

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

June 10, 2020  
1:30 PM

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

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Girouard called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:30 P.M. Mr. Reggie Skains gave the invocation and Mr. Steve Horvath lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

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

Members and Alternate Members present:

Dr. Ernest Girouard - Chairman  
Mr. Steve Horvath-Vice Chairman  
Mr. Larry Sayes- Secretary-Treasurer  
Mr. John Alan Williams- LACD President  
Mr. Reggie Skains, Member  
Mr. Ed Yerger, Member  
Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Member

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center  
Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist  
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the agenda.

**Motion by:** Mr. Larry Sayes

**Second by:** Mr. Alan Williams

Passed unanimously

## **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Chairman Giroaurd called for a motion to approve the February 26, 2020 SSWCC minutes.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Second by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Passed unanimously

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement- Mr. Brad Spicer, Executive Director, SSWCC

- Farm Bill total remaining funds is approximately \$235,029

Final Status of Water Management Bills and Concurrent Resolutions in the Louisiana Legislature, 2020

Regular Session-Mr. Brad Spicer, Executive Director, SSWCC

- HB 181 Riser: Extends the cooperative endeavor agreement program for use of surface waters of the state by removing the 12/31/2020 deadline for surface water withdrawal permits.
- HCR 35 Lacombe: Extends the False River Watershed Council; LDAF, OSWC is a member of the Council.
- SCR 51 Hewitt: To extend the termination date for the Lower Pearl River Basin task force until April 1, 2022.
- SB 110 Allain- Provides relative to the natural servitudes of drainage to be altered.
- HCR 62 Hodges: Continues the Comite River Diversion Canal Project Task Force. This project was initiated in the late 1980s.
- HCR 63 Hodges: Urges and requests the Division of Administration, Office of Community Development, to consider funding the Darlington Reservoir.
- HB 97 Lacombe: Removes the limitation that, in order for a rural water system project to be exempt from its local match requirement, the project must extend or connect waterlines to other water systems.
- SB 390 Peterson: Provides relative to updating the management of the public water system, public sewerage system, and public drainage system of the city of New Orleans.
- HB 845 Dwight: Provides relative to the Calcasieu Ship Channel public-private partnership; creating a management and advisory board to manage channel operations.

2020 NACD Conservation Forum and Tour- July 18-21, 2020 in Bismarck, North Dakota- Mr. Brad Spicer, Executive Director, SSWCC

- The 2020 NACD Summer Conservation Forum and Tour, to be held in conjunction with the NACD Northern Plains Region Leaders Meeting, has been canceled. There may be information regarding a virtual NACD board meeting coming out in the near future.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Conservation Servitude- Mr. Joey Breaux

- Mr. David Daigle and the Calcasieu SWCD are interested in looking at the options for using conservation servitudes as long-term tools for soil and water conservation, flood damage prevention, habitat and native ecotype protection, water quality and quantity management, and conservation education. The Calcasieu SWCD could be considering charging an easement holding fee. Chairman Giroaurd called for a motion to support Calcasieu SWCD in this effort.

**Motion by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Feral Swine: Mr. Joey Breaux

- Staff has been hired in Natchitoches SWCD and Dugdemona SWCD to fulfill the 3 year, \$1.5 million feral swine agreement. Gulf Coast SWCD and Tensas-Concordia SWCD are also scheduled to each hire a technician under this agreement as well.

### Review of Shutdown Impacts on SWCDs- Mr. Brad Spicer, Executive Director, SSWCC

- Districts were sent instructions to comply with NRCS rules regarding office procedures during COVID-19. Several districts were concerned with how they were going to hold monthly meetings. The OSWC was able to setup a process at no cost to the districts to use Google Meets to conduct their meetings via teleconferencing. Dr. Girouard stated that NASCA recently did a teleconference that had over 200 participants from different districts across the country. A few of the districts admitted to using social media to reach out to the public. He said they did get a decent response and that it was a great opportunity for open exchange among the participants.

### District Supervisor Election, June 13, 2020- POSTPONED

- The 2020 Annual Supervisor Election was postponed due to COVID-19. The Commission decided to reschedule the nomination period from July 1, 2020- July 30, 2020. The three year terms will be retroactive to July 1, 2020. The districts must check with their Registrar of Voters Office to confirm that they will be open to verify nominating petitions. Chairman Girouard called for a motion to reschedule the nominating petition period to July 1-30, 2020 and the election on August 8, 2020

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

### Supervisor's Attendance Waiver Requests- Chairman Girouard

- We received 7 waiver letters requesting the Commission waive attendance requirements and allow the following supervisors to run for re-election and reappointment: Ms. Patricia Avery-D'Arbonne SWCD, Mr. Teddy Schneider-East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Jim Dupont-Gulf Coast SWCD, Mr. Patrick Churchman-Natchitoches SWCD, Mr. Jim Harper-Rapides SWCD, Mr. Alton Broussard- St. Mary SWCD, and Mr. Cullen Kovac- West Carroll SWCD. Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve waiving attendance requirements and allow Ms. Patricia Avery-D'Arbonne SWCD, Mr. Teddy Schneider-East Carroll SWCD, Mr. Jim Dupont-Gulf Coast SWCD, Mr. Jim Harper-Rapides SWCD, Mr. Alton Broussard- St. Mary SWCD, and Mr. Cullen Kovac- West Carroll SWCD.

**Motion by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

**Seconded by:** Mr. Alan Williams

### Supervisor Resignations/Reappointments/Appointments

- Chairman Girouard said there are 10 supervisor reappointments for three year terms.

The reappointments submitted for three year terms are: Mr. Hezzie Crain- Bogue-Chitto SWCD- May 28, 2020- May 28, 2023; Ms. Rebecca Livaudais- Crescent SWCD, June 11, 2020- June 11, 2023; Mr. David Lowe- Dorcheat SWCD-March 23, 2020- March 23, 2023; Mr. Timothy Wild- Jefferson Davis SWCD-June 11, 2020- June 11, 2023; Mr. Douglas Foreman- Lafayette SWCD-June 11, 2020- June 11, 2023; Mr. Patrick Churchman- Natchitoches SWCD- June 26, 2020- June 26, 2023; Ms. Patty Vogt- Plaquemines SWCD- May 28, 2020- May 28, 2023; Mr. Patrick Klein- Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD- May 25, 2020- May 25, 2023; Mr. Andrew Price Gay- Upper Delta SWCD- May 13, 2020- May 13, 2023.

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to approve these reappointments for a three year term.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Passed unanimously.

#### Review Supervisor's Board Meeting Attendance:

- The Commission agreed to review current legislative policies and supervisor requirements to ensure the Commission is complying with the legislature's meeting attendance requirements. The Commission also agreed to review records to identify districts who continually submit attendance waiver requests for re-election or reappointments.

#### Commissioner's Strain Statement on Court Ruling on Dicamba- Mr. Brad Spicer, Executive Director, SSWCC

- Dr. Strain released a statement saying that he agrees with USDA Secretary Perdue's statement that all producers need to use all the tools available to them to be able to meet the world's food fiber and fuel needs. He also stated that he supports the science based process released by EPA for assessing and managing ecological risk.

#### World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates

- The USDA released this month's data prepared by USDA's Interagency Commodity Estimates Committee. This report includes wheat, coarse grains, rice, oil seeds, sugar, livestock, poultry, and dairy as well as cotton.

#### New Data Indicates the Mississippi Delta is on Borrowed Time

- Coastal Louisiana currently has 15,000 square kilometers of marshland, a critical ecosystem held together by a complex, interlocking set of processes. These building processes may also cause land loss resulting in conflicting views on what is the main causes of land loss in Coastal Louisiana.

#### NRCS State Conservationist Report- NRCS State Conservationist, Mr. Chad Kacir

- Mr. Kacir reported on the Pandemic Reopening Operating Procedure for USDA offices in Louisiana that outlines the phased reopening of the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) facilities from the current position of maximum telework to normal operations. The process includes three phases followed by a return to normal operations. There is a system in place to track the number of cases in each parish. Mr. Kacir reported that these numbers can fluctuate after an office has begun a new phase but will not change the phase that they are in. He expects that it could take months to get back to normal operations. There are currently 20 offices that are in phase one.

Mr. Kacir said several kids in the state have signed up for the NRCS Conservation Agriculture Mentorship Program (CAMPS). NRCS are asking employees to be mentors to the kids to teach them agriculture tips and processes that they may not know. Louisiana has had 6 soil conservationists' positions and has opened up an additional soil conservationist position.

He said that 80 CSP renewals have hit their 5 year life span. The open period for new CSP contracts closed on June 5th. They are still working on EQUIP and CRP contracts and have added an additional 30 new WRE easements.

#### LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi

Dates to Remember:

1. July 1, 2020- H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station Annual Rice Field Day (Virtual)-Rayne, LA
2. July 15, 2020- Sugarcane Field Day- St. Gabriel, LA

#### Review Candidates and select candidate for SSWCC Director

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to go into executive session to discuss the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission's review of the three candidates that applied for the Commission's Director Position that will become vacant when Mr. Spicer retires.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Yerger  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Alan Williams  
Passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard asked for a motion come out of executive session and come back into regular session.

**Motion by:** Mr. Alan Williams  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger  
Passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard said in the executive session the members discussed the interviews that took place earlier in the day for the Commission's Director Position. The members concluded during their discussion that they want to recommend Mr. Joey Breaux to fill the position that will become vacant when Mr. Spicer retires. Dr. Ernest Girouard called for a motion to recommend to Commissioner Strain that Mr. Joey Breaux fill the Commission's Director Position.

**Motion:** Mr. Reggie Skains made a motion to recommend Mr. Joey Breaux to fill the Commission's Director Position that will become vacant when Mr. Spicer retires. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Dr. Girouard said the recommendation letter will be sent to Commissioner Strain after the SSWCC meeting today.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Spicer said we recently lost some people that served and made great contributions to the state conservation program:

1. Mr. Sidney Bowles- Served on the Lafayette SWCD Board for 34 years and held was currently serving as board chairman.
2. Mr. Jake Ardoin- Served on the Evangeline SWCD Board for 38 years.
3. Ms. Dolores Neese Vitrano- Wife of Dr. Tommy Vitrano who serves on the Crescent SWCD Board. She regularly attended LACD Area and Annual meetings. Dr. Vitrano has been serving for 39 years.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

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

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Girouard 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 3:43 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alan Williams and passed unanimously.

/s/ Dr. Ernest Girouard   
Dr. Ernest Girouard, Chairman State Soil and Water Conservation Commission