

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

September 27, 2018
1:15 PM

USDA BUILDING B TRAINING ROOM
3727 GOVERNMENT STREET
ALEXANDRIA, LA 71302

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Skains called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:30 P.M. and gave the invocation and ask Dr. Ernest Girouard to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. Faran Dietz.

Members and Alternate Members present: Mr. Reggie Skains; Chairman; Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vice Chairman; Mr. Randell Fletcher, Mr. David Daigle, LACD President; Secretary/Treasurer, Mr. Ed Yerger, Dr. Thomas Vitrano.

Members absent: Mr. John Compton, Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter, Southern University Agricultural Center Representative.

A quorum was present.

Others Present: Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC; Mr. Kevin Norton, NRCS State Conservationist USDA-NRCS; Mr. Tim Landreneau, Assistant State Conservationist for Easement Programs USDA-NRCS; Ms. Theresa Killings, Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy USDA-NRCS; Scott Edwards, Assistant State Conservationist of Programs; Dr. Ron Levy, LSU AgCenter; Mr. Larry Sayes, Area 3 Alternate/LACD 2nd VP; Mr. Sherril Sagera, Vermillion SWCD Supervisor; Mr. Steve Horvath, Capital SWCD Supervisor; Ms. Debra Cornelius, D'Arbonne SWCD Secretary; and Ms. Faran Dietz, 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 any comments from the public or Commission members about the August 28, 2018 State Commission minutes and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the August 28, 2018 State Commission Meeting Minutes.

Motion: Mr. Randell Fletcher made a motion to approve the August 28, 2018 State Commission Meeting Minutes. 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 said that as of August, districts have earned 80% of their Farm Bill funds. He said districts will normally report hours that they failed to report in the prior months. He said that he expects that districts will go over the 90% mark in September. Mr. Norton said that that we did amend the current Farm bill to add an additional \$400,000. He said that NRCS has also given a contract to OSWC for some additional Program Support Specialists (PSS) as well as another technician. He said that NRCS has given a lot of funding to the OSWC to support local soil and water conservation districts. Mr. Spicer said that OSWC will have to do a special budget revision form for the office because the OSWC does not have the authority to expend the additional funds. Chairman Skains said that he wanted to thank Mr. Norton for his and NRCS efforts towards the districts. He said the NRCS support to the districts has enhanced district operations.

State Commission Convention Election- Area III and Area IV

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *State Commission Convention Election- Areas III and IV*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said that he recommends that we have the election in conjunction with the SSWCC meeting on Tuesday, December 4, 2018 at the Dean Lee Research and Extension Center, 8105 Tom Bowman Drive, Alexandria, LA 71302 in the Rapides Parish extension office . Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the Area III and Area IV State Commission Membership Convention Election to be held in conjunction with the SSWCC meeting on Tuesday, December 4, 2018.

Motion: Dr. Tommy Vitrano made a motion to approve the Area III and Area IV State Commission Convention Election to be held in conjunction with the SSWCC meeting on Tuesday, December 4, 2018 at the Dean Lee Research and Extension Center, 8105 Tom Bowman Drive, Alexandria, LA 71302 in the Rapides Parish extension office. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked NRCS State Conservationist, Mr. Kevin Norton to give the NRCS report. Mr. Norton said he wanted to introduce a new NRCS state office employee, Ms. Theresa Killings, Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy, who comes to Louisiana from the New York. He said he also wanted to welcome back Mr. Scott Edwards. He said that Scott had been on detail as part of the Strategic Leadership Development program. Mr. Norton said he also wanted to thank Mr. Tim Landreneau who had stepped up to the challenge to serve as Acting State Conservationist. He said that he appreciates that he is able go off on temporary duty and feel comfortable leaving the leadership team to conduct Louisiana's conservation efforts.

Mr. Norton said that there is not an official Farm Bill as of yet. He said that the Committee staffs are in the stage of drafting and finalizing certain text and language in the bill. He said that there was no immediate need for him to stay in Washington D.C. and that he could correspond with the team from Louisiana.

Mr. Norton said that things are going well with the closeout of the NRCS fiscal year. He said that the agency is going to start off the New Year with a Congressional continuing resolution. He said that NRCS seems to have hit all the performance targets throughout the state. He said that a lot of states have rejected taking on extra funding because of the recent hiring freeze. He said that Louisiana had stepped up and took in a lot of extra funds and acres. Mr. Norton said that it is a partnership effort and that we are trying to maintain the current staff and possibly add more staffing. He said that there is nowhere else in the government that has a partnership like ours. He said the House and Senate Ag Committees are acquainted with our conservation partnership and are in support of it and they will continue to fund our conservation efforts.

Mr. Norton said this concluded his report and Chairman Skains thanked him, Mr. Landreneau and the leadership team for all of their efforts to put conservation on the ground in Louisiana. Chairman Skains said that Louisiana is a better place with the help of Mr. Norton and his team.

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondence is *O.E. Williams Trust Granted Century Farm Status*. He asked Mr. Spicer to review this. Mr. Spicer said that this article discusses the prestigious award given to Mr. Alan Williams of Sabine SWCD. He said the award is given when to a family proves farm resilience. He said additionally Mr. Williams is the third generation to serve on the Sabine SWCD board of Supervisors. He said that his grandfather, Mr. O.E. Williams was a charter member of Sabine SWCD and was appointed on November 19, 1938. Mr. Spicer said that the son later became a board member and after his retirement Mr. Allan Williams became a member of the board.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *NASDA Comments on the FWS/ NMFS Proposed Revision of the Regulations for the Listing Species and Designation Critical Habitat*. He asked Mr. Spicer to review this article. Mr. Spicer said this article discusses the comments that NASDA had in reference to designating critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act.

Chairman Skains said the last article is *NASDA Comments on the FWS/NMFS proposed Revision to Interagency Cooperation Regulations to Clarify and Improve Section 7 Implementation*. He asked Mr. Spicer to review this article. Mr. Spicer said that the article gives NASDA's support on the Services' changes and applauds the many ways these rules will increase effectiveness in implementing the Endangered Species Act.

Chairman Skains said that he wanted to thank Mr. Spicer for the LSU River Study tour that was conducted after the August SSWCC meeting. He said the tour was an experience to remember and that he looks forward to sharing the same experience with the LACD membership as part of this year's annual meeting. Mr. Spicer said that they can accommodate a tour of up to 44 participants. He said that the LSU staff constructed the model.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments and Reappointments

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

Chairman Skains said that there was 1 resignation this month: Gulf Coast SWCD, Ms. Cynthia Leblanc, Appointed position; effective September 27, 2018.

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to accept the resignation of Ms. Cynthia LeBlanc.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle called for a motion to accept the resignation of Gulf Coast SWCD, Ms. Cynthia Leblanc, effective September 27, 2018. The motion was seconded by Dr. Ernest Girouard and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said that we had three appointments:

Crescent SWCD, Mr. Henry "George" Schlorff, to elected position formerly held by Rebecca Livaudais. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2019.

Red River SWCD, Mr. Daniel Snead, to elected position formerly held by Blake McCartney. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2020.

West Carroll SWCD, Mr. Jacob Blaine Chop, to elected position formerly held by Steve Rye. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2021.

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to accept the appointments of Crescent SWCD, Mr. Henry "George" Schlorff, to elected position formerly held by Rebecca Livaudais. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2019; Red River SWCD, Mr. Daniel Snead, to elected position formerly held by Blake McCartney. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2020; West Carroll SWCD, Mr. Jacob Blaine Chop, to elected position formerly held by Steve Rye. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2021.

Motion: Dr. Tommy Vitrano made a motion to approve the appointments of Crescent SWCD, Mr. Henry "George" Schlorff, to elected position formerly held by Rebecca Livaudais. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2019; Red River SWCD, Mr. Daniel Snead, to elected position formerly held by Blake McCartney. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2020; West Carroll SWCD, Mr. Jacob Blaine Chop, to elected position formerly held by Steve Rye. Term will begin September 27, 2018 and will expire June 30, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

IRS Tax IDs for SWCDs

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is IRS Tax IDs for SWCDs. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said that Ms. Brenda Archer of Rapides SWCD and Ms. Sarah Elias of Red River SWCD have been working on the process of getting their tax IDs. He said that he has asked Ms. Brenda Archer to come to speak to the Commission about her experience in trying to get a Tax ID for Rapides SWCD. Ms. Archer said that she did attempt to start the process online but she was having issues with the selecting the correct options for her district. She said that districts will have to sign up as a brand new entity. She said that she had to get the actual SS-4 form offline and fax the information to the IRS. She said that she did receive a letter in the mail this week that said she neglected to check a box on her form and that it would need to be corrected. Ms. Archer stated that she called the IRS about the letter she received regarding the form. She said that the representative was able to see the check mark but she said the reviewer missed it. She said the representative stated that she would have to resend the form and make the check mark more visible. Mr. Spicer said that all the districts have been using the Tax ID that is listed as "State Soil and Water Conservation Committee" for over 50 years. He said there were no issues until the districts were required to get a SAMS number and DUNS number. He said that due to the districts using Soil and Water Conservation district names instead of "Committee", they started getting rejected by the system. He said that in order to conduct business electronically, districts will need their own Tax ID. Dr. Levy said that he once experienced an issue similar to what the districts are going through. He said that we must make sure we are submitting what is needed. Mr. Norton said that any district wanting to get involved with any federally funded contracts and programs will need their Tax ID, DUNS, and SAMS number. He said that this will now be one of the first questions being asked of districts because NRCS wants to make sure that districts have these numbers before they are awarded a contract. Ms. Archer said that she has been taking screenshots of the form and her selections and putting the shots into a PowerPoint that the secretaries can use as a guide to completing the forms. She said that this would save the districts from any possible penalties and extra stress. Chairman Skains and Mr. Spicer thanked Ms. Archer for the work that she is doing.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Skains asked Dr. Ron Levy if he had any comments. Dr. Levy said that Dr. Leonard asked him to review some upcoming events. He said there is a field day on October 6, 2018 from 8:30AM- 3:30 PM at the LSU Veterinary School in Baton Rouge. He said there is a conservation training session scheduled but he does not have the date. He said the Master Farmer phase one training is scheduled for October 10, 2018 at the Natchitoches Farm Bureau Office in Natchitoches, LA starting at 9:00AM. Dr. Levy said that that phase two is scheduled for October 18, 2018 at the DeWitt Farm in Alexandria, LA that starts at 8:00 AM. He said that also in the afternoon there will be a field day taking place as well. He said that there is also an Acadiana Cattle Field Day scheduled for October 24, 2018 in Abbeville, LA starting 5:30PM. Chairman Skains thanked Dr. Levy for his comments.

Mr. Spicer said he wanted to remind everyone to please do their Ethics training before the end of the year. He said that you can incur fines if you don't complete the training.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 23, 2018 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. David Daigle made a motion to adjourn at 2:13 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ Reggie A. Skains

Reggie Skains, Chairman
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission