

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

June 27, 2023
1:15 PM

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY
VETERANS AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Garber called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Steve Horvath gave the invocation and Chairman Garber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

Members and Alternate Members present:

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, Area IV
Mr. Steve Horvath, Vice Chairman, Area V
Mr. Ben Langlinais, LACD President, Member
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate
Mr. J. Patrick Boudreaux, Area I Alternate
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member

Members Absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Member
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Ms. Candis Voorhies, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and Initiatives
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Jerry Davenport, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

Chairman Garber asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none. He thanked Mr. Boudreaux for attending the meeting today. He also congratulated the LSU men's baseball team on winning the championship yesterday.

Approval of the agenda

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the June 27, 2023 SSWCC agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the May 23, 2023 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

Mr. Breaux said May's Farm Bill drawdown was \$57,313 leaving a balance of \$249,190. Eighteen districts have maxed out their farm bill funds with the highest monthly earning being approximately \$31,000. The total amount that districts have exceeded their maximum earnings is approaching \$160,000. Mr. Breaux said discussions for the upcoming farm bill agreement will happen soon. Chairman Garber asked were there any questions or comments and there were none.

LA Legislative Regular Session Updates-

Mr. Breaux mentioned some recent updates to the following bills from the Legislative Analysis list:

1. SB 22- (Sen. Glen Womack)- Provides relative to soil conservation policy. (Status: Signed and became Act 185)
2. HB 82- (Rep. Kathy Edmonston) which was set to abolish the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission was repealed and removed. (Status: Removed)
3. HB425 (Rep. Ryan Bourriaque) and SB 102 (Sen. Fred Mills)- relative to the creation of the Acadiana Watershed District. (Status: SB 102 was signed and became Act 325)
4. SB 42 (Sen. Fred Mills)- Creates the LA Watershed Initiative; Management Council (Status: No Movement)
5. HB 453 (Rep. Sherman Mack)- Requires that carbon dioxide injected for geologic sequestration using a Class VI injection well be transported to and sequestered in a storage facility in the Gulf of Mexico. (Status: Deferred)
6. HB 454 (Representative Sherman Mack)- Requires a local election for the approval of carbon dioxide sequestration within a parish. (Status: Deferred)
7. HB 465 (Rep. Valerie Hodges)- Provides relative to the Louisiana Scenic Rivers Act. (Status: No movement)
8. HB 570 (Rep. Alan Seabaugh)- Establishes a bounty to control feral hogs. (Status: No Movement)
9. HB 476 (Rep. Mike Huval)- Establishes the Acadiana Watershed District. (Status: No movement)
10. HCR 45 (Rep. Phillip Devillier)- Creates the Louisiana Solar Sitting Task Forces to study the impact of, and alternatives to, locating solar energy developments on farmland. Provides for the composition of the task forces, structure, meeting requirements, and quorum. (Status: adopted)
11. HB 537 (Rep. Valerie Hodges)- Provides for a prohibition against foreign adversary purchasing, leasing, or acquiring land. (Status: Sent to governor)
12. SB 206 (Sen. Barry Milligan)- Provides relative to foreign interest in certain Louisiana research facilities. (Status: Signed and is now Act 106)
13. SCR 6 (Sen. Bob Hensgens)- Approves the annual state integrated coastal protection plan for Fiscal Year 2024, as adopted by the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board (CPRA). (Status: Sent to Sec. of State)
14. SCR 17 (Sen. Bob Hensgens)- Approves the comprehensive master plan for integrated coastal protection. (Status: Sent to Secretary of State)
15. SR 21 (Sen. Stewart Cathey)- Designates May 4, 2023, as Future Farmers of America (FFA) Day at the Louisiana Capital and commends the officers of the Louisiana FFA Association. (Status: Sent to Secretary of State)
16. HCR 81(Rep. Michael Echols)- Establishes the ArkLaMiss Timber and Bioinnovation Corridor Commission. (Status: Sent to Secretary of State)

NACD Summer Meeting

Mr. Breaux said NACD's Summer Meeting is scheduled for July 15-19, 2023 in Bismarck, North Dakota. Workshops that include discussions on regenerative grazing and ESMC's Eco-Harvest program are scheduled as well as conservation tours to Black Leg ranch and Cooperative research farm with a visit to Menoken farm.

NACD South Central Region Meeting

NACD's South Central Region meeting is scheduled for August 13-15, 2023 in Arlington, TX. This two-day event includes a tour to the 77 Ranch in Navarro County as well as having dinner at Joe T. Garcia's restaurant which has been a Fort Worth staple since 1935. NACD requests that reserve rooms by July 24, 2023.

Out of state travel

Chairman Garber said we received 2 out of state travel requests:

1. DeSoto SWCD is asking permission for Ms. Chrissy Ebarb to attend the NACD South Central Regional Meeting on August 13-15, 2023.
2. East Carroll SWCD is asking permission for Mr. Bert Lensing, Mr. Willis Nelson, Mr. Rowdy Sanderson, Ms. Rebecca Thom, Mr. Teddy Schneider, and Ms. Deborah Morris to attend the NACD South Central Regional Meeting on August 13-15, 2023.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these out of state travel requests.

Motion by: Mr. J.P. Boudreaux

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

NRCS State Conservationist Report- Ms. Candis Voorhies, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and Initiatives

Ms. Voorhies reported the following information:

NRCS Staffing

- 215 Full time employees
- Currently making selections for about 20 Resource Conservationists positions
- Civil/Agricultural Engineer (5 positions) open until 06/30/2023
- Easement Coordinator vacancy announcement
- Advertising the Assistant Manager vacancy at Plant at the Plant Materials Center
- 15 Soil Conservationist positions are expected to be advertised in a few weeks.

Programs

- 80% of EQIP funds have been obligated. NRCS was allocated 23 million this fiscal year.
- Beginning to obligate CSP funds. NRCS was allocated 17 million this fiscal year.
- RCPP signups end August 16, 2023.
- Still working on EWP projects from Hurricane Ida. NRCS hopes to finish these projects by the end of the year.
- NRCS headquarters has requested additional practices to be added to the IRA climate smart practice list. Louisiana requested that the following practices be added:
 1. Irrigation water management
 2. Prescribed grazing
 3. Upland wildlife habitat management
- Climate Smart Commodities has done a lot of work on their dashboard on their website. If you go on their website, there is an interactive map of the United States. Currently, Louisiana has 18 projects that have been submitted by only 7 of them have been fully approved. The only project currently open for signup is the US Cotton Trust protocol. A video was posted on YouTube on how you can apply for this project, how much you could receive when you apply, and eligible land requirements. With phase 1, you could receive up to \$5 an acre with 706 acre maximum. If you proceed to phase 2, producers

would have to adapt one climate smart activity and would be eligible for up to \$35 an acre for up to 706 acres. Another requirement request is that the landowner sign a disclosure saying that they will not receive a duplicate payment for the same climate smart activities. Chairman Garber suggested that we send notification out to districts to make them aware of this possible issue. Mr. Breaux asked Ms. Voorhies to assist with composing something for the districts.

OSWC Staff- Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director

Mr. Breaux said the newest project that OSWC is working on is the limited cost-share reimbursement of poultry litter. This reimbursement was written into the 2020 319 workplan and has a cap of \$2,500 per program. The litter would have to be moved out of the HUC 8 watershed that it originated in. Producers will also be encouraged to create a nutrient management plan at their earliest convenience. During the beginning stages, they will be asked to complete a check list that will be based on a current solid waste BMP template that will make sure that they are land applying in a timely manner and staging it in the correct area. Land application rates that exceed 2 acres should be based on litter analysis, soil analysis, and land use or commodity specific nutrient management. Districts will process the payments as applications are received and approved by OSWC. District offices could also charge an administrative fee for payment processing. Chairman Garber asked Commission members to prepare to discuss the Commission goals list during the next board meeting so that districts can start planning to request more funding in the future. Mr. Breaux mentioned that OSWC created a new training module to explain the differences between SWCC, LACD, and OSWC which was presented recently during the Area 2 meeting. Mr. Breaux also advised the members that we should also begin discussions on the LACD Mid-Year meeting which happens in September.

Meritorious Award

Chairman Garber said we received one Meritorious award request:

- Vermillion SWCD is nominating Mr. Devan Georgia, District Technician, to receive an exceptional performance of \$500.00 award for his excellent evaluation and his commitment to Vermillion SWCD and the producers of the parish.

The Meritorious award nomination packet was reviewed and included the following as requested in PPM#1:

1. Employee's Name
2. Title of Employee
3. Personnel number
4. A successful performance evaluation in the same fiscal year, a job performance plan showing an explanation of the significant achievement and how it benefited the SWCD, the conservation partnership and the district cooperators.
5. The reward amount proposed by the SWCD.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the nomination packets for:

- Vermillion SWCD is nominating Mr. Devan Georgia, District Technician, to receive an exceptional performance of \$500.00 award for his excellent evaluation and his commitment to Vermillion SWCD and the producers of the parish.

Motion by: Mr. J.P. Boudreaux

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Attendance waiver letter(s)

Chairman Garber said there were two district supervisors that did not meet the board meeting attendance requirements in the past year:

1. Plaquemines SWCD: Mr. Bartol Taliancich Jr.
2. Tensas-Concordia SWCD: Mr. Walker Head

Each supervisor sent their own letters along with supporting letters from each district board suggesting the absences were justified and they are requesting the attendance requirements be waived.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to waive the attendance requirements for:

1. Plaquemines SWCD: Mr. Bartol Taliacich Jr.
2. Tensas-Concordia SWCD: Mr. Walker Head

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Seconded by: Mr. J.P. Boudreaux

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Articles:

- NACD Government Affairs Update: Supreme Court Releases Opinion on WOTUS Definition
- Researchers want to use 'biochar' to combat climate change
- Did you know that soil health affects human health?
- TUWaterways: Clean Water Act gets the Sack(ett)
- Unprecedented sea level rise seen on Gulf coast, East Coast as waters warm
- With river's help, new land emerges in Barataria Basin
- A Message From CPRA Chairman Chip Kline: CPRA Chairman Chip Kline Announces Resignation at 2023 State of the Coast conference
- Popular Science: This ancient farming practice (silvopasture) could get a boost from the US farm bill
- Drovers: Supreme Court Rules Against EPA in WOTUS case
- Influence of Increased Freshwater inflow on nitrogen and phosphorus budgets in a dynamic subtropical estuary, Barataria basin, Louisiana

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 25, 2023 in the LDAF Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

Adjournment

Chairman Garber said if there was no other business or comments from the public or Commission members, He will accept a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. J.P. Boudreaux made a motion to adjourn at 3:13 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brad Spicer and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, State Soil and Water Conservation Commission