work should not begin without first signing an agreement with the district. Mr. Spicer stated that in the 1980s, landowners would have to go through the districts to sign cooperative agreements. After the 1980 Farm Bill, The districts no longer would sign the agreements and it wasn't a requirement to approve them. If we get back to the process of signing cooperative agreements with landowners, this could strengthen the program and get more interest in board meetings. The landowners would be able to discuss their own individual projects. Mr. Kacir said there first needs to be a cooperative agreement and then the districts need to sign the conservation plan.

Mr. Kacir mentioned that NRCS has filled 22-23 vacant positions this year. NRCS is expecting an additional 28 positions. With these additions, all Louisiana Resource Units (LARUs) can expect to get additional 3 to 4 people. EQIP fund will be dispersed soon and the CSP sign up period just ended in late March. The Conservation Incentives is expected to begin in late May with an announcement period and contracts will be written late summer.

LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi

Dr. Salassi said he wanted to remind the Commission of a couple of upcoming event:
April 29, 2021- Northwest Region Beef & Forage Field Day- Homer, LA

LSU was able to hire a Sugarcane Soybean Agronomist at the Dean Lee Research Station, a Precision Agriculture Agronomist, and they are currently making an offer to a Landscape Horticulturalist for the Hammond Station. He said over the last several years NRCS has hosted an Interagency A & R Road and Field Tour and Training where LSU AgCenter Personnel, NRCS, LDAF, and other agencies meet and visit several farm sites to review the best management practices. This year's Field and Tour and Training is currently scheduled for Monday, July 19, 2021 in Pointe Coupee Parish.

Correspondence/Articles:

- Special Recognition letter to Ms. Anita Manschack
- A Better Mousetrap is needed for Carbon Programs, Consortium Says- Ag Web
- Feral pig baits showing promise- LSU AgCenter
- Invasive snails threatening Louisiana's crawfish population
- NCPP State Plans to Reinvigorate Conservation Planning
- Statement by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on the Nomination of Robert Bonnie to Serve as Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. – USDA
- NACD Announces \$13 Million in 2021 Technical Assistance Grants- NACD
- Louisiana Conservation and Commodity Updates- LSU AgCenter
- USDA Celebrates 5 Million Acres Enrolled in Conservation Easements- USDA
- Weed Seed Destroyer could help address pigweed issues- Farm Progress
- Bayer Sys Farmers Using Conservation Practices Since 2012 Might Qualify For Its 2021-22 Carbon Program- Bayer Carbon Initiative Expands 042021
- Policy: How will the Growing Climate Solutions Act Impact Farmers

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Breaux said The National Wildlife Federation contacted OSWC wanting to partner with Louisiana Conservation Districts to implement local conservation outreach. The NWF wants to reach out to people who have not been participating in conservation programs and to create an interest in enrolling in the programs as they are available. Mr. Breaux said that he will keep the Commission updated with information as the information become available.

The Senate Ag Committee's Growing Climate's Solution Act came up in Congress again last week. This act was originally introduced in 2020 by the House Ag Committee. The act has now gained bipartisan support and doesn't look to have been revised since its introduction. It does strengthen its regard and definition of third party verification of conservation practices that are going to be the basis of most of the upcoming climate projects.

Mr. Breaux also wanted to mention the upcoming deadline for the Tier 2.1 Financial Disclosure Forms on May 17th. Supervisors are to submit these to the Louisiana Board of Ethics. Emails and reminders have been sent by OSWC to the districts to remind supervisors about these forms. It is the supervisor's responsibility to submit this information. If the information is not submitted in time, supervisors could face penalties.

Next Meeting

Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 1:15 PM virtually. Information will be sent to members prior to the meeting.

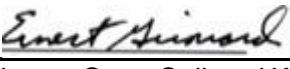
Public Comments

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. Brad Spicer made a motion to adjourn at 2:41 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Giering and passed unanimously.

/s/ Dr. Ernest Girouard 

Dr. Ernest Girouard, Chairman State Soil and Water Conservation Commission