

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

June 28, 2022  
1:15 PM

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY  
VETERANS AUDITORIUM  
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Garber called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Steve Horvath gave the invocation and Mr. Ed Giering lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Members and Alternate Members present:**

Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, Area IV  
Mr. Steve Horvath, Vice-Chairman, Area V  
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member  
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Alternate Member  
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate Member  
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Member

**Members Absent:**

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative  
Mr. Ruben Dautat, Secretary-Treasurer, Area III  
Mr. Jason Nolde, LACD President, Member  
Mr. Reggie Skains, Area I Member

A quorum was present.

**Others Present:**

Mr. Chad Kacir, NRCS State Conservationist  
Ms. Stacy Conly, Saline SWCD  
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Dustin Aguillard, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director  
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. Caitlin Joubert, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

**Public Comments**

Chairman Garber asked if there were any comments from the public. Mr. Breaux introduced Ms. Stacy Conley from Saline SWCD who will be representing Area 1 in this meeting. He also welcomed Ms. Caitlin Joubert and Mr. Dustin Aguillard. He said Mr. Augillard is the newest member of the OSWC staff and has filled the position formerly held by Ms. Faran Dietz. Mr. Breaux also announced that OSWC recently received approval for a new position. This position will be advertised soon.

**Approval of the minutes**

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the May 24, 2022 SSWCC minutes.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement-** Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said May's Farm Bill drawdown was \$50,026. The total remaining balance for FY 21-22 is \$143,401. There are 4 months left in the agreement and districts are expected to complete this fiscal year's budget prior to September. An additional 4 districts ran out of farm bill funds bringing the total to 22 districts that have over-earned. Mr. Kacir said NRCS is considering adding additional funds to the agreement. Chairman Garber said that the information he was given before the meeting shows the number of hours that districts have over-earned and suggested that this information be shared with the full Commission and Mr. Breaux agreed.

### **Legislative Regular Session/State Funding-** Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC/ Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said we have not received any news about new fiscal year funding for districts. As soon as we have those figures, districts will be receiving their operating budget letters. The session closed and most of the bills that mentioned Louisiana Conservation were passed and signed by the governor. SB 414 by Senator Fred Mills which would have recreated the Louisiana Watershed Initiative did not pass.

Mr. Breaux said HB 762- Louisiana Outdoors Forever Program by Rep. Jerome "Zee" Zeringue did pass and was signed on June 13, 2022 and as Act 714. HB 406 which was the companion bill that funds HB 762 also passed and became Act 167. The governor plans to have a formal signing ceremony and once that is completed, the Commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF), or his designee will be appointed to the LOFP project selection board along with other assigned members from different state agencies to create the State rules guidelines for applicants to apply for project funding. The project selection board also includes NRCS as a non-voting member. The project selection board will be advised by a technical advisory board that will also include a designee from LDAF. Mr. Breaux and Mr. Spicer suggested that districts must begin now to reach out to legislators and form relationships with them to ensure a sufficient legislative awareness of SWCD conservation project needs, concerns, and ideas.

Mr. Breaux mentioned HCR 100 presented by Rep. Jack McFarland which also passed. This resolution urges and requests the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service establish a cost share program to assist landowners and producers with the purchase and application of lime on cropland and grassland. Senator McFarland said the Commissioner presented the idea of the resolution on behalf of the Louisiana Cattlemen's Association.

He also mentioned that HCR 18 by Rep. McFarland to re-establish the Feral Hog Management Advisory Task Force passed as well. The re-establishment of this task force now includes an appointment from the Louisiana State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. This appointment will help to show how much districts are working to help private landowners with management of feral swine. Rep. McFarland was also able to work with the Louisiana Wildlife Federation to get legislative approval for \$325,800 to SWCDs not currently involved in the Feral Swine Pilot Program to purchase traps and cameras with subscriptions from supplemental appropriations. This amount would cover up to two traps with cameras for 30 SWCDs.

HCR 98 also passed which urges and requests continued support for the efforts by the Louisiana Conservation Partnership and other states in the Mississippi River Basin to work together toward achieving the goals of the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan and reduce hypoxic zone off the coast of Louisiana.

### **NACD Summer Meeting- San Juan, Puerto Rico**

The NACD Summer Meeting is scheduled for July 16-19,2022 in San Juan Puerto, Rico. The deadline to reserve rooms for the event was on Sunday. The Summer Meeting will give participants a chance to explore Puerto Rico's extensive selection of tours and experiences such as the Old San Juan Walking Tours, The Flavors Food Tours, and a few Distilleries. A few topics for this meeting include Climate-Smart Conservation, The Importance of Data and Targeted Outreach, Coastal and Urban Conservation, and Watershed and Habitat Protection Opportunities and Southeast Region Experiences.

### NACD South Central Meeting- Baton Rouge, LA

The NACD South Central Meeting will take place on August 28-30, 2022 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Baton Rouge, LA. The draft agenda for the meeting has been sent out to districts. Some of the agenda topics include watershed planning and management opportunities for districts and the Feral Swine Control Pilot Program. The agenda also includes tours of the LSU Center For River Studies, The Baton Rouge Water Campus, and the LSU AgCenter Idlewild Research Station.

### CPA-SWCD Agreements

Chairman Garber said the Commission received one SWCD CPA Agreement: LaSalle SWCD is requesting to enter into agreement with John R. Vercher, CPA. The bid for service amount will be between \$500-\$700.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve this engagement request.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

### New Business

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

Mr. Kacir said NRCS has obligated 70% of the \$21 million of EQIP funds. NRCS expects to receive an extra \$2 million to go towards some MRBI projects. NRCS received 1,780 stewardship applications this year and are planning to fund 130 contracts with approximately \$13 million. The Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) program is also on the way to purchasing 30-35 new easements this year with each easement being approximately 3,000 acres.

NRCS is also working towards filling some of their vacant positions. They have advertised for Soil Conservationist positions at 16 different locations. They were able to send job offers for 10 locations leaving 6 locations with vacancies. NRCS also plans to advertise for 10 Natural Resource Specialists and 10 Soil Conservationists once they receive final approval. There are currently 10 Pathway Summer interns working with NRCS. Some of the interns are from Puerto Rico which is increasing diversity within the agency. Interns who work 2 summers with NRCS could be eligible for a full-time position with NRCS after they finish college.

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

Dr. Salassi said the LSU AgCenter recently reissued a landowner survey that was initially done in 2013 to would show the types and extent of damages caused by feral swine. The survey used the same format and same questions as in 2013 to receive updated figures. There were 952 survey responses covering over 660,000 acres of agricultural and timber land. He said 50%-55% of participants said that the feral hog population is increasing on their land and 30%-35% of the participants said the feral hog population has stayed the same. In the 2013 survey, there were production losses (crop damage, pasture damage, timber damage) and non-production losses (cost to repair or replace damage to agricultural land). The 2013 survey estimated \$52.8 million in production losses and in the recent study the estimated production losses were \$66.2 million. The 2013 non-production losses were estimated at \$21.3 million and the recent survey for non-production losses was estimated at \$24.9 million.

Dr. Salassi wanted to remind the Commission members of a few field day dates:

- June 29, 2022- H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station Field Day-Rayne, LA
- July 7, 2022- Row Rice/Soybean Field Day- Northeast Field Station- St. Joseph, LA
- July 12, 2022- Best Management Practices in Cotton and Grain Model Farm Field Day- Somerset Plantation, Newellton, LA
- July 14, 2022- Water Quality and Irrigation Workshop- Red River Station-Bossier City, LA

- July 20, 2022- Sugarcane Field Day- Sugar Research Station- St. Gabriel, LA
  - July 22, 2022- Horticulture Field Day- Horticulture Research Station- Hammond, LA
- Dr. Salassi said that concluded his report.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there are 2 resignations this month: Mr. Donavon Taves, East Carroll SWCD effective June 28, 2022 and Mr. Edwin Lashney, Rapides SWCD effective June 28, 2022.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve these resignations: Mr. Donavon Taves, East Carroll SWCD effective June 28, 2022 and Mr. Edwin Lashney, Rapides SWCD effective June 28, 2022.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger  
 Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there is 1 reappointment this month: Mr. Charles Istre, Allen SWCD, appointed position, effective June 28, 2022- July 27, 2025.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the reappointment of Mr. Charles Istre, Allen SWCD, appointed position, effective June 28, 2022- July 27, 2025.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Yerger  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer  
 Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 2 appointments this month:

- Mr. Edwin Lashney, Rapides SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Larry Gillespie, effective June 28, 2022- June 26, 2025.
- Mr. Paul Alford, Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Hubert Yarborough, effective June 28, 2022- June 30, 2025.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the appointments of:

- Mr. Edwin Lashney, Rapides SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Larry Gillespie, effective June 28, 2022- June 26, 2025.
- Mr. Paul Alford, Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Hubert Yarborough, effective June 28, 2022- June 30, 2025.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Yerger  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer  
 Motion passed unanimously.

District Supervisor Election Results- June 11, 2022

Chairman Garber said the Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD submitted results of their June 11, 2022 supervisor election between Mr. Mark Magee and Mr. Edward Statham. The board held a special meeting on June 13, 2022 to count the votes. After reviewing and counting the votes, The Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD declared Mr. Mark Magee, incumbent, the winner of the election. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to accept these results and the re-election of Mr. Mark Magee to the Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD board.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer  
**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Giering  
 Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Articles:

- Letter from Mr. David Daigle, Louisiana Hypoxia Working Group
- HCR 98
- 5 things to know before signing a solar lease
- Kennedy joins Republican colleagues in opposing SEC's move to overregulate farmers, ranchers
- Letter from US Senators to Gary Gensler, Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman
- Letter from the National Agricultural Associations on SECs Proposed Rules on the Enhancement and Standardization of Climate-Related Disclosures for Investors to Vanessa Countryman, Secretary of Securities and Exchange Commission
- U.S. Army: Central Review of Environmental Legislative and Regulatory Actions
- WOTUS Roundtable Reveals New Rule Pushes Definition "Back to Square One", says NCBA
- Gaesser Tells EPA, Army Corps to Involve Farmers in Developing New WOTUS Regs
- Long-Term Leases Encourage Conservation Efforts

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Area Reports- Area V- Mr. Steve Horvath

Chairman Garber asked Mr. Steve Horvath to review the Area V's report. Mr. Horvath reviewed the highlights from Area V (attached)

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 26, 2022 at 1:15 PM in the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

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. Brad Spicer made a motion to adjourn at 3:30 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Giering and passed unanimously.

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