

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

January 26, 2021
1:15 PM

5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Girouard called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. Mr. Steve Horvath gave the invocation and Mr. Joey Breaux lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Mr. Theron Phillips.

Members and Alternate Members present:

Dr. Ernest Girouard - Chairman
Mr. Steve Horvath-Vice Chairman
Mr. John Alan Williams- LACD President
Mr. Larry Sayes- Secretary- Treasurer
Mr. Reggie Skains- Area I Member
Mr. Ed Yerger- Area II Member
Mr. Brad Spicer- Alternate Member
Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate 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/ Director SSWCC
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC	
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC	Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Public Comments

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

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Giroaurd called for a motion to approve the December 8, 2020 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Second by: Mr. Alan Williams

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

Farm Bill figures for the month of December closed on January 10th. Districts have obligated approximately 57% of this year's funds which total \$524,058. The system will open on February 1st to enable the districts to enter January hours.

LACD Annual Meeting/NACD Annual Meeting-Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC/ Mr. Alan Williams, LACD President

Mr. Breaux said the LACD Annual meeting was a successful virtual meeting. He asked Mr. Williams if he had any comments. Mr. Williams said he enjoyed all the great presentations and he hopes that we are able to have a face to face LACD meeting next year. During LACD, two resolutions from the Coastal Resources Committee were approved, each requesting funding support from both the Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority and LA Congressional delegation. Mr. Breaux said he forwarded the resolutions to the CPRA Board Chairman, and Ms. Mitzi Dohrman, secretary for the Coastal Resources Committee, will get the resolutions sent to the Congressional Delegates. Mr. Breaux announced the LACD presentations are now available as clips and can be sent out via email if anyone is interested.

Mr. Williams said the NACD Annual Meeting will take place on February 1-10, 2021. The meeting will be virtual and looks to have a great turnout based on registration. He also mentioned the great lineup of speakers including Mr. Kevin Norton, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation and Mr. Rudy Rice, NACD Past President.

New Business

Sexual Harassment Training for Commission Members- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux presented a resolution to the Commission members in relative to the prevention of sexual harassment. The resolution resolves the following:

1. The Commission and its Chair will adopt the sexual harassment policy developed by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF).
2. The Commission and its Chair will delegate obligation to provide the requisite education and training on the prevention of sexual harassment.
3. The Commission and its Chair will delegate their obligation to accept and investigate complaints of sexual harassment involving members of the Commission to the LDAF.
4. The Commission and its Chair will delegate their obligation to maintain records regarding its members' compliance with mandatory training requirement and to compile the annual report requirement.
5. The Commission and its Chair will delegate their obligation to ensure that its policy against sexual harassment is prominently posted in LDAF, which shall publish its sexual harassment policy on its website along with a notice that said policy is applicable to this Commission
6. The Commission and its Chair will delegate their obligation to ensure that the notice required is disseminated to every member of the Commission/Board on an annual basis to the Department, which shall be responsible for disseminating said notice to all Commission/Board Members.
7. This resolution remains in full force and effect until superseded or otherwise revoked by this Commission.

Mr. Breaux asked the Commission to review the resolution. He asked that if there were no comments that the Commission approve the resolution. Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to approve this resolution.

Motion by: Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Larry Sayes

Passed Unanimously.

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

Mr. Kacir said FY 2021 funding appropriations have decreased a little bit from last year. EQIP is \$20 million this fiscal year which has decreased from the \$26 million last fiscal year. The 2018 Farm Bill has an EQIP incentive of making contracts last 5-10 years. CSP funding for FY 21 are \$15 million which is down from \$21 million last year. He said they have 300 CSP applications with 100-125 applications being renewals.

LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi

Dr. Salassi said during the this years' LACD meeting, LSU with assistance from Dr. Donna Gentry, new Master Farmer Administrative Coordinator, recertified 19 Master Farmers. LSU is currently working to fill a few agronomist positions, a horticulture position, and a Precision Ag position. He said in the next 6 months, there will be 2 Forestry positions open as well. He said the livestock shows are still happening with COVID restrictions in place. LSU is also working on pesticide applicator certifications which can be done online as well as in person. LSU is also anticipating having spring and summer field days virtually.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Girouard said there are 2 supervisor appointments: Lafayette SWCD, Mr. Tyler Clark (appointed) effective January 26, 2021- June 11, 2023 and Plaquemines SWCD, Mr. Bartol Taliancich (elected) effective January 26, 2021- June 30, 2023.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the 2 appointments.

Motion by: Mr. Larry Sayes

Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Feliciano Soil & Water Conservation seeks farmers and landowners for its programs

Feliciano SWCD published this staff report seeking landowners who may benefit from the resources offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Services offered include conservation technical assistance programs which can incorporate wetlands and erosion prevention services, pond boring, cattle, conservation of wetlands and other aspects of farming and land conservation.

ICYMI: Partners in Preservation

Ms. Aurelia Skipwith, U.S. Fish and Wildlife service Director, discusses the many partnerships that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has built and strengthened. Recently they signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ducks Unlimited, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Public Lands Council, and Safari Club International. The agreement arranges the common and equally beneficial natural resource management goals of these diverse organizations.

Auburn researchers study feral hog damage in Alabama

Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences secured a \$450,000 grant from the Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Commission to remove hogs as well as monitor and prevent the damage that hogs do in Alabama, and show which strategies for hog control are most efficient. The project will use drones, water samples, and logging observations to better document the full impacts of hogs in Alabama. The research hopes to yield previously unknown data regarding the state's feral pig population, which will lead to crucial new strategies to control numbers and reduce substantial damage.

Male weeds may hold key to their own demise

Scientists are getting closer to finding the genes for maleness in water hemp and Palmer amaranth, two of the most troublesome agriculture weeds in the U.S. If the U.S. could identify which genes controlled maleness, those genes could become proliferate within the population.

New Rule Improves Partner Flexibility in Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released the final rule for its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This rule updates USDA's partnership-driven program as directed by the 2018 Farm Bill and integrates feedback from agricultural producers and others. To integrate that feedback received by more than 65 organizations and individuals, the final rule adopts the interim rule with minor changes made to RCPP that:

1. Make explicit special considerations for historically underserved (HU) producer and landowner enrollment, including requiring partnership agreements to denote any authorizations for higher payment rates, advance payment options, or other methods for encouraging HU participation.
2. Identify ranking criteria for proposals that include developing an innovative conservation approach or technology that specifically targets the unique needs and limitations of HU producers.
3. Adjust the rule language to incorporate source water protection as a priority resource concern.
4. Remove the list of infrastructure types that would be considered for Alternative Funding Arrangements to avoid.
5. Increase the emphasis on conservation benefits and objectives partners seek to achieve for the ranking of proposals.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Breaux presented two documents. The first is a Conservation Servitude Management & Monitoring Agreement between the Calcasieu Soil and Water District and St. Gabriel Resources, LLC. This agreement gives Calcasieu SWCD management authority on property owned by St. Gabriel Resources, LLC to satisfy the requirements for the creation and protection of a compensatory wetlands mitigation bank that will be known as the St. Gabriel Mitigation Bank.

The second document is a Conservation Servitude that outlines the roles of the Calcasieu SWCD and St. Gabriel Resources from the first document. Mr. Breaux asked that the Chairman ask for a motion to approve the Servitude, and servitude management documents. Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to approve both Instruments with the recommendation that Calcasieu SWCD consult with Allen SWCD.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Ed Yerger

SWCD Grassroots Investment Reports

Mr. Breaux said that the State Revenue Estimating Committee had met the previous week, and all indications now are that the State budget for OSWC and for SWCDs is secure through the remainder of the fiscal year, but due to anticipated COVID-19 related State revenue shortfalls, next year's budget will likely be more of a concern. In his LACD presentation the Commissioner mentioned that supervisors needed to be sure make contact with their legislators to protect State funding for districts.

Mr. Breaux said that, to this end, he recommends sending Grassroots Investment Report guidance and templates out to districts so that statewide conservation communications will be timely and consistent. He said Commissioner Strain thought it was an excellent idea and asked to receive copies of them. Chairman Girouard and LACD President Williams agreed that a statewide district effort to use the Grassroots Investment Reports in a coordinated legislative outreach effort is a very good idea and should be pursued. Chairman Girouard asked for a motion to have districts complete Grassroots reports before the beginning of the 2021 Legislative Session.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Steve Horvath

Passed Unanimously.

Next Meeting

Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 1:15 PM virtually. Information will be sent to members prior to the meeting.

Public Comments

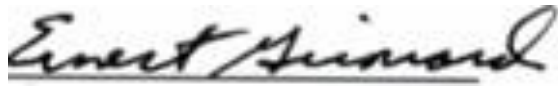
Chairman Girouard asked if there were any other comments from the public or Commission members and there were none.

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 2:27 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Sayes and passed unanimously.

/s/ Dr. Ernest Girouard



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