

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

January 11, 2023  
10:00 AM

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 10:00 A.M. Mr. Jason Nolde gave the invocation and Chairman Garber 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. Jason Nolde, LACD President, Member  
Mr. Ben Langlinais, LACD 1<sup>st</sup> VP, Area IV Alternate  
Mr. Reggie Skains, Area I Member  
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member  
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Alternate  
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate  
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate

**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  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. Phyllis Cart, Acadia SWCD  
Ms. Caitlin Joubert, LDAF-OSWC

**Public Comments**

Chairman Garber asked if there were any comments from the public and there were none.

**Approval of the agenda**

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the January 11, 2023 SSWCC agenda.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

## Approval of the minutes

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the December 6, 2022 SSWCC minutes.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement-

Mr. Breaux reported November's drawdown of \$143,475 and December's drawdown of \$126,579. Districts have been working diligently and it is showing on their reports. Due to the increase in Farm bill, districts still have remaining balances unlike prior years at this time where SWCDs would be maxing out.

### LACD Annual Meeting/NACD Annual Meeting

Chairman Garber asked Mr. Nolde and Mr. Breaux for an LACD update. Mr. Nolde said everything is ready and that he is looking forward to seeing the presenters and as well as the consultants that will have booths at the meeting. Mr. Breaux said exhibitors are enthusiastic about the meeting. The Legislative Committee meeting this year will be different from last year. Last year's meeting consisted of many presentations, but this year's meeting will consist of hot topics and priorities that conservation districts would like to see in the future. Mr. Breaux also wanted to congratulate Mr. Nolde on becoming the NACD South Central Region chair. LACD will start earlier with the Board of Directors meeting starting at noon. The hotel will provide boxed lunches for the board. Dr. Salassi advised that Dr. Matt Lee, Interim Vice President, will be attending the Master Farmer luncheon and plans to make a few comments. Also, Mr. Breaux wanted to give special thanks to the OSWC staff for their hard work.

## New Business

### Election of Officers

- Chairman Garber asked for nominations for Chairman of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. Mr. Reggie Skains nominated Mr. Earl Garber and Mr. Steve Horvath seconded the nomination. Chairman Garber asked were there any other nominations and there were none. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, the Commission would accept the nomination for Mr. Earl Garber to continue to hold the position of Chairman of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. **The Commission unanimously elected Mr. Earl Garber as Chairman of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission.**
- Chairman Garber asked for nominations for Vice Chairman of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. Mr. Ed Giering nominated Mr. Steve Horvath and Mr. Ed Yerger seconded the nomination. Chairman Garber asked were there any other nominations and there were none. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, the Commission would accept the nomination for Mr. Steve Horvath to continue to hold the position of Vice-Chairman of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. **The Commission unanimously elected Mr. Steve Horvath as Vice Chairman of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission.**
- Chairman Garber asked for nominations for Secretary-Treasurer of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. Mr. Ed Giering nominated Mr. Reggie Skains and Mr. Steve Horvath seconded the nomination. Chairman Garber asked were there any other nominations and there were none. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, the Commission would accept the nomination for Mr. Reggie Skains to be elected Secretary-Treasurer of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. **The Commission unanimously elected Mr. Reggie Skains as Secretary-Treasurer of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission.**

Chairman Garber then asked for a motion to confirm the SWCC officer elections as recorded.

**Motion by:** Mr. Ed Giering

**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

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

Chairman Garber asked Mr. Kacir to give the NRCS state conservationist report. Mr. Kacir said Ms. Voorhies reported that NRCS recently advertised for technician vacancies. Out of the 15 job positions that were advertised, NRCS was able to offer 8 positions. Mr. Kacir said 2 or 3 of the candidates were Targeted Technicians. NRCS plans to move these positions to different parishes where a targeted technician is needed. The new technicians may also could also become NRCS technicians as vacancies become available. Mr. Kacir said NRCS also advertised for 24 Soil Conservationist positions and are waiting to review and interview the qualified applicants.

Mr. Kacir said there hasn't been any more details released about the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding. He hopes that more details will be revealed during the NACD meeting. NRCS was able to renew over 100 CSP renewal contracts for producers for a total of approximately 10 million dollars. Mr. Kacir reported that he attended the Louisiana Cattlemen's Association state meeting this weekend. They are working with legislators to create legislation to make fencing materials and supplies tax exempt. He said that this proposed legislation would not only be beneficial to them but to conservation districts. Mr. Skains suggested that the Commission submit a letter of support. Mr. Breaux said many of the district supervisors serve on different boards should consider how ideas could benefit the other boards that they serve on.

Mr. Kacir also wanted to mention that the EPA announced the new WOTUS rule. The day prior to the release of the new WOTUS rule, there was a conference call. After participating on the conference call, Mr. Kacir believed that once a prior converted cropland was defined that any agricultural activity would be recognized and not enforce the 5-year abandonment rule. Another concern about these defined prior converted croplands is defining the land that is considered adjacent to or connected to these converted croplands. Producers will have to wait and see how these cases work out as they are being presented.

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

Dr. Salassi said Dr. Matt Lee was appointed as the Interim Vice President of Agriculture last August by President Tate. The application period for the position closed in December so hopefully LSU will choose a permanent candidate in a few months. Dr. Lee has been working to bring LSU back to its traditional administrative structure with some new appointments:

- Dr. Taylor Smith - Director of the Extension Service
- Dr. Toby Lepley- Associate Vice President- 4-H Youth Development
- Dr. Gina Eubanks- Program Leader, Family and Consumer Services (FCS)
- Dr. Michael Salassi- Interim Executive Associate Vice President and Director of the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment station.

Dr. Salassi wanted to mention one of their major projects that was funded through the Taylor Foundation recently expired in 2022. This project was created to show conservation practices on commercial farming operations. Dr. Lisa Fultz and Dr. Benda Tubana were to submit another proposal and their project was renewed for another 4 years.

Dates To Remember:

January 18, 2023- Precision Ag Conference- Evacuation Center- Alexandria, LA

Dr. Salassi said that concluded his report and Chairman Garber congratulated him on his position and thanked him for his report.

### OSWC Report- Feral Swine Pilot (update)

Chairman Garber said the next item on the agenda is the OSWC Report and asked Mr. Breaux if he had any comments. Mr. Breaux said the Feral Swine Pilot is moving forward and believes Louisiana had a great start just as other states who are participating in the program. So far there are at least 200 cooperators in Louisiana that are participating. Mr. Breaux mentioned that there are three pilot areas:

Pilot Area 1: Red River, Natchitoches, Winn, Grant and Rapides Parishes

Pilot Area 2: Madison, Tensas, and Concordia Parishes

Pilot Area 3: Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes

Over 10,000 pigs have been removed from these 3 pilot areas and cooperators are happy with the project results. During last legislative session, Senator McFarland was able to receive some of the supplemental appropriations for 30 non-pilot districts to buy some trapping equipment.

Dr. Salassi said LSU has previously surveyed the whole state and has gotten a mailing list from it. He said they are about ready to send a follow-up survey. He asked Mr. Breaux would districts be able to supply a list of the cooperators information in those pilot areas so they could receive the short survey from LSU. Mr. Breaux said districts should be able to get their hands on the cooperator list quickly.

### Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said there are 4 SWCD supervisor resignations this month:

- Mr. Elmore Morris, Bodcau SWCD, appointed position, effective December 22, 2022.
- Dr. Thomas Vitrano, Crescent SWCD, appointed position, effective, December 31, 2022.
- Mr. Blaise Pezold, Crescent SWCD, elected position, effective January 11, 2023.
- Mr. Dan Delee, Feliciana SWCD, appointed position, effective December 27, 2022.

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

- Mr. Elmore Morris, Bodcau SWCD, appointed position, effective December 22, 2022.
- Dr. Thomas Vitrano, Crescent SWCD, appointed position, effective, December 31, 2022.
- Mr. Blaise Pezold, Crescent SWCD, elected position, effective January 11, 2023.
- Mr. Dan Delee, Feliciana SWCD, appointed position, effective December 27, 2022.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ed Yerger

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said we have 3 SWCD supervisor appointments this month:

- Ms. Erica Johnson, Crescent SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Henry Schlorff, effective January 11, 2023- June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Blaise Pezold, Crescent SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Dr. Thomas Vitrano, effective January 11, 2023- June 21, 2025.
- Mr. Brad Fontenot, Evangeline SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Ike Morein, effective January 11, 2023- June 30, 2025.

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

- Ms. Erica Johnson, Crescent SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Henry Schlorff, effective January 11, 2023- June 30, 2025.
- Mr. Blaise Pezold, Crescent SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Dr. Thomas Vitrano, effective January 11, 2023- June 21, 2025.
- Mr. Brad Fontenot, Evangeline SWCD, elected position formerly held by Mr. Ike Morein, effective January 11, 2023- June 30, 2025.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 9 SWCD supervisor re-appointments this month:

- Mr. Jeremy Slade, Catahoula SWCD, appointed position, effective March 29, 2023- March 29, 2026.
- Mr. Glen Caldwell, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position, effective March 23, 2023- March 23, 2026.
- Mr. David Lowe, Dorcheat SWCD, appointed position, effective March 23, 2023- March 23, 2026
- Mr. Jason Waller, Morehouse SWCD, appointed position, effective February 26, 2023- February 26, 2026.
- Mr. Dean Smith, New River SWCD, appointed position, effective February 28, 2023 – February 28, 2026.
- Mr. Ethan Poland, Northeast SWCD, appointed position, effective February 25, 2023- February 25, 2026.
- Mr. John Patrick Boudreaux, Sabine SWCD, appointed position, effective March 23, 2023- March 23, 2026.
- Mr. Richard Hollier III, St. Landry SWCD, appointed position, effective March 26, 2023 – March 26, 2026.
- Mr. Theron Ty Rogers, West Carroll SWCD, appointed position, effective February 24, 2023 – February 24, 2026.

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

- Mr. Jeremy Slade, Catahoula SWCD, appointed position, effective March 29, 2023- March 29, 2026.
- Mr. Glen Caldwell, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position, effective March 23, 2023- March 23, 2026.
- Mr. David Lowe, Dorcheat SWCD, appointed position, effective March 23, 2023- March 23, 2026
- Mr. Jason Waller, Morehouse SWCD, appointed position, effective February 26, 2023- February 26, 2026.
- Mr. Dean Smith, New River SWCD, appointed position, effective February 28, 2023 – February 28, 2026.
- Mr. Ethan Poland, Northeast SWCD, appointed position, effective February 25, 2023- February 25, 2026.
- Mr. John Patrick Boudreaux, Sabine SWCD, appointed position, effective March 23, 2023- March 23, 2026.
- Mr. Richard Hollier III, St. Landry SWCD, appointed position, effective March 26, 2023 – March 26, 2026.
- Mr. Theron Ty Rogers, West Carroll SWCD, appointed position, effective February 24, 2023 – February 24, 2026.

**Motion by:** Mr. Jason Nolde

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence/Articles:

- Carbon credits focus of forage meeting
- Email: Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD) Permit Announcement
- NC State University via SWCS: Crop and Soil Sciences News: Ground truthing Climate-Smart Grasslands
- Louisiana Conservation & Commodity Updates: December 2022, Issue-12
- The Power of Grasslands, Grazing, and Ranchers Who Get It Right
- The Secret to Supreme Rice
- USACE reaches decision on Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion permit

## OTHER BUSINESS

- Chairman Garber asked Mr. Breaux if he had any comments. Mr. Breaux asked Ms. Joubert to present on the proposed Commission logos. Ms. Joubert said that everyone should have a copy of logos that were created for the Commission by the LDAF marketing department. Ms. Joubert asked the members to review the logos and decisions can be made later. If the logos aren't used, they could be repurposed for LACD. Mr. Spicer said the logo was made when Soil and Water wasn't under LDAF. He said we should consider using LDAF's logo since we are getting funding assistance through the department. Mr. Breaux said the logos help to give the Commission an identity. Chairman Garber thanked Ms. Joubert for report.
- Mr. Breaux wanted to mention to the members that NACD is preparing to host the Spring Fly-in on March 22-23 2023 in person. The event hasn't happened in person since 2019.
- Mr. Skains wanted to mention some water quality news that is making its rounds. He said the legislature gave the Department of Health and Hospitals the responsibility to grade all the water systems in the state. He took a look at the Union/ Lincoln parishes' water systems. In Union parish, there are 21 water systems and 9 of them received a grade of "F". In Lincoln Parish, 18 systems received A's and there were no failing grades. He said one system in Union Parish receives all their water from a system in Lincoln Parish. The water is coming from a grade A water system but coming out as a grade D to the other side of the parish. Mr. Skains said the Commission should in some way be involved because it affects all of us. Mr. Kacir said if specific areas have a surface water system and they're having trouble meeting their requirements, they would be great candidates for NRCS's water quality or EQIP dollars to put some conservation practices in place to help producers.
- Chairman Garber also wanted to discuss a meeting that took place with the Commissioner and Mr. Breaux regarding funding. NRCS is expected to receive a large amount of funds from the Infrastructure Reduction Act (IRA) which will cause a larger workflow for districts in the upcoming fiscal years. The Commissioner asked for figures so that he would be able to pass along the message to the legislators. After the meeting, Mr. Breaux drafted some figures but they are not finalized yet. There was also a conversation regarding a previously proposed parcel fee that would cover firefighter efforts and conservation work. The proposal never moved forward due to conflicting interests. Chairman Garber believes that there should be some conversation with LACD and hopes that Commission members are also thinking about ideas to restructure parcel fee proposal.

### Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28, 2023 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. Steve Horvath made a motion to adjourn at 11:34 A.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reggie Skains and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

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