

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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

April 23, 2024  
1:15 PM

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

MEETING 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 Chairman Garber led 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. Reggie Skains, Secretary-Treasurer, Area I  
Mr. Ben Langlinais, LACD President, Member  
Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF Alternate  
Mr. Jason Nolde, Area III Alternate SWCD

**Members Absent:**

Southern University Agricultural Center Representative  
Mr. Ed Yerger, Area II Member  
Mr. Ed Giering, Area III Member  
Dr. Michael Salassi, LSU AgCenter, Alternate

A quorum was present.

**Others Present:**

Ms. Mellowdee Tibbs, Acting NRCS LA State Conservationist  
Mr. Theron Phillips, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. Wendy Gibson, LDAF-OSWC  
Mr. Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC / Director  
Ms. Caitlin Joubert, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander

**Public Comments**

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

**Approval of the April 23, 2024 agenda**

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the April 23, 2024 SWCC agenda.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of the March 26, 2024 minutes**

Chairman Garber called for a motion to approve the March 26, 2024 SWCC meeting minutes.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

Motion passed unanimously.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

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

March's Farm Bill drawdown- \$ 130,281

12 Districts have fully expended their allocated Farm Bill funds, totaling \$79,522 worked beyond their allocations.

NRCS Farm Bill agreement balance- \$306,662

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

Mr. Breaux reported that a letter had been sent to Rep. Jack McFarland and Sen. Glen Womack from Commissioner Strain asking for support for the requested \$400,000 increase to OSWC budget. Districts have been notified to submit their Grassroots Conservation Reports by May 10<sup>th</sup> to Ms. Courtney Gerace. LACD also asked conservation districts to reach out to local legislators to get their support for the requested funding amendment. The LDAF House egg breakfast has already taken place with good attendance from aides and legislators. After the house egg breakfast, the Natural Resources committee met and discussed CPRA board reorganization. Mr. Breaux and Commissioner Strain provided comments regarding LDAF's role in coastal matters. He also mentioned that the senate egg breakfast is scheduled for May 1, 2024 and invited Commission members to attend. Mr. Skains invited Commission members out to the Rural Caucus meeting scheduled for May 22, 2024 at the Capital.

### **SWCC Area III Alternate Member Appointment**

Chairman Garber said Mr. Breaux sent notification to Area III district board members and secretaries on February 29, 2024, asking that they discuss the SWCC Area III alternate vacancy during their March board meetings. Districts were asked to submit their nominations no later than April 1, 2024 at the Area III Meeting in Pineville, LA. Notification was received stating that Mr. Jason Nolde from Calcasieu SWCD was the only nomination. Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to accept Area III's nomination and appoint Mr. Jason Nolde of Calcasieu SWCD to fill the SWCC Area III Alternate vacancy formerly held by Mr. Gregory Monceaux of Allen SWCD.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Ben Langlinais

Motion Passed unanimously.

Resolved, Mr. Jason Nolde, Calcasieu Soil and Water Conservation District will serve as the Area III Alternate Member of the State Soil & Water Conservation Commission with the term beginning April 23, 2024 and expiring December 7, 2024.

Mr. Breaux discussed Act. 393 which provides that members of a public body having a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) shall be allowed to participate and vote in a meeting via electronic means (video or teleconference). Mr. Breaux asked that the Commission consider this act on behalf of Mr. Ed Giering to have his continued engagement available if he can join the meeting virtually.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **NRCS State Conservationist Report-** Ms. Mellowdee Tibbs, Acting NRCS LA State Conservationist

Ms. Tibbs said that she and her staff were currently drafting FY 24-25 agreements with the OSWC for Program Support Specialists (\$800,000) and Targeted Technician (\$700,000) funding for SWCDs. She also said that the RCPP applications portal is open until 07/02/24 and that currently there is \$1.5 billion in funding with a \$25 million ceiling.

SWCD Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) and Unfunded Cooperatives will expire soon and NRCS is working to get those rewritten before the end of the federal fiscal year. Ms. Tibbs said that \$17.3 million was available through the EQIP Classic program, and that to-date, 34.6% of the applications have been approved, and funds

have been obligated for 23.1% of the applications. She also said that CSP Classic had \$6.6 million available with 115 approved applications, 356 applications unfunded.

#### OSWC Update

Mr. Breaux asked Ms. Caitlin Joubert to give an update on the Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus meeting that focused on supporting funding for the Louisiana Outdoors Forever grant. Ms. Joubert said there was a great turnout of senators and representatives, which included Rep. "Zee" Zeringue and Sen. Cathey. Some of the sponsors in attendance were Ducks Unlimited (DU), Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), American Kennel Club, and the Nature Conservancy Group. These groups got the opportunity to speak to the group during lunch and express their support for the Louisiana Outdoors Forever grant.

Mr. Breaux also mentioned:

- Planning for upcoming BMP Field Days in St. Martin and Iberia Parishes. The dates will be released soon.
- Ag waste distribution cost-share has been expanded to include all ag waste not just poultry litter. A re-announcement about this program will be sent soon.
- There has been discussion of Pig Brig entering into consultant agreements directly between them and SWCDs. These agreements would allow Pig Brig to be available for demonstration and instruction on how to manage feral swine damage most effectively in the area.
- Stewardship week-April 28, 2024- May 5, 2024

#### Supervisor Waivers/ Resignations/ Appointments / Reappointments

Chairman Garber said we received a letter from Mr. Robert Dale Thibodaux, Acadia SWCD, who did not meet the board meeting attendance requirements in the past year. Mr. Thibodaux submitted a letter to the Acadia Board and the Acadia Board of Supervisors board submitted a supporting letter suggesting the absences were justified and they are requesting the attendance requirements be waived.

Chairman Garber said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to waive the attendance requirement for Mr. Robert Dale Thibodaux, Acadia SWCD making him eligible for reappointment.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 5 SWCD resignations this month:

- Mr. Shane Hart, Boeuf River SWCD, elected position, effective April 12, 2024.
- Mr. Glen Caldwell, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position, effective March 26, 2024.
- Mr. Allen Gooden, DeSoto SWCD, elected position, effective April 23, 2024
- Mr. Ricky Weeks, DeSoto SWCD, elected position, effective April 23, 2024.
- Mr. Joel Matthews, Rapides SWCD, elected position, effective April 16, 2024

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

- Mr. Shane Hart, Boeuf River SWCD, elected position, effective April 12, 2024.
- Mr. Glen Caldwell, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position, effective March 26, 2024.
- Mr. Allen Gooden, DeSoto SWCD, elected position, effective April 23, 2024
- Mr. Ricky Weeks, DeSoto SWCD, elected position, effective April 23, 2024.
- Mr. Joel Matthews, Rapides SWCD, elected position, effective April 16, 2024

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 4 appointments this month:

- Mr. Shane Hart, Boeuf River SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Dustin Morris, effective April 22, 2024- April 22, 2027.
- Mr. Allen Gooden, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Glen Caldwell, effective April 23, 2024- March 23, 2026.
- Mr. Ricky Weeks, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Jerry Holmes, effective April 23, 2024- March 23, 2025.
- Ms. Mona Murray, Sabine SWCD, elected position formerly held by Thomas Christian Pearce, effective April 23, 2024- June 30, 2025.

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

- Mr. Shane Hart, Boeuf River SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Dustin Morris, effective April 22, 2024- April 22, 2027.
- Mr. Allen Gooden, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Glen Caldwell, effective April 23, 2024- March 23, 2026.
- Mr. Ricky Weeks, DeSoto SWCD, appointed position formerly held by Mr. Jerry Holmes, effective April 23, 2024- March 23, 2025.
- Ms. Mona Murray, Sabine SWCD, elected position formerly held by Thomas Christian Pearce, effective April 23, 2024- June 30, 2025.

**Motion by:** Mr. Reggie Skains

**Seconded by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Garber said there are 2 reappointments this month:

- Mr. Joseph Tupper, Jefferson Davis SWCD, appointed position, effective June 11, 2024- June 10, 2027.
- Mr. Robert Morris, Upper Delta SWCD, appointed position, effective May 25, 2024- May 24, 2027.

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

- Mr. Joseph Tupper, Jefferson Davis SWCD, appointed position, effective June 11, 2024- June 10, 2027.
- Mr. Robert Morris, Upper Delta SWCD, appointed position, effective May 25, 2024- May 24, 2027.

**Motion by:** Mr. Brad Spicer

**Seconded by:** Mr. Steve Horvath

Motion passed unanimously.

#### District Supervisor Election- June 8, 2024

Chairman Garber said district supervisors up for re-election in 2024 now have 7 days to get signatures and have their petitions reviewed by Registrar of Voters. After it has been reviewed by the Registrar of Voters and has the 25 signatures required, they must mail the petition originals to the OSWC office. There have not been any reports of current supervisors having opposition for their seat. Supervisors will be duly elected during the tentative June 25, 2024 SWCC Meeting. Currently, OSWC has 6 completed petitions submitted.

#### SWCC Goals

Mr. Breaux said OSWC is in the process of working towards a virtual supervisor training option. Supervisors have been trained recently using the "Know the Difference" training module which teaches the differences between the SWCC, LACD, and OSWC. OSWC has been working with Ms. Sarah Dubea, LDAF IT, to get

ideas on the virtual supervisor training program options. Mr. Breaux said he has noticed districts are more in tune with supervisor training if they are considering or are engaging in a lot of different programs, especially PL-566. Mr. Horvath said a board must choose the best people to fill their board vacancies. Mr. Breaux suggested the Commission could review some previously distributed information primarily from NACD that included a district self-evaluation section. Chairman Garber said the Commission may consider adding a section to the goals list that would help to encourage districts to have a more active board meeting. Districts should also be considering their choice for board officers especially the chairman. Mr. Langlinais said districts would like to reach the next generation, but training would be difficult. Mr. Breaux said NRCS has different leadership training programs and Ms. Joubert also stated the Soil and Water Society offers a free class for “Emerging Leadership” as does LSU. Mr. Skains said he attended most of the supervisor training sessions done at the area meetings this year and enjoyed the training layout presented at the Area 1 training by Ms. Wendy Gibson. He said that a lot of supervisors have expressed interest in a virtual training option, but he feels that supervisors should rotate between virtual and live supervisor training. Chairman Garber said districts should reach out to other companies or agencies to share opportunities that SWCDs may offer. Working with these companies will also give SWCDs an introduction to the younger generation. Mr. Nolde suggested reaching out to 4-H as start because these members have agriculture backgrounds.

Correspondence/Articles:

- Obituary: Mr. James Bailey Rogers, Supervisor-Bogue-Chitto Pearl River SWCD
- Soil and Water Stewardship Week Proclamation: April 28- May 5, 2024
- 2024 Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference: May 21-25, 2024
- Drivers: Bringing Back Native Grasslands After Wildlife
- Community Conservations: For the 2029 Coastal Master Plan
- State urgently needs the Greenfield Wallace facility
- 2024 Coastal Stewardship Award Winner: Kenneth Bahlinger

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

Chairman Garber said the next state Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 28, 2024 at the LDAF Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806.

Public Comment

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 3:10 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Horvath and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

---

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