

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

August 29, 2024
1:15 PM

NRCS State Office Building B Training Room
3727 Government Street, Alexandria, LA 71302

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Garber called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:30 P.M. Mr. Reggie Skains gave the invocation and Chairman Garber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. "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. Ed Yerger, Area II Member
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Member
Mr. Ron Duhon, Area IV Alternate

Members Absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate Member
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate Member

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Ms. Kelli McClelland, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist of Programs
Ms. Candis Voorhies, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist of Partnerships and Initiatives
Mr. Kirk Garber, NRCS Watershed Planning Specialist
Mr. Scott Romero, Jefferson Davis SWCD
Ms. Rose Sharbeno, Calcasieu SWCD
Ms. Jo Sadowsky, Capital SWCD
Mr. Joey Breaux, SWCC Exec. Director
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Carol Bliss, Calcasieu SWCD
Ms. Denise Richard, Capital SWCD
Ms. Adrienne Landry, Iberia SWCD
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Caitlin Joubert, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

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

Approval of the August 29, 2024 agenda

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the August 29, 2024 SWCC agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the July 29, 2024 minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the July 29, 2024 SWCC meeting minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

- July's Farm Bill drawdown- \$39,845
- 28 Districts have fully expended their allocated Farm Bill funds, totaling \$471,661 earned beyond their allocations.
- NRCS Farm Bill agreement balance- \$106,414

District Funding

Mr. Breaux reported that OSWC just received the SWCD state allocation budget yesterday. He said OSWC plans to get funding out to districts as soon as possible.

Mr. Breaux said the Commission discussed during last month's meeting a funding list created years ago by NACD. He was able to find copies of the list and printed them for the members to review and discuss during next month's meeting. Chairman Garber said some of these opportunities are still relevant and others probably need an update and that hopefully NACD can update this list of funding opportunities available for our conservation districts.

LACD Mid-Year Meeting- August 29, 2024

Mr. Langlinois said the meeting had good attendance and great ideas coming from everyone. He believes that the best days are ahead for conservation districts. Chairman Garber said that Mr. Langlinois's challenge is to work hard to convince supervisors that gaining relationships with the state legislators is vital. Once state legislators have become more aware of conservation efforts, they in turn can become conservation champions. Mr. Langlinois said with partnership assistance, we can work to get Louisiana more in the digital age with the different technologies now available. Mr. Langlinois also wanted to thank Ms. Gerace for putting on a great meeting.

Out of State travel

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

- Capital SWCD is asking permission for Mr. Steve Horvath, Mr. Anthony Butler, Ms. Jo Ann Sadowsky, and Ms. Patricia Fennesy to attend the NACD South Central Region Meeting on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- Crescent SWCD is asking permission for Ms. Rebecca Livaudais, Ms. Erica Johnson, Mr. Blaise Pezold, Mr. Daniel Milojevic, and Ms. Nina Ockman to attend the NACD South Central Region Meeting on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- Lower Delta SWCD is asking permission for Ms. Stephanie Garvin to attend the MACD (Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts) Commissioners Tour on October 14-16, 2024 in Georgia. (Splitting the costs with Upper Delta SWCD)
- Northeast SWCD is asking permission for Mrs. Stephanie Ainsworth and Ms. Katie Taylor to attend the NACD South Central Region Meeting on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- Rapides SWCD is asking permission for Mr. Danny Coombs and Ms. Brenda Archer to attend the NACD South Central Region Meeting on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- Upper Delta SWCD is asking permission for Mr. Price Gay to attend the NACD South Central Region Meeting on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- Upper Delta SWCD is asking permission for Ms. Wendy Gibson and Ms. Stephanie Garvin to attend the MACD (Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts) Commissioners Tour on October 14-16, 2024 in Georgia.

- Vermillion SWCD is asking permission for Mr. Trevor Hair 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 Capital SWCD, Crescent SWCD, Northeast SWCD, Rapides SWCD, Upper Delta SWCD, and Vermillion SWCD's out of state travel requests to attend the NACD South Central Region Meeting on September 22-24, 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains
Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering
Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve Lower Delta SWCD and Upper Delta SWCD's out of state travel request to attend the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts tour on October 14-16, 2024 in Georgia.

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

CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Garber said the Commission received 2 SWCD-CPA Agreements:

- Catahoula SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, LLC. The fee is \$1,350.
- Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, LLC. The fee is \$1,350.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the following SWCD-CPA Agreements:

- Catahoula SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, LLC. The fee is \$1,350.
- Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Langley, Williams & Company, LLC. The fee is \$1,350.

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

Mr. Breaux said Langley, Williams & Company, LLC is the CPA firm that agreed to provide financial review engagements for most of the districts that submit sworn financial statements. The firm has been slow to distribute their engagement letters this year and in turn districts have received notices from the Louisiana Legislative Auditors (LLA). Mr. Breaux suggests that other firms be considered, as well as have a discussion with Langley, Williams & Company. Chairman Garber said if there were no other comment, he would call for a motion to approve Mr. Breaux speaking with Langley, Williams & Company regarding this matter.

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

NEW BUSINESS

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

Ms. McClelland said NRCS has obligated 93% of their total allocation leaving approximately \$5 million to spend before the end of their fiscal year. EQIP has obligated 730 contracts at \$36.3 million and CSP has obligated 271 contracts at \$26 million. RCPP has obligated 19 contracts at approximately \$1.1 million. NRCS staffing is still at 214 full-time employees.

Ms. McClelland asked Ms. Voorhies to discuss NRCS agreement updates. Ms. Voorhies said NRCS has been working diligently in getting the next FY agreements completed. She wanted to thank Mr. Phillips and Ms. Gibson for their hard work and assistance in these efforts. The agreements have already been presented to NRCS's national grants and agreements section and are still in process. She said everything will be completed prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year. Ms. Voorhies said there has been no movement on FY 24 notice of funding opportunity, so they are preparing for FY 25 notice of funding announcement. She planned to use previous wording, but she is prepared to revise it to add suggestions for possible special projects from the NRCS Acting Conservationist, Mr. Steven Cole.

OSWC Update

Ms. Joubert said we had some extra outreach funding in OSWC's 319 agreement and were able to produce a BMP video. The video featured Mr. Glenn Simon from Acadia SWCD and Mr. Jeff Durand of St. Martin SWCD which highlighted their conservation practices that increased water quality during their rice production. LDAF also sent a film crew to get interviews from the feature producers and others that included Mr. Kyle Soileau from Ducks Unlimited and Mr. Jacob Jarreau from NRCS. Throughout the video, participants were discussing rice production and how rice farmers are helping with water pollution by utilizing local surface water for irrigation. The video has been posted on LDAF's YouTube channel and the video has been shared by LACD and NACD. Ms. Joubert plans to encourage districts with Facebook pages to share this video on their pages as well. Currently, there are plans to produce 2 more videos that will feature Mr. David Daigle of Calcasieu SWCD and Mr. Buddy Oubre of St. Martinville SWCD Cooperator.

Ms. Joubert said OSWC created a new 319 proposal that would include an additional \$25,000 to be used for at least 6 additional conservation videos next FY with emphasis on water quality. She said one special thing about the footage being taken is that even if a clip is not used in final video footage it could be used later. These videos can be displayed at different events such as LACD and this would be something that legislators would get excited about as well. Mr. Langlinais said these videos are great tools and will be beneficial in the long run. He said Farm Bureau does an excellent job with videos at their conventions.

Ms. Joubert said OSWC has been working to highlight a conservation district each month in LDAF's Market Bulletin. OSWC has highlighted 6 districts so far with the next one being Morehouse SWCD in October. These districts are chosen based off big projects or activities happening in their area. Ms. Joubert said OSWC is open to receiving ideas and names of producers doing excellent conservation work in their areas.

Supervisor Waivers/ Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there is 1 SWCD resignation this month:

- Ms. Keli Hayden, Capital SWCD, elected position, effective July 31, 2024

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

- Ms. Keli Hayden, Capital SWCD, elected position, effective July 31, 2024

Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there is 1 reappointment this month:

- Ms. Denise Richard, Capital SWCD, elected position formerly held by Ms. Keli Hayden, effective August 29, 2024- June 30, 2025.

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

- Ms. Denise Richard, Capital SWCD, elected position formerly held by Ms. Keli Hayden, effective August 29, 2024- June 30, 2025.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said the Commission received one reappointment:

- Mr. Marlin Lemoine, Allen SWCD, appointed position, effective August 29, 2024- July 26, 2027.

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

- Mr. Marlin Lemoine, Allen SWCD, appointed position, effective August 29, 2024- July 26, 2027.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Giering

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

SWCC Goals

Chairman Garber said during last meeting, the Commission revised the goals list under “District Operational Funding” to identify current and future funding sources for district operations. He said Mr. Breaux gave the Commission the list of funding opportunities that was discussed previously with hopes that the members would review it for further discussion during next meeting. Chairman Garber said the Commission would welcome any ideas from the districts that should be considering as a goal. Chairman Garber opened the floor to any further discussion about the goals list and there was none.

Correspondence/Articles:

- Letter to US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Williams from Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Director Sheahan asking for consideration to allow bellied whistling ducks harvest during the September teal season.
- USDA: Injecting New Life into an Old Aquifer
- Water Resources Bill Advances in House, Includes Additional Graves Priorities
- USDA Farm Service Agency: USDA Accepts More Than 2.2 Million Acres Through 2024 Grassland, General and Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Offers
- Innovative Acadiana plant to turn sugar cane bagasse into biofuel pellets

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next state Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 24, 2024 at the LDAF Veterans Memorial 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. Steve Horvath made a motion to adjourn at 2:55 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Giering and passed unanimously.



/s/

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