

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

June 23, 2026
1:15 PM

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY
VETERANS MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BLVD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70806

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Skains called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 PM.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. Clay Alexander.

Members and Alternates present:

Mr. Reggie Skains, Chairman, Area I Member Mr. Steve Horvath, Vice Chairman, Area V Member

Mr. Ron Duhon, Area IV Alternate Member Mr. Price Gay, LACD President, Member

Mr. Chris Carter, Area II Alternate Member Mr. Ed Giering, Area III, Member

Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate Member Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Member

Dr. Crystal Vance, Southern University Ag
Center, Alternate Member

Members Absent:

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Ms. Candis Voorhies, Acting LA NRCS Assistant
State Conservationist-Partnerships and Initiatives

Mr. Scott Durham, LA Wildlife and Fisheries
Biologist, Retired

Mr. Ben Langlinais, Iberia SWCD

Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC

Ms. Clay Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Britt Paul- Assistant State Conservationist-
Water Resources & Rural Development

Mr. Doug Daigle, LA Hypoxia Working Group

Mr. Joey Breaux, SWCC Exec. Director

Mr. Jerry Davenport, LDAF-OSWC

Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

Chairman Skains asked for public comments and recognized Mr. Doug Daigle. Mr. Daigle discussed forecasts for the Gulf of America's dead zone recently released by the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The dead zone or hypoxic zone, is an area where dissolved oxygen levels are too low to support marine life, causing die-offs of fish, shellfish, corals, and aquatic plants. NOAA used May's nitrate reports to develop a forecast. At the end of July, a monitoring survey will be conducted, and results will be released in August.

Approval of May 26, 2026 minutes

Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the May 26, 2026 SWCC meeting minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Price Gay

Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

April 2026 Drawdown: \$76,104

Total Farm Bill Balance remaining: \$364,249

Legislative Session

Chairman Skains asked Mr. Breaux if he had any comments. Mr. Breaux discussed possible rule development in the Dept. of Conservation & Energy that will enable LDAF and Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to review and comment on solar permits as they are received by the Louisiana Department of Conservation and Energy.

The Legislative Session ended and there were no known changes to previously reviewed legislation of concern. Commissioner Strain expects to see the LDAF budget sometime in July and it is expected that districts will maintain their current level of funding .

NACD Summer Meeting-Grand Rapides, MI

The 2026 NACD Summer Meeting is scheduled to take place on July 17-21, 2026 in Grand Rapides, MI. Early bird registration ends on June 29, 2026.

CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Skains said the Commission received 2 SWCD CPA Agreements:

- Iberia SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Maraist & Maraist, CPA. The fee will be no more than \$2,100.
- LaSalle SWCD is submitting an engagement letter from Ther Vercher Group, CPA. The fee will be no more than \$6,000.

Chairman Skains said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve Iberia SWCD's engagement letter from Maraist & Maraist, CPA and LaSalle SWCD's engagement letter from The Vercher Group.

Motion by: Mr. Price Gay

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

DOTD Water Resources Presentation- Mr. Ed Knight, Deputy Assistant Secretary

Mr. Knight thanked the Commission for the opportunity to present and discussed Act 418 of the 2025 Regular Session, which established the Coordinated Use of Resources for Recreation, Economy, Navigation,

and Transportation Authority (The CURRENT Authority). This entity is responsible for flood control, risk reduction, navigation, water resource management, and infrastructure projects specifically within the non-coastal areas of the state, excluding jurisdictions under the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA). He noted that Senate Bill 171 of the 2026 Regular Legislative Session introduced minor updates to the framework, including updating the terminology from “upland” to “non-coastal” and clarifying board membership structures.

Mr. Knight reported that a budget has been allocated, with the majority of funds designated for the development of a master plan. Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) Secretary Glenn Ledet is currently serving as Chairman and leading The Authority until an Executive Director is appointed. The group has designated watershed management as its top priority and is currently drafting a scope of services to secure a Master Plan Consultant, with the goal of completing the comprehensive master plan within 18 to 24 months.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Knight encouraged the Commission to share any suggestions or insights that could assist in the development of the state master plan, noting that the subsequent phase of operations will focus on public data dissemination. He highlighted the recently released 2020 Water Use of Louisiana report, which indicated an increase in groundwater consumption alongside a decrease in surface water utilization, emphasizing the critical need for Louisiana to approach water resource management with long-term strategic planning.

NRCS State Conservationist Report- Ms. Candis Voorhies, Acting LA NRCS Assistant State Conservationist- Partnerships and Initiatives and Mr. Britt Paul- Assistant State Conservationist- Water Resources & Rural Development

Ms. Voorhies said Chief Buckley recently introduced a renewed mission, vision, and motto to reinforce its commitment to conservation and agriculture productivity:

- Motto: Keeping Working Lands in Working Hands
- Mission Statement: We deliver practical voluntary, and locally led conservation solutions that help producers conserve natural resources, strengthen agricultural productions, and keep working lands productive for generations to come.
- Vision Statement: An America where working lands remain productive, resilient, and in the hands of those who steward them.

Chief Buckley also updated NRCS's priorities:

- Preserving and protecting agricultural land
- Advancing outcome-based conservation and farmer empowerment
- Strengthening field engagement and technical expertise
- Expanding wildlife conservation and outdoor access
- Enhancing partnerships through streamlined processes and accountability
- Optimizing mission delivery through workforce development
- Modernizing infrastructure and technology

On June 17, 2026, NRCS announced reorganization. By law, the agency is required to complete a 30-day consultation process with congress. During this time, the agency is not allowed to make any changes to reflect the upcoming reorganization. Most of the restructuring is looking to take place at the national level. Ms. Voorhies reported that it doesn't look like field office staff will be affected by this reorganization at this time.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFA) was just released today. There is a total budget of \$310 million available for RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs). 10% of this budget will be set aside for tribal entities. The deadline for RCPP

proposals is August 24, 2026. Ms. Voorhies mentioned the Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) is live and July 27, 2026 is the deadline. CIG Classic has approximately \$15 million available and CIG On-Farm Trials has approximately \$50 million available. CIG classic priorities include water management, conserving ecosystems by managing pest pressure, soil health, habitat improvement, and farmer-focused conservation outcomes. CIG On-Farm Trial priorities include irrigation management technologies, new and innovative grazing land management solutions, nutrient management, and soil health demonstration trials.

There are no new updates regarding the Feral Swine Pilot Program, but NRCS will notify everyone if there get any information.

NRCS has created CEMA 216 soil health tester list. If there is anyone interested in being put on the list, go to the Louisiana NRCS website where they can fill out a form or scan the QR code located on the page. They can also contact her or Ms. Audrina Lange, Public Affairs Specialist. NRCS cannot specifically recommend someone for testing, but the list is available.

LA NRCS is working through their financial assistance program obligations. Figures for EQIP, CSP, and ACEP are reaching historic levels this year with over \$100 million obligated. NRCS is going through a due diligence review for all agreements. This process has a tentative deadline of July 15, 2026. Ms. Voorhies stated that she is the primary contact for the state and there has been no feedback which is hopefully good news for LA NRCS agreements.

Mr. Paul wanted to remind the Commission about the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. This program offers technical and financial assistance to help local communities relieve imminent threats to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters that impair a watershed. There is some ongoing work happening from winter storm Fern in the northern part of the state. Most recently, Avoyelles Parish had some flooding to happen, and they are awaiting a call for assistance from them.

LSU AgCenter Report- Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter Member

On July 1st, the University of New Orleans will become LSU New Orleans. The school aims to leverage the broader prestige and financial backing associated with the LSU brand. LSU hired Mr. Joseph Messina as the school's provost. He served as the Dean of Arts and Science at University of Alabama.

The LSU AgCenter and faculty are continuing to monitor three new pests that were discovered last year: the rice delphacid, the West Indian cane fly, and the pasture mealybug. They are also doing research and extension work related to the New World Screwworm outbreak in Texas cattle. APHIS released approximately \$100 million for funding some Screwworm research. So far, they have funded 40 projects with LSU AgCenter having 1 of their 6 submitted projects funded.

Over the last week, LSU released their annual "Highlights of Louisiana Agriculture" which gives estimates of the value of agriculture production in the state. Agencies of each parish compile the information for Dr. Kirk Guidry to show in the highlights. Some of the figures include:

Forestry (2025): \$ 3.48 billion

Poultry (2025): \$1.8 billion

Cattle & Calves (2025): \$903 million

Aquaculture (2025): \$807 million (crawfish is majority)

Sugarcane is biggest agronomics crop: \$1.5 billion

LSU Events:

- June 24, 2026: Annual H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station Field Day – Crowley, LA
- July 9, 2026: Sugarcane Field Day- Dean Lee Research Station- Alexandria, LA
- July 15, 2026: St. Gabriel Sugarcane Field Day- St. Gabriel, LA
- July 22, 2026: Crop Nutrient Management Field Day- Bossier City, LA

Southern University Ag Center Report- Dr. Crystal Vance

Dr. Vance reported that Southern University received a \$1.3 million grant to support improvements and enhancements to the Meat Processing Facility. Additionally, the university secured \$400,000 in funding allocated for renovations and infrastructure upgrades to the Poultry Unit.

An update was provided on current research initiatives, noting that researchers are evaluating how landscape characteristics influence honeybee health by monitoring colonies in both rural and urban environments. Additionally, the university is continuing its collaborative partnership with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) on honeybee breeding and genetics research.

Under the Mississippi Delta Transition Initiative, Southern University will launch the "Scientist for a Day" program this upcoming fall in partnership with the Southern University Laboratory School. This program is designed to introduce middle school students to coastal and environmental science topics while actively promoting STEM and agricultural career pathways.

Dr. Vance mentioned that Southern has faculty vacancies for an Assistant Professor of Animal Science (Research) and an Assistant/Associate Professor within the Department of Environmental Toxicology. The selection committee for the Chair of the Department of Urban Forestry and Natural Resources has concluded its work and plans to move forward with the hiring process.

LACD Update- Mr. Price Gay, LACD President, Member

- Ms. Gerace has been in discussions with Mr. Jimmy Emmons, Assistant Chief for the Central Region for NRCS, about the Feral Swine Pilot Program. He is interested in receiving letters of support for Dr. Gentry's toxicant from LACD and any other entities. Mr. Emmons would be willing to reach out to EPA to aid in getting the proper approval.
- LACD has chosen the Golden Nugget resort in Lake Charles, LA as the 2027 LACD annual meeting location. They are working with the Lake Charles Visitors Bureau, and they are supplying different discounts as well as welcome bags and name badges. With increased costs, supervisors are encouraged to invite as many cooperators as possible to the meeting. LACD is also welcoming new exhibitors and sponsors for the meeting.
- The NACD South Central Region- September 17-18, 2026 in Natchitoches, LA. Supervisors are encouraged to invite cooperators.
- LACD Summer Meeting- September 3, 2026 in Alexandria, LA
- 2027 LACD Annual Meeting- January 11-13, 2027
- LACD Coastal Resource Committee Meeting- June 25-26, 2026 in Hackberry, LA
- LACD is still working on attaining 501(c3) status . The next step would be to hire a lawyer to review the bylaws and articles to critique them.

OSWC Update- Mr. Joey Breaux, SWCC Exec. Director

Mr. Breaux reported that OSWC staff recently met with the Ducks Unlimited (DU) Water Resource staff to collaborate on developing a Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). An EPA waiver approved last year authorized OSWC to secure a contractor to initiate and complete these projects. Mr. Breaux introduced Scott Durham, a recently retired Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) biologist now working with Ducks Unlimited. Mr. Durham is currently engaged with the Coastal Grassland Restoration Incentive Program (C-GRIP), which provides financial incentives to private landowners executing habitat treatments to improve suitability for grassland birds.

OSWC personnel, Theron Phillips and Wendy Gibson, managed an informational booth at the Louisiana State Farm Bureau Convention last week, which focused on the challenges and opportunities facing state producers. Additionally, Commissioner Strain attended the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) Regional Meeting in Cambridge, Maryland. Hosted by Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Tyler Harper, the meeting covered various topics, including the administrative processes for migrant agricultural

workers entering and exiting the United States. Mr. Breaux also noted that the LDAF legal team is drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between LDAF and LSU regarding a no-till drill for agricultural research stations.

Meanwhile, progress continues on the Online Supervisor Training program. Mr. Breaux stated he is developing the initial module on ProProfs, which will focus on district public meetings. Once this pilot module is complete, it will be distributed to a select group for testing, feedback, and any necessary revisions before a wider rollout.

Concluding the reports, Mr. Davenport stated that the Boeuf River SWCD Steep Bayou project is advancing toward Environmental Assessment status in coordination with Stantec. This initiative will join the Lower Vermilion River Watershed and Lower Ouachita Basin projects, both of which are scheduled for renewal submission by the end of the year. Additionally, OSWC recently submitted the Fiscal Year 2026 workplan to the EPA. Louisiana is also on track to become the first state in EPA Region 6 to implement Capacity Development through the Lake Providence Watershed, alongside Phase 2 of the Bayou Maringouin and Bayou Grosse Tete projects. This Capacity Development framework assists water systems in acquiring and maintaining the necessary technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity to consistently provide safe drinking water to the public. As part of this program, LDAF will receive a mobile agricultural education conservation trailer, with completion anticipated next year. Mr. Davenport reminded the Commission that OSWC stands ready to assist districts applying for grants or special projects, advising districts to contact their assigned OSWC representative or the main office for support.

Supervisor Waivers/ Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Skains said there is 3 resignations this month:

- Mr. Don Knuppel, Crescent SWCD, elected position, effective June 5, 2026.
- Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vermillion SWCD, appointed position, effective June 3, 2026.
- Mr. Christian Richard, Vermillion SWCD, elected position, effective June 23, 2026.

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

- Mr. Don Knuppel, Crescent SWCD, elected position, effective June 5, 2026.
- Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vermillion SWCD, appointed position, effective June 3, 2026.
- Mr. Christian Richard, Vermillion SWCD, elected position, effective June 23, 2026.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Giering

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said there are 3 appointments this month:

- Dr. Jasmine Jackson, appointed position formerly held by Ms. Rebecca Livaudais, effective June 23, 2026- June 21, 2029.
- Mr. Christian Richard, appointed position formerly held by Dr. Ernest Girouard, effective June 23, 2026-November 27, 2028
- Ms. Shannon Neveaux, elected position formerly held by Mr. Christian Richard, effective June 23, 2026- June 30, 2029.

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

- Dr. Jasmine Jackson, appointed position formerly held by Ms. Rebecca Livaudais, effective June 23, 2026- June 21, 2029.
- Mr. Christian Richard, appointed position formerly held by Dr. Ernest Girouard, effective June 23, 2026-November 27, 2028
- Ms. Shannon Neveaux, elected position formerly held by Mr. Christian Richard, effective June 23, 2026- June 30, 2029.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer
Seconded by: Mr. Price Gay
Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said there are 2 re-appointments this month:

- Mr. Preston Broxson, Calcasieu SWCD, appointed position, effective July 27, 2026- July 27, 2029.
- Mr. Jolley Nash, Red River SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2026- August 30, 2029.

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

- Mr. Preston Broxson, Calcasieu SWCD, appointed position, effective July 27, 2026- July 27, 2029.
- Mr. Jolley Nash, Red River SWCD, appointed position, effective August 30, 2026- August 30, 2029.

Motion by: Mr. Ron Duhon
Seconded by: Mr. Price Gay
Motion passed unanimously.

Meritorious Awards

Chairman Skains presented 3 meritorious award requests:

- Northeast SWCD is nominating Ms. Katie Taylor (district secretary) to receive an exceptional performance award of \$1,000.00.
- St. Mary SWCD is nominating Ms. Andrea Dumesnil (district secretary) to receive an exceptional performance award of \$1,285.44
- Vermillion SWCD is nominating Mr. Ty Detraz (district technician) to receive an exceptional performance award of \$998.40.

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

- Northeast SWCD is nominating Ms. Katie Taylor (district secretary) to receive an exceptional performance award of \$1,000.00.
- St. Mary SWCD is nominating Ms. Andrea Dumesnil (district secretary) to receive an exceptional performance award of \$1,285.44
- Vermillion SWCD is nominating Mr. Ty Detraz (district technician) to receive an exceptional performance award of \$998.40.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer
Seconded by: Mr. Ron Duhon
Motion passed unanimously.

District Supervisor Election

Chairman Skains said the following supervisors submitted completed nominating petitions and had no opposition. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the below list of supervisors:

ELECTED SUPERVISORS WITH TERMS EXPIRING JUNE 30, 2026

**** Represents new member**

District	Mr./Ms.	Name	Term Exp
Acadia	Mr.	*Joseph Sittig III	06/30/2026
Allen		VACANT	06/30/2026
Avoyelles	Mr.	Chadrick Tassin	06/30/2026
Bodcau	Mr.	*James Craig Smith	06/30/2026
Boeuf River	Mr.	William Waller	06/30/2026
Bogue Chitto-PR	Mr.	*Steve Branch	06/30/2026
Caddo	Mr.	Kyle Dill	06/30/2026
Calcasieu	Mr.	*Trace Porter	06/30/2026
Capital	Mr.	*Dale Cambre	06/30/2026
Catahoula	Mr.	Charles Edwards	06/30/2026
Crescent	Mr.	Don Knuppel	06/30/2026
D'Arbonne	Ms.	Patricia Avery	06/30/2026
DeSoto	Mr.	Kendall Lemar	06/30/2026
Dorcheat		VACANT	06/30/2026
Dugdemona	Mr.	Glenn Austin	06/30/2026
East Carroll	Mr.	*Nick Van Mol	06/30/2026
Evangeline	Mr.	Anthony Rozas	06/30/2026
Feliciana	Ms.	Amelia Kent	06/30/2026
Grant	Ms.	Conan Soileau	06/30/2026
Gulf Coast		VACANT	06/30/2026
Iberia	Ms.	Lisa Hulin	06/30/2026
Jefferson Davis	Mr.	David Scott Romero	06/30/2026
Lafayette	Mr.	Chad Courteois	06/30/2026
Lafourche-Terrebonne	Mr.	Robert Pitre	06/30/2026
LaSalle	Mr.	Michael McCartney	06/30/2026
Lower Delta	Mr.	Josh Himel	06/30/2026
Madison	Mr.	Jack Varner III	06/30/2026
Morehouse	Mr.	*Alan Haynes	06/30/2026
Natchitoches	Mr.	Ed Giering II	06/30/2026
New River	Mr.	Ozane Gravois	06/30/2026
Northeast	Mr.	Randall Braswell	06/30/2026
Plaquemines	Mr.	Bartol Taliancich Jr.	06/30/2026
Rapides		VACANT	06/30/2026
Red River	Mr.	Daniel Snead	06/30/2026
Sabine		VACANT	06/30/2026
Saline	Ms.	Ashley Davis	06/30/2026
St. Landry	Mr.	Fred Lavergne	06/30/2026
St. Martin	Mr.	Daniel Richard	06/30/2026
St. Mary	Mr.	Alton Broussard Jr.	06/30/2026
Tangi-St. Helena		VACANT	06/30/2026
Tensas-Concordia	Mr.	Walker Head	06/30/2026
Upper Delta	Mr.	Curtis Engemann	06/30/2026
Vermilion	Mr.	Christian Richard	06/30/2026
West Carroll	Mr.	Cullen Kovac	06/30/2026

Motion by: Mr. Ron Duhon

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

SWCC Goals

Chairman Skains emphasized the necessity of advancing water management plans. Following this, Mr. Breaux highlighted the poultry litter cost-share program, noting that while Mr. Davenport is engaged with select districts, widespread participation remains an objective. Mr. Breaux also presented a proposal to introduce cost-share funding for approvable gypsum into upcoming workplans. Utilizing gypsum as bedding in grow-out houses serves to ease odors and bind nitrates and phosphates, effectively eliminating related environmental impairments. OSWC intends to issue a letter of encouragement to conservation districts regarding program opportunities available through the Strategic Implementation Grant (SIG) and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Correspondence

- Journal of Soil and Water Conservation: Can a forested state park within an agriculturally impacted watershed reduce total suspended solids and dissolved organic carbon concentrations? A case study in the US Midwest
- Journal of Soil and Water Conservation: Nearing nationwide coverage of the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework database to facilitate watershed-scale planning
- Journal of Soil and Water Conservation: Phosphorus content and leaching potential from crop residues increased with soil test phosphorus
- Journal of Soil and Water Conservation: Avian use of agricultural cover crop fields during winter, migratory stopover, and the breeding season in Tennessee
- Choices Magazine: What Can Cows Tell Us About Climate Change

Other Business

Next Meeting

Chairman Skains said the next state Commission Meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, July 28, 2026 in the LDAF Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806.

Public Comment

Adjournment

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

Motion: At 3:16 P.M. Mr. Brad Spicer made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Giering and passed unanimously.

/s/



Mr. Reggie Skains, Chairman, State Soil and Water Conservation Commission