

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

June 25, 2024
1:15 PM

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

MEETNG 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 Member
Mr. Steve Horvath, Vice Chairman, Area V Member
Mr. Reggie Skains, Secretary-Treasurer, Area I Member
Mr. Ben Langlinais, LACD President, Member
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate Member
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Member
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member

Members Absent:

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

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Ms. Kelli McClelland, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist of Programs
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

Chairman Garber asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none.

Approval of the June 25, 2024 agenda

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the June 25, 2024 SWCC agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the May 28, 2024 minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the May 28, 2024 SWCC meeting minutes. Mr. Skains requested that "Rep. Cathey" be changed to "Sen. Cathey" under the Public Comments section of the minutes. Chairman Garber said if there were no more changes, he would call for a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

- May's Farm Bill drawdown- \$ 54,896
- 23 Districts have fully expended their allocated Farm Bill funds, totaling \$244,964 worked beyond their allocations.
- NRCS Farm Bill agreement balance- \$192,201

Legislative Session/State Funding

Chairman Garber asked Mr. Breaux for his comments. Mr. Breaux said the legislative website currently shows HB 1 (will be published as Act #4) being signed by the governor with a couple of line items that were vetoed. There is a strong consensus that the \$300,000 amendment for SWCDs was not vetoed. With this approval, the Commission would have to decide how to distribute the funds with the best option being to increase the base allocation in the current formula.

Mr. Breaux also wanted to mention that LDAF along with 5 other agencies were removed from the CPRA board. (Act 726) Chairman Garber said the Commission should consider reaching out to the Governor to let him know that LDAF would like to continue to be more involved in CPRA's efforts. Mr. Breaux said there has been no indication that LDAF or SWCDs will lose any opportunities with the changes.

Chairman Garber wanted to thank Mr. Langlinais and Ms. Gerace for their efforts in supporting the Commissioners \$300,000 budget amendment for district allocations. Mr. Langlinais said there were a few districts supervisors like Mr. Anthony Butler in Capital SWCD who were very active in making key contacts for its support.

Chairman Garber asked the Commission for their thoughts on how best to allocate the \$300,000 amendment among the districts. Mr. Giering said the easiest way would be to increase their base allocation amounts. Mr. Spicer said Commission members should also keep in mind that we have a few districts with multiple offices. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve an increase in the base allocation.

Mr. Breaux mentioned SB 81(Act 288) by Senator Robert Allain which provides for prescribed burning by non-certified prescribed burn managers. He met with Commissioner Strain and the State Forester to discuss drafting rules for the new law. Any agriculture, marshland, or timber prescribed burning conducted without certification must call the Office of Forestry and provide the date, time, location, and type of burn to be conducted. The person calling the Office of Forestry will receive further guidance and will then be able to proceed with their burn. A burn conducted by a non-certified prescribed manager without this prior notification could lead to fines.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

NACD Summer Meeting- Boston, MA

Chairman Garber said the NACD Summer Meeting will be held at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel in Boston, MA. Registration is on the website and the early bird registration ends June 30,2024.

NACD South Central Meeting- Tulsa, OK

Chairman Garber said the NACD South Central Region Meeting will be held on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, OK. More details will be released once they are made available.

Out of State travel

Chairman Garber said we received one out of state travel request:

- DeSoto SWCD is asking permission for Ms. Christina Ebarb to attend the NACD South Central Region Meeting on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Ben Langlinais

Motion passed unanimously.

CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Garber said the Commission received a SWCD CPA Agreement:

- Upper Delta SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, LLC. The cost is \$715.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve Upper Delta's engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, LLC.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report- Ms. Kelli McClelland, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist of Programs

Ms. McClelland said approximately 63% of the \$73 million allocated to LA NRCS has obligated 517 EQIP contracts completed on 89,000 acres, and 161 CSP contracts completed on 121,000 acres. With the additional IRA funding increasing NRCS's budget, Ms. McClelland expects NRCS to complete another 200-300 additional contracts before the fiscal year is completed.

Currently, Louisiana NRCS has 214 full-time employees. Ms. Mellowdee Tibbs, Acting State Conservationist, will retire on June 30th. Mr. Mitch Mouton will be the new Acting State Conservationist. The State Conservationist job posting closed on June 13th. Some of the applicants may have also applied to the Arkansas State Conservationist announcement as well.

OSWC Update

Mr. Breaux said Ms. Arlene Culpepper, Feliciana SWCD's secretary, has worked hard to get Feliciana SWCD recognized. In doing so, she assisted with the planning of the Feliciana Wildflower Festival which took place on June 1, 2024. The event was wildly publicized and had great attendance. A few OSWC employees as well as Ms. Courtney Gerace, LACD Executive Director, were able to assist in working at the event. He said hopefully the event grows and can assist Feliciana SWCD is advertising their program opportunities.

Mr. Breaux said he previously mentioned the sugarcane harvester cane modifications that were going to get funded on the Iberia Parish side of Bayou De Pourtage. They were able to fund 12 of these modifications with EPA being very agreeable with deriving the match from landowners in-field adjustments to the modification as well as partial reimbursement. Additionally, 3 districts: Northeast, LaSalle, and Iberia are in the process of purchasing 319 funded no-till drills.

Mr. Breaux also mentioned that Mr. Kenneth Bohnsack, Reveg. Project Manager, resigned from OSWC. The position has been advertised. He and Mr. Phillips have reviewed the candidates and may have to readvertise the position.

OSWC has planned a series of Supervisor Trainings:

- Area II - July 10, 2024-Ferriday, LA
- Area IV - July 16, 2024- Franklin, LA
- Area V - August 5, 2024- Addis, LA

Mr. Breaux said OSWC will send a memo out to districts to remind them to submit CPA engagement letters for Commission approval. An email to remind districts to submit personnel notice for the new duly elected members will also be sent. Mr. Phillips also wanted to mention that OSWC and LACD will share a display booth at the Farm Bureau Federation meeting.

Supervisor Waivers/ Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there are 2 SWCD resignations this month:

- Ms. Nancy Dupont, Plaquemines SWCD, elected position, effective June 30, 2024
- Mr. John Girard, St. Martin SWCD, elected position, effective June 30, 2024

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

- Ms. Nancy Dupont, Plaquemines SWCD, elected position, effective June 30, 2024
- Mr. John Girard, St. Martin SWCD, elected position, effective June 30, 2024

Mr. Spicer asked that Mr. Girard revise his resignation letter to state that he is resigning from the St. Martin SWCD and not resigning his position as Vice-Chairman. Chairman Garber said if there were no more comments, he would call for a motion to approve the resignations as amended.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 1 reappointment this month:

- Mr. Jarrod Blake McCartney, Red River SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2024- August 30, 2027.

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

- Mr. Jarrod Blake McCartney, Red River SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2024- August 30, 2027.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

District Supervisor Election- June 8, 2024

Chairman Garber said Bodcau SWCD held an election on June 8, 2024 between current supervisor, Mr. Rick Adams and his opponent, Mr. David Hooper. There were three polling locations within Bossier Parish. A special meeting was held after the election to open the sealed ballot boxes. The votes for each location were sorted by board members and tallied by poll commissioners. Poll Commissioners declared Mr. David Hooper the winner of the election. The Bodcau SWCD approved the election results and asked that the Commission approve Mr. Hooper's election to the Bodcau SWCD board effective July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2027.

Chairman Garber said the list of supervisors below will be duly elected and will begin their new terms on July 1, 2024 and will expire June 30, 2027:

ELECTED SUPERVISORS WITH TERMS EXPIRING JUNE 30, 2024

*Green represents a new supervisor

District	Mr./Ms.	Name	Term Exp
Acadia	Mr.	Gerard Frey	06/30/2024
Allen	Ms.	Amie Nunez	06/30/2024
Avoyelles	Mr.	Kyle Lemoine	06/30/2024
Bodcau	Mr.	David Hooper	06/30/2024
Boeuf River	Mr.	John O. Lowery	06/30/2024
Bogue Chitto-PR	Mr.	A. Murdock Brumfield	06/30/2024
Caddo		VACANT	06/30/2024
Calcasieu	Mr.	David Daigle	06/30/2024
Capital	Mr.	David R. Hoover	06/30/2024
Catahoula	Ms.	Rhonda Murphy	06/30/2024
Crescent	Mr.	Daniel Milojevic	06/30/2024
D'Arbonne	Ms.	Melissa Echols	06/30/2024
DeSoto		VACANT	06/30/2024
Dorcheat	Mr.	Mickey Chandler	06/30/2024
Dugdemonia	Mr.	Mervin Parker	06/30/2024
East Carroll	Ms.	Rebecca Thom	06/30/2024
Evangeline	Mr.	Louis Clay Brignac	06/30/2024
Feliciana	Mr.	Luke Fontenot	06/30/2024
Grant	Mr.	Thomas W. Smith	06/30/2024
Gulf Coast	Mr.	Charles R. Fontenot	06/30/2024
Iberia	Mr.	John R. Viator Jr.	06/30/2024
Jefferson Davis	Mr.	Cody Hayes	06/30/2024
Lafayette	Mr.	Daniel Hebert	06/30/2024
Lafourche-Terrebonne	Mr.	Jason Richard	06/30/2024
LaSalle	Mr.	Jimmy Keene	06/30/2024
Lower Delta	Mr.	Patrick Frischhertz	06/30/2024
Madison	Mr.	William Marsh	06/30/2024
Morehouse	Mr.	Robert Jeff Simmons	06/30/2024
Natchitoches	Mr.	Lewis Casey Messenger	06/30/2024
New River	Mr.	Bryce Gautreau	06/30/2024
Northeast	Mr.	Greg Kincaid	06/30/2024
Plaquemines		VACANT	06/30/2024
Rapides		VACANT	06/30/2024
Red River	Mr.	Stuart Shaw	06/30/2024
Sabine	Ms.	Patricia H. Brown	06/30/2024
Saline	Mr.	Lawrence Ryan	06/30/2024
St. Landry	Mr.	Lee Hampton	06/30/2024
St. Martin		VACANT	06/30/2024
St. Mary	Mr.	Junius Hebert Jr.	06/30/2024
Tangi-St. Helena	Mr.	William Brasher	06/30/2024
Tensas-Concordia	Mr.	William Miller	06/30/2024
Upper Delta	Mr.	Morgan Vosburg II	06/30/2024
Vermilion	Mr.	Trevor Hair	06/30/2024
West Carroll	Mr.	Jacob Blaine Chop	06/30/2024

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the elected supervisors listed.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Breaux recommended sending Mr. Rick Adam a commendation letter for his service to the district. He was an intricate part of the district office as a District Conservationist prior to becoming a district supervisor and he should be recognized. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve sending Mr. Adams' commendation letter.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Reggie Skains
Motion passed unanimously.

SWCC Goals

Chairman Garber thanked Mr. Langlinais and Mr. Horvath for their efforts in reaching out to senate members for their support of the Commissioner's \$300,000 budget amendment for district allocations. Chairman Garber said we now must work to get additional funding sources for district operations as stated on the list as well. Mr. Langlinais said LACD does have so ideas and that they will be reaching out to NRCS.

Mr. Giering had comments on the additional \$300,000 amendment. He said a few districts have suboffices to incorporate in the increase. Chairman Garber said it may be best to address the suboffice amounts first and use the remainder of the funds to increase the base allocation for all districts. The Commission members agreed and will further discuss during July's Commission meeting.

Correspondence/Articles:

- State of Louisiana Executive Order Number: JML 24-77- Natural Resources steering Commission
- LIDCO, Helping Increase Recharge, May 27, 2024
- Drovers: Lightning Kills Colorado Rancher and 34 Cows
- Drovers: Swampbuster Challenged By Iowa Farmland Owner In Blockbuster Lawsuit
- The Man Planting Live Oaks to Save Louisiana's Coastal Ridges
- Journal of Soil and Water Conservation: May/June 2024
- Nationwide Partnership Advances Regenerative Agriculture in Cotton
- From the law of the minimum to soil health
- Group plants seed for Feliciana flower destination
- St. Landry Now: Rotary Club Recognizes Parish Farmers

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next state Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 23, 2024 at the LDAF Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806.

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 3:03 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reggie Skains and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

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