

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

December 4, 2019
1:15 PM

VETERAN'S AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BLVD.
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Skains called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M and gave the invocation and Mr. David Daigle lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

Members and Alternate Members present:

Mr. Reggie Skains- Chairman
Dr. Ernest Girouard-Vice Chairman
Mr. Ed Yerger
Mr. Ed Giering
Mr. Steve Horvath
Mr. David Daigle- LACD President
Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter_

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative

Mr. Larry Sayes

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Tim Landreneau, Acting NRCS State Conservationist
Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Skains asked if there were any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members about the October 22, 2019 State Soil and Water Conservation Commission minutes. Mr. Giering said in the "Louisiana Governor's Office of Community Development" paragraph it states that there are five state agencies that are a part of the Watershed Initiative Council but only four are listed in the minutes. He said the Governor's Office of Homeland Security is the missing agency. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve October 22, 2019 State Commission Meeting minutes as revised.

Motion: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve October 22, 2019 State Soil and Water Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes as revised. The motion was seconded by Dr. Ernest Girouard and passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Skains said they would now take up Unfinished Business and asked Mr. Spicer to review the agenda items with the State Commission.

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

Mr. Spicer reported the districts earned \$91,000 in September. He said that he is hopeful the districts will continue to stay on track in earning their farm bill funds.

State Commission Area V Election Convention Results

Chairman Skains said the next item is the State Commission Election Convention for Area V. He said the State Commission discussed the results of the Area V Election Convention in October which is as follows:

Area V-State Commission Member
Mr. Steve Horvath
Capital SWCD

Area V- State Commission Alternate Member
Dr. Thomas Vitrano
Crescent SWCD

Chairman Skains said there was no motion to accept the results. He called for a motion to accept the results.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to accept the State Commission Area V Election Convention Results. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

LACD Annual Meeting/NACD Annual Meeting

Chairman Skains said the next items are the *LACD Annual Meeting and NACD Annual Meeting*. Mr. Spicer said that Chief Matt Lohr and Governor John Bel Edwards are unable to attend the Annual meeting. Mr. Landreneau said that Mr. Kevin Norton, Associate Chief, will be giving an NRCS report this year. Mr. Spicer said we also have a video by Ms. Taylor Frey that will be shown after district area reports on Wednesday afternoon. He said he appreciates Ms. Adele Swearingen for assisting in preparing the program. Chairman Skains said the NACD Annual Meeting is scheduled for February 8-12, 2020 in Las Vegas, NV. Mr. Spicer said that we did have two submissions for the NACD scholarship that we planned to submit but NACD had already given out the scholarships before the actual deadline that was given on the website.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Mr. Tim Landreneau, Acting NRCS State Conservationist, to give the NRCS report. Mr. Landreneau said NRCS is slowly working through its transitional period. He said that he wanted to talk about some of the accomplishments that happened in 2019 and some of the new things happening in 2020. He said Louisiana's producers received 71.4 million dollars in funding through NRCS's conservation programs. He said 348,000 acres were obligated through working lands, wetland easements, and floodplain easements. Mr. Landreneau said conservation plans were developed on over 436,000 acres and over 236,000 acres had conservation practices applied to treat resources concerns and to improve environmental quality.

Mr. Landreneau said that we did get a new Farm Bill but of course it will take some time to implement the rules and regulations. He said during the first year, NRCS operated under the existing rules. He said now that we are entering the second year, we would have to operate under interim rules or final rules. He v

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) interim rules were published in November and there is a 60 day comment period available until January 13th. Mr. Landreneau said that interim rules for EQIP, ACEP, and RCPP should be posted in the next 30-60 days.

Mr. Landreneau said the big news is that NRCS has chosen a new State Conservationist for Louisiana. He said his name is Chad Kacir and he has a start date of December 8th. He said he will be on the road his first day to go to Little Rock, Arkansas for the Rice Outlook conference. He said Mr. Kacir is a native of Victoria, TX and a graduate of Texas Tech University. Mr. Landreneau said he started in the private sector and had a cow/calf operation. He said Mr. Kacir has been with NRCS for 17 years working first as a Soil Conservationist in south Texas and then as a District Conservationist for 4 years in Hawaii and then went on to Oklahoma as an Assistant State Conservationist of Field Operations and been there for 8 years.

Mr. Landreneau said he wanted to discuss restructuring the field offices. He said Mr. Norton bought this concept up a while ago and is now starting to be implemented. He said NRCS never lost sight of it but there have been some changes to delay the process. He said that Undersecretary Northey and Secretary Perdue has approved the plan but there are a few formalities left and NRCS is hoping to have complete approval in January. Mr. Landreneau said he passed out a map to show us the restructuring process. He said Louisiana will have 13 resource units with multiple field offices in each unit. He said currently there is a District Conservationist (DC) in each field office. He said the restructuring plan calls for 1 DC in each resource unit and each field office will have a Soil Conservationist Senior Planner. Mr. Landreneau said the intent of this plan is to change and split the duties where the new DCs will focus on Technical Assistance and being out in the field. He said the Senior Planner positions will be supervisory and administrative focused positions. He said the 13 DC positions are expected to be advertised in mid-January. He said the first round of selections will be Louisiana only applicants with the attempt to fill all vacancies and if there are any vacancies, the position will become available nationwide. Mr. Landreneau said NRCS currently has DCs classified as GS-11 and GS-12 positions. He said the new 13 DC positions will be GS-12 positions and if a current DC decides not to apply for the new positions or if the DC is not chosen for the position, the DC will be reverted to the title of Soil Conservationist Senior Planner and retain their current grade.

Mr. Landreneau said this month's *Conservation Update* contains an article on Sweet Home, LLC which is owned by Mr. Buddy Gravois. He said Sweet Home, LLC. is a sugarcane operation that spreads across Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James and St. John Parishes. He said Mr. Buddy is a third generation farmer who has been utilizing several conservation practices over the past 15 years with the assistance of Lower Delta Soil and Water Conservation District. He said this month's update also introduces Mr. Chris Ebel who is the new state rangeland management specialist in the NRCS State Office in Alexandria, LA.

Mr. Landreneau concluded his report and Chairman Skains thanked him.

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondence item is an out of state travel request from Vermillion SWCD for Dr. Ernest Girouard to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 8-12, 2020 in Las Vegas, NV. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the out of state travel request from Avoyelles SWCD.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve the out of state travel request from Vermillion SWCD for Dr. Ernest Girouard to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 8-12, 2020 in Las Vegas, NV. The motion was seconded Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said next is an article covering the *6 Tips for Switching to No Till*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments on this article. Mr. Spicer said he wanted to ask Mr. Landreneau about this topic. He asked Mr. Landreneau did Louisiana follow these types of tips for no-till operations. Mr. Landreneau said that it is not listed exactly like the article but there have been discussions on field conditions, types of equipment, and economic factors. Mr. Spicer said the article caught his attention because he has had conversations with

different people across the United States and the main complaint is understanding how to implement soil health programs. Chairman Skains said that he is taking the steps slowly and that is the best way to do no till.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "*Fridays on the Farm: Enhancing an Operation with Cover Crops.*" He asked Mr. Spicer did he have any comments on this article. Chairman Skains said this story is about Mr. Bo Fox from Monona County, Iowa. Dr. Girouard said these stories are highlighted every Friday and are a great read.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *Soil Health News*. He asked Mr. Spicer did he have any comments on this article. Mr. Spicer said the article discusses a Soil Health Annual Meeting that took place in Sacramento, California. He said the highlight of the article is a discussion from Dr. Shannon Cappellazzi. He said participants gained guidance on evaluating soil health measurements as well as discussing the 2018 Farm Bill.

Chairman Skains said next is the *Louisiana Commodities and Conservation Newsletter: November 2019: Issue 7*. He asked Dr. Leonard if he had any comments on the publication. Dr. Leonard said this is a monthly newsletter done by Dr. Naveen Adusumilli in regards to agriculture economics and soil health. He said this newsletter was made to be comprehensive but compact to get information to Louisiana producers .

Supervisor Resignations/Reappointments/Appointments

Chairman Skains said they would now take up supervisor resignations, reappointments, and appointments.

Chairman Skains said there is one reappointment this month from the Vermillion SWCD requesting to reappoint Dr. Ernest Girouard to fill his appointed position. Term will began November 27, 2019 and expire November 27, 2022. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the reappointment.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve the reappointment of Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vermillion SWCD, to fill his appointed position on the board. Term will began November 27, 2019 and expire November 27, 2022. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Skains said they would now go into executive session. Chairman Skains asked for a motion to go into Executive Session.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve going into Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains requested only Commission members and the Commission Executive Director remain in the room.

Chairman Skains called for motion to end Executive Session.

Motion: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve ending Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Horvath and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains requested all visitors to return to the Commission meeting.

Chairman Skains welcomed everyone back. He said in the executive session they discussed the retirement of Mr. Brad Spicer, Executive Director. He said Mr. Spicer stated that he planned to retire in late February or early March. He said they discussed recommendations for the position of Executive Director of State Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Soil and Water Conservation. He said the members recommended Mr. Joey Breaux for the position. Chairman Skains called for a motion to recommend Mr. Joey Breaux for the position of Executive Director of State Soil and Water Conservation Commission Conservation and Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Soil and Water Conservation.

Motion: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to recommend Mr. Joey Breaux for the position of Executive Director of State Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Soil and Water Conservation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Horvath and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Skains said they would now take up Other Business. He asked Dr. Rogers Leonard if he had any comments. Dr. Leonard said he wanted to introduce to Dr. Mike Salassi, Department Head of Agriculture Economics and Agriculture Business, who is transitioning to his position. He said Dr. Salassi has already begun working with him and that he will begin his new position on February 29th. He asked if Dr. Salassi if he had any comments. Dr. Salassi said that he is excited to be coming an alternate member of the Commission and is looking forward to attending the Commission meetings. He said that he is a Louisiana native and obtained two degrees with from LSU and one from Mississippi State University. He said he previously worked in Washington D.C. for 9 years and came back to Louisiana to work at LSU for the last 25 years. Chairman Skains said the Commission is looking forward to working with Dr. Salassi.

Chairman Skains said the Commission greatly appreciates Dr. Leonard for the guidance and for his reports at the Commission meetings. Mr. Spicer said that Dr. Leonard has been an outstanding person to work with and thanked him for his contribution to Louisiana Agriculture.

Chairman Skains asked were there any other comments. Mr. Breaux said he wanted to announce that NRCS had selected a feral hog eradication proposal that was submitted on behalf of 3 priority areas. He said the next step would be to develop an agreement to get the process going.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at 1:15 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Skains asked if there were any other comments from the public or Commission members and there were none.

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: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to adjourn at 2:48 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Giering and passed unanimously.

/s/ Reggie Skains

Reggie Skains, Chairman State Soil and Water Conservation Commission

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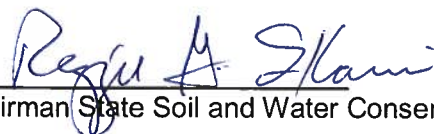
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