

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

April 25, 2023  
1:15 PM

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

MEETING MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**

Secretary-Treasurer Skains called the regular monthly Soil & Water Conservation Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. and gave the invocation. Mr. Ed Giering led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Members and Alternate Members present:**

Mr. Reggie Skains, Secretary-Treasurer, Area I  
Mr. Ben Langlinais, LACD President, Member  
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate  
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member  
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Member  
Mr. Chris Martin, Area V Alternate

**Members Absent:**

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative  
Mr. Earl Garber, Chairman, Area IV  
  
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate

A quorum was present.

**Others Present:**

Ms. Candis Voorhies, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and Initiatives  
Mr. Ron Duhon, Area IV Alternate  
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

**Public Comments**

Secretary-Treasurer Skains asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none.

**Approval of the agenda**

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said that before the Commission approves the agenda, we should amend the agenda to move the letter "C- SWCC Area IV Alternate Member Appointment" under Unfinished Business to letter "A". Secretary-Treasurer Skains said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the agenda with the amendment.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Giering

**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of the minutes**

Secretary-Treasurer Skains called for a motion to approve the March 28, 2023 SSWCC minutes.

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

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **SWCC Area IV Alternate Member Appointment**

During last month's Commission meeting, Chairman Garber mentioned that he wanted to meet with Area IV to determine who would fill the Area IV alternate member vacancy formerly held by Mr. Ben Langlinais who became LACD President this year. Area IV was able to have a meeting on April 11, 2023 to discuss the alternate member vacancy. The members recommended that Mr. Ron Duhon, Lafayette SWCD, fill the Area IV alternate member vacancy. Secretary-Treasurer Skains said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to accept the recommendation of Area IV to have Mr. Ron Duhon, Lafayette SWCD, fill the Area IV alternate member vacancy.

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

Resolved, Mr. Ron Duhon, Lafayette Soil and Water Conservation District will serve as Area IV Alternate Member of the State Commission with his term beginning April 25, 2023 and expiring December 7, 2024.

### **NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement-**

March's Farm Bill drawdown was \$119,446 leaving a balance of \$387,977. Currently, Six districts have maxed out of their Farm Bill funds. Secretary-Treasurer Skains asked were there any questions or comments and there were none.

### **Legislative Regular Session/State Funding**

Mr. Breaux said that everyone should have a copy of the Legislative Analysis update. Mr. Breaux stated that many of the bills that are pending have to do with carbon sequestration. The Commission discussed HB 125, relative to agriculture and land protection against foreign adversaries. The Commission recommended a modification that would include all foreign ownership in addition to foreign adversary ownership. Another bill that is gaining interest is the Watershed Initiative bill. Yesterday, Mr. Pat Forbes presented during the Area 3 meeting and made mention that the initiative currently exists by appointment and not statutorily. The pending bill does make it statutory and will include LDAF and the SWCC as appointees.

### **NRCS State Conservationist Report- Ms. Candis Voorhies, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnership and Initiatives**

Secretary-Treasurer Skains asked Ms. Voorhies to give the NRCS State Conservationist report. Ms. Voorhies presented the Commission with the following information:

#### **NRCS Staffing**

- Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations vacancy- an offer has been made to fill the position. Mr. Scott Breedlove will be acting in this position until July 1, 2023.
- Advertisement for LARU DCs vacancies (LARU 6,10,13)- offers have been made to each candidate and one vacancy has been filled.
- 3 Civil Engineers vacancies (Crowley, New Iberia, Opelousas). Vacancies close on 05/04/2023.
- Assistant State Soil Scientist
- Program Assistant for Financial Assistance program in Alexandria
- State Grazing Land specialist vacancy- an offer has been made to fill the vacancy.

#### **NRCS Programs**

- 2022 EQIP figures: \$22.3 million (505 contracts)
- 2022 CSP Classic figures: \$12.9 million (142 contracts)

- 2022 CSP renewals figures: \$6.1 million (71 contracts)
- 2022 CSP GCI figures: \$224,000 (33 contracts)
- 2022 RCPP figures: 1.4 million (49 contracts)
- Obligations are expected to be completed by the end of May for EQIP signups.
- NRCS is currently in the assessment phase and the ranking deadline for these applications is April 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) EQIP and CSP signups ended March 17<sup>th</sup>. Currently, there are 421 IRA EQIP applications and 10 CSP IRA applications.

Ms. Voorhies said USDA was awarded \$12 million in cooperative agreements in 2023 for projects across the US that expanded access to conservation technical assistance for livestock producers and increased use of conservation practices on grazing land. Louisiana received 2 of those agreements:

1. Louisiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Inc.- The objective of this project is to build leaders in conservation through in-depth expert training, expand partnerships and digital resources through outreach and videos.
2. The National Center for Appropriate Technology Inc.- Their objective aims to empower and equip women farmers who are beginning grass-based livestock enterprises to expand their knowledge and practice skills in goal setting, soil health, regenerative grazing, animal handling, health, equipment and tools, and direct marketing.

The notice of funding for outreach agreements is still open and will close on May 10, 2023. All interested parties must apply through the EZFed website.

Ms. Voorhies said that during the last SWCC meeting, making it a requirement to have producers sign cooperative agreements as well as getting districts to sign their conservation plans. She researched the Freedom of Information act, Privacy Act, NRCS's 2008 Personally Identifiable Information (PII) training and the newest MOUs between NRCS and all the districts. On page 8, it states that USDA may disclose protected information to a USDA cooperator when such cooperator is providing technical or financial assistance with respect to the agriculture operation, land, or farming of conservation practices if USDA determines that the protected information will not be subsequently disclosed. It further names conservation districts as cooperators which means that USDA is allowed to share PII with conservation districts. This information can be shared during conservation district meetings if the PII information is not recorded in the minutes. Mr. Breaux said that he plans to work with Ms. Voorhies to send some information to districts to make them aware. Ms. Voorhies said Mr. Breaux discussed trying to add cooperative agreements to the NRCS packet that is given to producers. She said that it could not be added to the NRCS packet since it is not an NRCS form. She suggests that districts have conversations with their district board members and encourage producers to come before the board. Ms. Voorhies said Mr. Kacir will also encourage NRCS staff to assist with getting the cooperative agreements signed.

### OSWC Report

Mr. Breaux reported that OSWC programs are doing good and are very busy. The Coastal Reveg projects are in process with some plantings are starting earlier than normal After completion of these early plantings, request for reimbursement is often being submitted at the end of the fiscal year when the department begins to hold off on making payments. We hope that this year is different, and the department can get the reimbursements out before their normal cutoff. Mr. Breaux also wanted to discuss the Louisiana Outdoors Forever (LOF) opportunity. There has not been any feedback from districts which is a concern to him. He was able to encourage district personnel who attended the Area 3 meeting yesterday about LOF. He said any ideas for conservation needs and opportunities that are going unrealized in the district should be submitted to LOF. OSWC is here to help any district needing assistance with their ideas and their applications. Mr. Breaux mentioned that he went to Washington D.C. with the Governor's Office to attend the Natural and Working lands learning lab hosted by the US Climate Alliance. Mr. Breaux was able to co-chair the Ag and Working lands sector committee and discuss blue carbon and its similarities to flood irrigation and rice irrigation ecology. Mr. Pat Forbes has mentioned interest in cost-sharing general BMPs that help to restore or maintain floodplain

hydrology. All 319 workplans have been re-worded to remove “water quality” and include “watershed management”.

#### Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said there are 7 SWCD supervisor resignations this month:

- Mr. Dirk Dupuy, Avoyelles SWCD, elected position, effective April 21, 2023.
- Mr. Ruben Dauzat, Avoyelles SWCD, appointed position, effective March 29, 2023.
- Mr. L. Scott Bickham, Feliciana SWCD, elected position, effective April 4, 2023.
- Mr. Randall Fletcher, Grant SWCD, appointed position, effective April 4, 2023.
- Mr. Tyler Clark, Lafayette SWCD, appointed position, effective April 19, 2023.
- Mr. John Gay, Lower Delta SWCD, appointed position, effective March 21, 2023.
- Mr. Richard Pullig, Saline SWCD, elected position, effective February 9, 2023.

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said if there were no more comments, he would call for a motion to approve the SWCD supervisor resignations for:

- Mr. Dirk Dupuy, Avoyelles SWCD, elected position, effective April 21, 2023.
- Mr. Ruben Dauzat, Avoyelles SWCD, appointed position, effective March 29, 2023.
- Mr. L. Scott Bickham, Feliciana SWCD, elected position, effective April 4, 2023.
- Mr. Randall Fletcher, Grant SWCD, appointed position, effective April 4, 2023.
- Mr. Tyler Clark, Lafayette SWCD, appointed position, effective April 19, 2023.
- Mr. John Gay, Lower Delta SWCD, appointed position, effective March 21, 2023.
- Mr. Richard Pullig, Saline SWCD, elected position, effective February 9, 2023.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ron Duhon

**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said we have 2 SWCD supervisor appointments this month:

- Mr. Dirk Dupuy, Avoyelles SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Ruben Dauzat, effective April 25, 2023- February 24, 2025.
- Mr. Joshua Fletcher, Grant SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Randell Fletcher, effective April 25, 2023- March 28, 2026.

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the SWCD supervisor appointments of:

- Mr. Dirk Dupuy, Avoyelles SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Ruben Dauzat, effective April 25, 2023- February 24, 2025.
- Mr. Joshua Fletcher, Grant SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Randell Fletcher, effective April 25, 2023- March 28, 2026.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Giering

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ron Duhon

Motion passed unanimously.

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said there are 3 SWCD supervisor re-appointments this month:

- Mr. Hezzie Crain, Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD, appointed position, effective May 25, 2023- May 25, 2026.
- Mr. Patrick Churchman, Natchitoches SWCD, appointed position, effective June 26, 2023- June 26, 2026
- Mr. Danny Coombs, Rapides SWCD, appointed position, effective June 26, 2023-June 26, 2026.

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the SWCD supervisor re-appointments of:

- Mr. Hezzie Crain, Bogue Chitto-Pearl River SWCD, appointed position, effective May 25, 2023- May 25, 2026.
- Mr. Patrick Churchman, Natchitoches SWCD, appointed position, effective June 26, 2023- June 26, 2026
- Mr. Danny Coombs, Rapides SWCD, appointed position, effective June 26, 2023-June 26, 2026.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Giering

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ron Duhon

Motion passed unanimously.

#### District Supervisor Election-June 10, 2023

Secretary-Treasurer Skains asked Mr. Breaux if he had any updates on the District Supervisor Election. Districts have submitted their election notices with addresses as requested. Petitions should be mailed to OSWC no later than May 16, 2023. OSWC has already received 6 petitions from board members currently up for election. None of the districts have reported opposition to any of the current supervisors up for election.

#### Correspondence/Articles:

- USDA NRCS National Feral Swine Damage Assessment Preliminary Findings
- Regulations.gov: Reconsideration of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter
- The NACD eResource: Rapides SWCD's Partnership with Good Food Project
- New Legislation Supports Ag Research on Soil Health Increasing Crop Yields
- Drovers: Critical Thinking is Paramount (And No, Cows are NOT Killing the Earth)

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

#### Next Meeting

Secretary-Treasurer Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 23, 2023 in the LDAF Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

#### Adjournment

Secretary-Treasurer 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. Brad Spicer made a motion to adjourn at 3:00P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

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