

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

May 25, 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. Reggie Skains gave the invocation and Mr. Theron Phillips lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha Alexander.

Members and Alternate Members present:

Dr. Ernest Girouard – Chairman, Area IV
Mr. John Alan Williams- LACD President
Mr. Jason Nolde- LACD 1st Vice President
Mr. Reggie Skains- Area I Member
Mr. Ed Yerger- Area II Member
Dr. Thomas Vitrano- Alternate Member, Area V
Mr. Brad Spicer- LDAF Alternate Member
Dr. Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate Member

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative

Mr. Steve Horvath-Vice Chairman, area V
Mr. Larry Sayes- Secretary-Treasurer, Area III
Mr. Ed Giering – Alternate Member, Area III

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. Caitlin Joubert, LDAF-OSWC
Mr. Michael Schooler, 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. Mr. Breaux said he wanted to welcome our former NRCS State Conservationist, Mr. Kevin Norton. Mr. Norton thanked Mr. Breaux for the welcome and Mr. Spicer for the invitation to the Commission meeting. He said that he is now a lifelong NACD member and has signed up to become an Earth team volunteer to assist districts with any projects. He said he could be reached through email at kevinnorton28@yahoo.com or he can be contacted on his cell at 318-451-5484. Mr. Breaux also mentioned that Mr. Keith Owen, NACD South Central Region Representative, recently visited the state to film conservation activities and the partnership in action as part of a virtual career field day.

Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the April 27, 2021 SSWCC agenda.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer

Seconded by: Mr. Jason Nolde

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes

Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the March 23, 2021 SSWCC minutes.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

The Farm Bill program closed on May 10th with April's Farm Bill total being \$64,407. The districts have currently used 23% of the allocated annual amount of \$925,000. If the districts continue on the same path, we will expend the entire allocated annual amount. There have been some changes with the Farm Bill reports at the request of the contact in Washington. Mr. Phillips has been corresponding to get the information corrected in the reports. This would be the reason the districts see a delay in receiving their farm bill payments if any.

Legislative Regular Session/State Funding- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Mr. Breaux said HCR 55 which creates the Outdoor Conservation Study Group to study conservation funding mechanisms and programs was passed yesterday. LDAF is listed as one of the agencies in the resolution. It is now expected to go to the Senate and everything looks favorable. There have been some other resolutions submitted naming OSWC as critic conservation partners of the state which supports our office. There is some groundwater withdrawal concerns mentioned in other bills but there have not been many updates besides what is happening with the Southern Hills aquifer, having to do with industrial withdrawals. Mr. Spicer said during the 1980s, there had been legislation presented for Southern Hills but it there wasn't much interest shown by legislators. He said the industry could use the Mississippi groundwater and build a conduit north of the industrial complex. During this process, they could treat the water and use industry fees to pay the bonds.

District Supervisor Election- June 12, 2021- Mr. Joey Breaux, Director, SSWCC

Chairman Girouard said listed below are forty four districts with thirty six candidates that had no opposition for the 2021 Supervisors Election. He said the term of office for the candidates listed below would start July 1, 2021 and expires June 30, 2024.

District	Mr./Ms.	Name	Term Exp.
Acadia	Mr.	Gerard Frey	06/30/2021
Allen	Mr.	Gregory Monceaux	06/30/2021
Avoyelles	Mr.	Kyle A. Lemoine	06/30/2021
Bodcau	Mr.	VACANT	06/30/2021
Boeuf River	Mr.	VACANT	06/30/2021
Bogue Chitto-Pearl River	Mr.	A. Murdock Brumfield	06/30/2021
Caddo	Mr.	Michael Volentine	06/30/2021
Calcasieu	Mr.	David R. Daigle	06/30/2021
Capital	Mr.	David R. Hoover	06/30/2021
Catahoula	Mr.	Christopher Freeman	06/30/2021
Crescent	Mr.	Irvin Dares III	06/30/2021
D'arbonne	Mr.	VACANT	06/30/2021
DeSoto	Mr.	VACANT	06/30/2021
Dorcheat	Mr.	Mickey Chandler	06/30/2021
Dugdemonia	Mr.	VACANT	06/30/2021
East Carroll	Mr.	Stephen Lensing Jr.	06/30/2021

District	Mr./Ms.	Name	Term Exp.
Evangeline	Mr.	Larry J. Fontenot	06/30/2021
Feliciana	Mr.	Luke Fontenot	06/30/2021
Grant	Mr.	Thomas Smith	06/30/2021
Gulf Coast	Mr.	Gene Douglas Miller	06/30/2021
Iberia	MR.	John R. Viator	06/30/2021
Jefferson Davis	Mr.	Cody Hayes	06/30/2021
Lafayette	Mr.	Daniel Hebert	06/30/2021
Lafourche- Terrebonne	Mr.	Jason Richard	06/30/2021
LaSalle	Mr.	Steve Andrews	06/30/2021
Lower Delta	Mr.	Frank A Sotile Jr.	06/30/2021
Madison	Mr.	William Marsh	06/30/2021
Morehouse	Mr.	Robert Jeff Simmons	06/30/2021
Natchitoches	Mr.	Lewis Casey Messenger	06/30/2021
New River		VACANT	06/30/2021
Northeast	Mr.	Greg Kincaid	06/30/2021
Plaquemines	Ms.	Nancy Dupont	06/30/2021
Rapides	Mr.	Danny Coombs	06/30/2021
Red River	Mr.	VACANT	06/30/2021
Sabine	Ms.	Patricia Brown	06/30/2021
Saline	Mr.	Richard D. Pullig	06/30/2021
St. Landry	Mr.	Lee A. Hampton	06/30/2021
St. Martin	Mr.	John Girard	06/30/2021
St. Mary	Mr.	Junius P. Hebert Jr.	06/30/2021
Tangipahoa- St.Helena	Ms.	VACANT	06/30/2021
Tensas-Concordia	Mr.	William Miller	06/30/2021
Upper Delta	Mr.	Morgan Vosburg II	06/30/2021
Vermilion	Mr.	Trevor Hair	06/30/2021
West Carroll	Mr.	Jacob Blaine Chop	06/30/2021
*Bold means new supervisor			

Mr. Breaux said that Mr. Elliot Colvin of Boeuf River SWCD submitted a waiver letter to the Commission and was approved but he did not send in a nomination petition. He has submitted a letter of resignation which will be announced further down in the minutes.

Mr. Breaux said Mr. Kenneth Halley of D'Arbonne SWCD did not submit a nominating petition before May 1, 2021. Mr. Halley has not been in contact with the board and has not shown interest in being re-elected to the board. D'Arbonne SWCD submitted a letter to be advised on the matter. Since Mr. Halley did not submit a nominating petition, he will be disqualified and his term will end on June 30, 2021.

Mr. Breaux said Mr. William Bagley of DeSoto SWCD was not able to submit a nominating petition before May 1, 2021 due to communication issues with the field office and the Registrar of Voters office. After speaking with Mr. Bagley and letting him know of that the Commission could review the matter, there was no petition submitted and there has not been a resignation letter submitted.

Mr. Spicer said if the candidate has been contacted and there has not been a response, he would recommend that the district pursue appointing a new candidate to the vacant elected position. The district cannot appoint the candidate he did not submit their nominating petition. Mr. Breaux recommended a motion be made. Chairman Girouard called for a motion to request that DeSoto SWCD appoint someone to fill the vacant appointed seat formerly held by Mr. William Bagley.

Motion by: Mr. Brad Spicer
Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains
Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would approve the elected supervisors listed.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains
Seconded by: Mr. Brad Spicer
Motion passed unaniously

New Business

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Girouard said there are 3 resignations this month: Bodcau SWCD, Mr. Randal Drew Lafler, effective April 30, 2021, Dugdemona SWCD, Mr. Robert Bruce Frazier, effective April 8, 2021, and Boeuf River SWCD, Mr. Elliot Colvin effective June 30, 2021.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the resignation of Bodcau SWCD, Mr. Randal Drew Lafler, effective April 30, 2021, Dugdemona SWCD, Mr. Robert Bruce Frazier, effective April 8, 2021, and Boeuf River SWCD, Mr. Elliot Colvin effective June 30, 2021.

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

Mr. Breaux suggested the Commission should send a special recognition letter to Mr. Bruce Frazier for his conservation efforts. Chairman Girouard said he got to the chance to work with Mr. Frazier as a part of LACD and he is a true conservationist. He called for a motion to approve the request to send Mr. Frazier a special recognition letter for his service.

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

Chairman Girouard said there is one appointment this month: Feliciana SWCD, Mr. John Patrick, elected position formerly held by Mr. Andrew Grezaffi, effective May 25, 2021- June 30, 2022.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the appointment of Feliciana SWCD, Mr. John Patrick, position formerly held by Mr. Andrew Grezaffi, effective May 25, 2021 - June 30, 2022.

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

Chairman Girouard said there are 3 supervisor reappointments for three year terms: Acadia SWCD-Mr. Robert Dale Thibodeaux- effective June 11, 2021- June 11,2024; Gulf Coast SWCD- Mr. Bradley Pousson- effective

June 10, 2021- June 10, 2024; and Upper Delta SWCD- Mr. Robert Morris-effective May 25, 2021- May 25,2024.

Chairman Girouard said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the reappointments for Acadia SWCD-Mr. Robert Dale Thibodeaux- effective June 11, 2021- June 11,2024; Gulf Coast SWCD- Mr. Bradley Pousson- effective June 10, 2021- June 10, 2024; and Upper Delta SWCD- Mr. Robert Morris-effective May 25, 2021- May 25,2024.

Motion by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Seconded by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence

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

Mr. Kacir said he has spent the last few days working with the Lower Mississippi Joint Venture to award two Louisiana producers with the Conservation award. He said these awards would have normally been given out during the LACD meeting but due to Covid-19, the process of awarding was rescheduled. He said that it was a great experience to work with the producer's families on their land.

Mr. Kacir said NRCS is in the process of obligating FY 21 EQUIP contract. They are working through adjustments for the CSP applications. Over the next several months, there will be several opportunities for district assistance.

NRCS recently went through the FPAC audit group this past week. There was discussion during the audit on if district employees were assisting NRCS employees during inventory and determining resource concerns and assessments. FPAC said anyone assisting with inventory or determining resource concerns should have level 1 conservation planner certification. FPAC said they would be getting back with NRCS on the specifics of the process.

In the first phase of the hiring process, NRCS has 19 new employees that have started work and 2 more planning to start of June 7th. There are an additional 28 positions being advertised: 10 Soil Conservationists, 13 Natural Resource Specialists, 4 Engineers, and 1 Soil Scientist.

LSU AgCenter Center Report- Dr. Michael Salassi

Dr. Salassi said he wanted to remind the Commission of a couple of upcoming events:

Master Farmer Program phase 1 Meetings:

1. June 29, 2021- Rice Research Station- Rayne, Louisiana
2. July 15, 2021- Northeast Research Station- St. Joseph, Louisiana
3. September 30, 2021- Red River Research Station- Bossier City, Louisiana
4. October 7, 2021- Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation- Zachary, Louisiana
5. October 14, 2021- Dean Lee Research Station- Alexandria, Louisiana

Dr. Salassi said to complete phase 2 trainings you must attend a field day. Most field days this year will be in person. Some of the field days include:

1. June 24, 2021- Taylor Foundation Field Day- Somerset Plantation- Newellton, Louisiana
2. June 30, 2021- Rice Research Field Day- H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station- Crowley, Louisiana
3. July 15, 2021- Road Rice Field Day- Northeast Research Station- St. Joseph, Louisiana
4. July 27, 2021- Cotton, Corn, Soybeans Field Day- Northeast Research Station- St. Joseph, Louisiana
5. August 14, 2021- Peanut Workshop- Northeast Research Station- St. Joseph, Louisiana

Correspondence/Articles:

Chairman Girouard said the first item is a travel request from East Carroll SWCD requesting authorization to attend the NACD Summer Annual Summer Meeting scheduled on July 24-27, 2021 in Chicago IL. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the out of state travel request.

Motion by: Mr. Reggie Skains

Seconded by: Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

Articles

- Biden must pay farmers to store more carbon
- Everyone loves a cowboy, but no one wants the cows
- Cosby named Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief
- Apple snails continue to plague crawfish ponds
- Graves, Scalise and Ducks Unlimited Announce Nearly \$5 million in federal grants to conserve Louisiana wetlands and waterfowl habitats
- Methane emissions from U.S. dairies in decline

Cooperative Endeavor Agreement

Mr. Breaux said the Commission members should have received a copy of the District Cooperative Agreement through email after last month's SWCC meeting. During the last Commission meeting, the Conservation Planning Reinvigoration Initiative was discussed and was briefly mentioned by Mr. Kacir earlier. Part of the discussion last month was a request to return to using the Cooperative Agreement. It is imperative that the form become a standard for all districts so that it establishes the working relationship between the district and the landowner.

OTHER BUSINESS

During the last SWCC meeting, the Commission members discussed the waivers that were submitted. The Commission made a decision that supervisors should be submitting their own waiver requests with the board's approval letter attached. Some of the waivers letters sent in by supervisors were lacking more detail as to why they accrued their absences. There were conversations with these supervisors where there was detail discussed but wasn't put in writing through their letters. During the last Commission meeting, there was an adhoc group formed that included Mr. Reggie Skains, Mr. Brad Spicer, and Mr. Joey Breaux. Through discussions, it was decided that it is a matter of interpretation of each supervisor's circumstance. If the Commission wanted further clarification on a request for waiver then it can be requested but the Commission should also review whether or not this supervisor is requesting a waiver every year. Mr. Breaux suggested the Commission establish some light standards of a waiver request and that the adhoc group reconvene to discuss upcoming requests and possibly adding a light policy to the PPMs in the section with the monthly minutes.

Mr. Breaux said there are a few area meetings scheduled. There were none last year due to Covid-19.

Currently the scheduled meetings are:

Area 1-N/A

Area 2- Outdoor Arena, St. Joseph, LA

Area 3- June 21, 2021- Virtually

Area 4- August 26, 2021- Abbeville, LA

Area 5- N/A


Next Meeting

Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 22, 2021 at 1:15 PM in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

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. Reggie Skains made a motion to adjourn at 2:25 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ Dr. Ernest Girouard 

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