

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

August 22, 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. Reggie Skains 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. Reggie Skains, Secretary-Treasurer, Area I
Mr. Ben Langlinais, LACD President, Member
Mr. Price Gay, LACD 1st Vice President, Alternate
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Member

Members Absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Jerry Davenport, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director
Ms. Caitlin Joubert, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

Chairman Garber asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none. He welcomed Mr. Gay to the meeting.

Approval of the August 22,2023 agenda

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the August 22, 2023 SSWCC meeting agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the July 25, 2023 minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the July 25, 2023 SSWCC meeting minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

July's Farm Bill agreement drawdown was \$42,982 leaving a balance of \$154,579. 21 districts have maxed out their farm bill funds with Rapides SWCD being the latest districts to be added to this list. Mr. Breaux said that OSWC plans to ask districts that have higher remaining farm bill balances to estimate their last month's drawdown amounts. With this information, OSWC can distribute the remaining balance to districts that maxed out of funds earlier in the FY.

District Funding

Mr. Breaux said allocation letters were emailed out to districts. Districts didn't lose funding this year but also didn't gain any additional funding. He mentioned that earlier today the Commissioner asked what some of his most valued accomplishments in his current role were so far. Mr. Breaux said one of the accomplishments would be receiving an increase for the Revegetation program. Another accomplishment was being able to get more districts involved in Feral Swine opportunities. Districts now have equipment to provide the necessary resources for their cooperator's feral swine management needs. Mr. Breaux said that being able to acquire two additional members for OSWC was also another accomplishment. These additional positions provide opportunities for OSWC to visit districts around the state to maintain familiarity with local, state, regional, and national opportunities that districts can be a part of such as the Watershed Initiative. Mr. Breaux said another significant goal is to update supervisor training into interactive web-based modules. Another part of Mr. Breaux's conversation with the Commissioner was the need for increased use of cooperator agreements. Districts should work to enhance their constituent-operator relationships that historically were strong but have lessened in recent years. With building the constituent-cooperator relationship comes opportunities to present conservation needs to state legislators. Chairman Garber said Commissioner Strain may consider making cooperative agreements a part of the LDAF Market Bulletin which has been displaying great coverages on different topics in the state. Mr. Breaux said a few districts have already been a part of the Market Bulletin recently as part of a new "SWCD highlight" section with Calcasieu SWCD being next to be spotlighted. Mr. Skains said with all the work that has taken place, districts weren't able to get more funding, which is disappointing. During the NACD meeting last week, ideas were suggested that included reaching out to the younger generation of producers. Mr. Spicer said that we need to inform all legislators of the need for more funding especially those who have more interest in conservation. Mr. Skains said during the September meeting, the Legislative Committee should formulate plans to speak with legislators who may be able to assist with conservation district efforts.

NACD South Central Region Meeting update

Chairman Garber said a few Commission members attended the meeting. Mr. Skains said they officially began the meeting on Sunday, but the first tour happened on Monday morning. They traveled to a 2,600-acre ranch which was about 50 to 60 miles South of the hotel. The attendees had a chance to ask questions regarding the conservation being implemented on the land, which was a good experience. On Tuesday morning, the business meeting began. Mr. Aaron Alejandro, Executive Director of the Texas FFA Foundation, gave a presentation about improving communication. Mr. Skains said this was the most informative presentation that he has ever heard, and the presenter received a standing ovation. Mr. Breaux said that it was a motivational presentation which is based off his training sessions that are available online. One of his key points was "what you say is not what they hear" which is aimed towards realizing that different generations may respond differently. Mr. Kacir said communication may be causing the delay with increasing funding to districts. Districts should be reaching out to their local legislators and anyone that could assist them to advance. Different sources of communication such as Facebook give districts an opportunity to get more information out to the

public. Mr. Breaux said legislators want to hear from the constituents. Mr. Kacir said that a communications director spoke after Mr. Alejandro. The director spoke about her communication experience as well as her community experience with conservation and agriculture. He shared with Mr. Skains that a communications director should be the next position that LACD advertises for. This position would assist LACD by teaching conservation districts how to use their social media platforms to get information out to the public.

LACD Mid-Year Meeting-September 13, 2023

Chairman Garber asked Mr. Langlinais for comments. Mr. Langlinais said that the LACD Mid-Year meeting will take place on Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at the NRCS State Office Building B Training Room, 3727 Government Street, Alexandria, LA 71302 at 10:00 AM. The meeting will involve planning the Annual LACD meeting scheduled for January 8-10, 2024 in Baton Rouge, LA. There will also be some committee elections taking place and hopefully the committees can fill a few vacancies. Mr. Langlinais said the last few summer meetings were filled with district and NRCS staff and he hopes that everyone will come out to plan this year's meeting. Mr. Langlinais said the LACD Executive Director position agreement is now fully executed. LACD hopes to hear some feedback from district staff at this meeting regarding advertisement and be able to answer any other questions about the position. Mr. Langlinais said his first request would be to have the director work towards social media development.

Area 1 and 2 SWCC Election Convention

Chairman Garber said the selection for the SWCC Area I and Area II delegates and alternates is scheduled for October 24, 2023 at the Lincoln Parish Public Safety Complex, 161 Road Camp Road, Ruston, LA 71270. The convention will convene at 11:00 a.m. Each district in Area I and Area II will have to select a member to represent their district as a delegate and alternate to this election convention. One of those members will have to attend the convention on October 24, 2023 to vote for their area's delegate and alternate. Districts should select their delegate and alternate and email their names to Ms. Alexander no later than October 9, 2023. The elected delegates and alternates for Area I and Area II will begin their three-year term on October 27, 2023. Chairman Garber said we should also make a motion to have the SWCC meeting follow the election convention.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve having September's SWCC meeting to follow the Area 1 and 2 election convention.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Garber said the Commission received a SWCD CPA Agreement:

- St. Martin SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Maraist & Maraist. The cost is between \$1,500-\$1,650.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these engagement requests:

- St. Martin SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Maraist & Maraist. The cost is between \$1,500-\$1,650.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

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

- 90% of EQIP is obligated and 60% of CSP is obligated currently.
- Waiting to see if Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds will be rolled into the base amount of FY 24 Farmbill.
- Currently, NRCS reimburses about 500 EQIP contracts and with IRA they are expecting a slow but steady increase over the next five years.
- CAPS have been removed from all conservation practices.
- NRCS will start to use ACT NOW process which allows them to immediately approve and obligate a ranked application in a designated ranking.
- New Orleans service center will open tomorrow. The office will house FSA as well and will have 2 staff members.

Mr. Kacir also wanted to mention that he will be retiring at the end of September. He and his family have moved to Texas. Chairman Garber and Mr. Horvath congratulated and wished him well. Mr. Breaux asked Mr. Kacir how long he has worked with NRCS, and he said nearly 21 years. Mr. Skains suggested that the Commission send Mr. Kacir a letter commending and thanking him for his accomplishments. Chairman Garber agreed and asked Mr. Breaux to assist. Mr. Kacir has agreed to continue working on NRCS's structuring to help smooth the transition of the new state conservationist.

LSU AgCenter Report

No report.

OSWC Update

Mr. Breaux stated that OSWC's EPA 319 Agricultural Non-point reduction plan for FY 23 has been delayed. EPA stated that the pre-award compliance form wasn't complete due to a lacking civil rights element. LDAF Human Resources suggested that OSWC appoint a Civil Rights coordinator for the agreement and Mr. Michael Schooler was appointed to the position. This year's 319 workplan plan includes another round of poultry litter transport funding. There has not been many submittals for this opportunity to-date, but Mr. Breaux is considering adding other agricultural waste that could be transferred as well as adjusting the current cap. OSWC is planning to work with local county agents and Farm Bureau to assist in promoting this opportunity. Mr. Breaux also mentioned that it is imperative that districts submit personnel notices and per diem documents in a timely manner. When one district does not submit per diem documents on time, it holds up the complete submission for all districts.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there are 1 SWCD supervisor resignation this month:

- Mr. Billy Joe Vise, Saline SWCD, elected position, effective July 13, 2023.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the SWCD supervisor resignation for:

- Mr. Billy Joe Vise, Saline SWCD, elected position, effective July 13, 2023.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said we have 4 SWCD supervisor appointments this month:

- Mr. John Laborde, Avoyelles SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Dirk Dupuy, effective August 22, 2023-June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Huel Jones, DeSoto SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Jeremy Evans, effective August 22, 2023- June 30, 2025

- Mr. Patrick Frischhertz, Lower Delta SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. John Gay, effective August 22, 2023- May 4, 2026.
- Ms. Michelle Hay Davis, Saline SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Billy Joe Vise, effective August 30, 2023- August 30, 2026.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the SWCD supervisor appointments of:

- Mr. John Laborde, Avoyelles SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Dirk Dupuy, effective August 22, 2023-June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Huel Jones, DeSoto SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Jeremy Evans, effective August 22, 2023- June 30, 2025
- Mr. Patrick Frischhertz, Lower Delta SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. John Gay, effective August 22, 2023- May 4, 2026.
- Ms. Michelle Hay Davis, Saline SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Billy Joe Vise, effective August 30, 2023- August 30, 2026.

Motion by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 3 SWCD re-appointments this month:

- Mr. Johnny Taylor, Red River SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2023- August 30, 2026
- Mr. Tim Collins, Saline SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2023-August 30, 2026.
- Mr. Patrick Hebert, Vermillion SWCD, appointed position, September 19, 2023-September 19, 2026.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the SWCD supervisor re-appointments for:

- Mr. Johnny Taylor, Red River SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2023- August 30, 2026
- Mr. Tim Collins, Saline SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2023-August 30, 2026.
- Mr. Patrick Hebert, Vermillion SWCD, appointed position, September 19, 2023-September 19, 2026.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Articles:

- Successful Farming: New Soil test helps famers see yield threats.
- Journal of Soil and Water Conservation: Long-term drainage water recycling affects soil health and soil properties.
- State of Louisiana Memo: Drought Relief Wells/ Request for reporting on Field Conditions (Drought)
- Delta Farm Press: SCOTUS WOTUS decision to reverberate. There is still a lot that could happen following WOTUS ruling.
- Ocean and Coastal Management: Lessons learned form 30-years of operation of the Caernarvon freshwater diversion, Louisiana USA
- Drover: John Phipps: Why Water is the New Oil for Landowners
- Controversial changes on the way for Red River, Atchafalaya, and Bayou Boeuf Leve District Board
- Legal Planet: Finetuning the New NEPA Rules

SWCC Goals

Chairman Garber said due to time restraints, the commission will discuss goals at our next commission meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

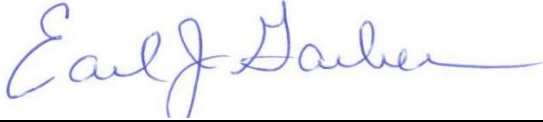
Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 13, 2023 in the NRCS State Office Building B Training Room, 3727 Government Street, Alexandria, Louisiana 71302.

Public Comment

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. Brad Spicer made a motion to adjourn at 3:20 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Horvath and passed unanimously.



/s/

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