

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

March 26, 2019  
1:15 PM

VETERAN'S AUDITORIUM  
5825 FLORIDA BLVD.  
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairman Girouard called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:20 P.M. and ask Mr. David Daigle to give the invocation and Ms. Amanda Mathis to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Members and Alternate Members present:**

Dr. Ernest Girouard-Vice Chairman  
Mr. David Daigle- LACD President  
Mr. John Compton- Secretary/Treasurer  
Mr. Larry Sayes  
Mr. Ed Yerger

**Members absent:**

Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter  
Southern University Agricultural Center  
Representative  
Mr. Reggie Skains- Chairman

A quorum was present.

**Others Present:**

Ms. Amanda Mathis, NRCS State Conservationist  
USDA-NRCS

Dr. Brian Leblanc, LSU AgCenter  
Mr. Joey Breau, LDAF-OSWC  
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director  
SSWCC

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Vice Chairman Girouard asked for comments from the public or Commission members about the February 26, 2019 State Commission minutes and there were none. Vice Chairman Girouard called for a motion to approve the February 26, 2019 State Commission Meeting minutes.

**Motion:** Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve February 26, 2019 State Commission Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Sayes and passed unanimously.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Vice Chairman Girouard said they would now take up Unfinished Business and asked Mr. Spicer to review the agenda items with the State Commission.

### NRCS/OSWC Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

Mr. Spicer reported that OSWC will be increasing farm bill funding for all the districts. He said the increased funds are from the Targeted Watershed account. He said the district employees need to be sure to charge all their farm bill activities to their farm bill accounts.

Dr. Girouard said his district (Vermillion SWCD) is having trouble utilizing their CSP funds and asked if the CSP funds could be reallocated to EQIP. Ms. Mathis said the farm bill funds have to be used for the program for which they are assigned. She said the funds can be also used for outreach activities that are CSP related. She said that the sign-up for CSP will increase this year so she expects that districts will charge more hours later in the fiscal year. Mr. Breaux said he would resend a listing of administrative and technical activities that district employees carry out daily that should be charged to the farm bill program. Ms. Mathis said that she was concerned about the program fitting the producers in Dr. Ernest's district. She said that she would like to continue dialogue on the issue with him later.

Mr. Spicer asked if there were any other questions about farm bill and there were none.

### Legislative Regular Session/ State Funding

Vice President Girouard said the next item on the agenda is *Legislative Regular Session/State Funding* and asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said that Chairman Skains, Mr. Daigle, and himself have met with Lieutenant Governor Nungesser and a representative from Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Mr. Daigle said they did not make the deadline for a bill to be included in the upcoming Legislative Session. Mr. Spicer said that Chairman Skains plans to continue to work towards submitting a district funding bill in a future session.

### NACD Spring Fly-In-March 13, 2019

Vice Chairman Girouard said the next item on the agenda is *NACD Spring Fly-In* and asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer asked if Ms. Mathis or Mr. Breaux would like to make any comments. Ms. Mathis passed out the Annual Conservation Investment Report for 2018. She said that the report was used in their meetings with our Congressional Delegation to help explain the positive impacts of the Farm Bill for Louisiana. She said that they were able to speak to a majority of the congressional members and all the congressional staff to share stories and discuss how certain farm bill programs were a big help to Louisiana producers. She said that overall she believes that everything went well in regards to the importance of the Farm Bill to Louisiana producers and for conserving and protecting our states' natural resources.

Mr. Breaux said he believes that Louisiana covered a lot in the meetings with our congressmen and their staffs. He said he had a chance to speak with representatives from other states that said that Louisiana was well represented at the Fly-In. He said that most of the states had about three to five meetings while Louisiana had eight or nine meetings. He said Congressman Abraham's staffers seemed very intrigued about the information detailed in the Louisiana Annual Report. Ms. Mathis said that she was quite excited that she got to participate in the Congressional meetings and was very pleased with the response. She said they got to meet with the congressman and staff for all eight offices.

Vice Chairman Girouard asked were there any other questions and there were none.

### District Supervisor Election- June 8, 2019

Vice Chairman Girouard said the next item on the agenda is *District Supervisor Election*. He said that each district has one supervisor that is up for election. He said that the term of the elected supervisor will begin on July 1, 2019 and end June 30, 2022. He said that if the supervisor up for election does not have anyone running against them they will be considered "duly" elected by the State Commission at the May SSWCC meeting. Vice Chairman Girouard said the petitions have to be signed by the Registrar of Voters and postmarked before May 1, 2019. He said that if the district has an election, there should be three polling places in each parish with a maximum of eight in multi-parish districts. He said that districts must make sure that they

provide petitions from all possible candidates in a timely manner and that notices of the district election must be published in the local paper and posted throughout the district in key locations.

Ms. Mathis asked about getting supervisors to fill the vacant positions. Vice Chairman Girouard said that districts are required to advertise the nominating petition period and the election. He said the district will try to get someone to complete a petition to fill the vacant positions on their board. He said that it is becoming more difficult to get someone who is interested in serving and willing to put in the work needed to be a supervisor.

Vice Chairman Girouard asked were there any other questions and there were none

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **NRCS State Conservationist Report**

Vice Chairman Girouard said they would now take up New Business and asked Acting NRCS State Conservationist, Ms. Amanda Mathis to give the NRCS report. Ms. Mathis said she wanted to first discuss an event called *Back to Your Roots*. She said the event took place on March 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> in Ruston, LA and was put on by the Campti Field of Dreams organization. She said it is a community based garden and farm organization. She said the organization is currently working on getting fresh produce to poverty stricken areas. She said that the organization is aiming to get to small scale farmers interested in supporting the cause. She said that this would be a great opportunity for districts to setup a booth to be a resource at their event.

Ms. Mathis said she had some program updates to share. She said Louisiana Easements currently has over 270 ACEP-WRE applications with a funding need in excess of \$120,000,000. She said there were 235 ACEP-WRE applications in the October batching period that have eligibility and ranking determinations completed for funding consideration in FY2019. She said NRCS anticipates their FY19 full funding allocation in the coming days and then they plan to begin the enrollment processes in April for new easement enrollments. Ms. Mathis said so far in FY2019, Louisiana has closed 20 WRE easements on 2,120 acres with restoration activities on over 3,000 acres, bringing the total state enrollment of Wetland Reserve Easements to 1,049 easements on 320,712 acres.

Ms. Mathis said two new RCPP projects are actively accepting application: the Red River SWCD-Bayou Pierre Project and OSWC Derelict Rice Project. She said the first signup period ends April 19, 2019. She said CSP renewal letters will be going out to all eligible 2018 CSP Renewal participants allowing them to extend their contract one year doing the same work as their last year's contract and with the same payment. She said those who have reached the payment cap can still be extended with lower to zero payments. Ms. Mathis said they are expecting have a CSP sign up announced sometime in May.

Ms. Mathis said the 2019 Conservation Innovation Grant program is open until May 31, 2019. She said there is an emphasis on projects that will do any of the following:

1. Projects increasing knowledge of soil health, cover crops, reduced tillage, and residue management in a flood irrigated (anaerobic conditions) systems.
2. Projects which increase success in establishment and management of native herbaceous and/or woody vegetation in wildlife or pollinator habitat.
3. Projects which display innovative techniques for management of poultry and dairy waste with enhanced benefits to water quality.
4. Projects which display innovative techniques that increase knowledge and skills in restoration of slope failures or gully erosion.
5. Projects which increase knowledge and skills in management of native herbaceous vegetation utilizing prescribed burning and prescribed grazing.

Ms. Mathis said NRCS is also soliciting applications for specific needs related to implementing key conservation objectives. She said this competitive funding opportunity will remain open until May 10, 2019.

Ms. Mathis said the first agreement to be implemented in Livingston Parish expanded authority EWP has been executed. She said the agreement to develop the Upper Terrebonne Basin WS plan has also been executed with Upper Delta SWCD. She said the task order has been issued to begin design of the Bayou DuLarge RESTORE Act project as well.

Ms. Mathis said there has not been much change in staffing. She said they currently have offers out to hire 5 people; including 2 positions for Coastal Wetlands, Protection and Restoration (CWPPRA) and 1 for the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center PMC. She said this would put NRCS at 182 on board without students. She said they expect Bastrop and Ville Platte DCs positions and the supervisory Engineer to be advertised soon. Ms. Mathis also mentioned that the Pathways summer internship announcement closed on March 22nd.

Ms. Mathis passed out the current issue of the *Conservation Update*. She said in this issue of the Conservation Update, we learn about Catherine LaCour, a six-generation farmer in Pointe Coupee Parish. She said that Ms. LaCour said working on the farm was not part of her original plan after college, but she loves the work and lifestyle of being a farmer and in her words, "Wouldn't change a thing!"

Ms. Mathis said she lastly wanted to thank LACD for their support of the Louisiana Women in Ag event. She said it was the biggest event ever and a huge success.

Vice Chairman Girouard asked were there any questions and there were none. Vice Chairman Girouard thanked Ms. Mathis for her report.

#### Correspondence

Vice Chairman Girouard said he wanted to make sure that everyone reviewed the FY 2020 Appropriations Assistance handout that was in everyone's packet. He said it talks about a few important topics that include: the Farm Bill Conservation Title Funding, Watershed Operations and Small Watershed Rehabilitation, State and Private Forestry Programs, and 319 Nonpoint Source Grants.

Vice Chairman Girouard said that the following correspondence is *Identifying Die-Off Syndrome*. He asked Mr. Breaux if he had any comments on this. Mr. Breaux said this article was written by LSU and was aimed towards land owners dealing with roseau cane die-off. He said the tone of the article leans toward LSU thinking that the Roseau cane may not be the only issue with some of the land. Vice chairman Girouard asked if there any questions and there were none.

Vice Chairman Girouard said the next correspondence is *USDA Seeks Public Comments on Conservation Practice Standards*. He asked Ms. Mathis if she had any comments. Ms. Mathis said it talks about a new stimulation from the recently passed Farm Bill which is about public comment. She said NRCS is reviewing conservation practices by evaluating opportunities to increase flexibility while ensuring natural resource benefits as well as ensuring to the maximum extent practicable, the completeness and relevance of the standards to local agricultural, forestry and natural resource needs. She said the comments can be made through [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) or by mail. She said the comments are due by April 25, 2019. Mr. Spicer said that it would be great to have a producer or a technician from the district to give some insight. Vice Chairman Girouard said that he has visited the site and while it does go into detail, it may be a lengthy process. Ms. Mathis said that if anyone has any comments, this would be a great time to send in a comment.

Vice Chairman Girouard said next article is the Army Central Review of State Legislative & Regulatory Actions. He said Louisiana's section talks about closure requirements for surface impoundments. He said the proposed definitions and rule changes would allow for the closure of solid waste surface impoundments under RECAP equivalent to and in lieu of clean closure. He said a hearing is scheduled for June 20<sup>th</sup> and comments are due on June 27<sup>th</sup>.

Vice Chairman Girouard said the next article is *Listen to the Land-Slow and Steady*. He said the article features East Carroll SWCD board member and former LACD President, Mr. Donavon Taves. He said the

article discusses how Mr. Taves took steps to educate himself and learn from mistakes made. He said that Commission members should read this article at their leisure.

Vice Chairman Girouard said the last correspondence is an engagement letter from LaSalle SWCD. He said LaSalle is asking to enter into agreement with the Vercher Group to conduct the districts FYE June 30, 2019 audit at cost of \$595. He asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He called for a motion to approve the engagement letter.

**Motion:** Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve LaSalle SWCD to enter into agreement with the Vercher Group to conduct their districts FYE June 30, 2019 audit at a cost of \$595. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Sayes and passed unanimously.

#### Supervisor Resignations/Reappointments/Appointments

Vice Chairman Girouard said they would now take up resignations, reappointments, and appointments of supervisors.

Vice Chairman Girouard said there are two resignations this month: Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Jason Benoit, appointed position; effective March 14, 2019 and Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Timothy Wild, elected position; effective March 14, 2019.

Vice Chairman Giroaurd asked for comments from the public or the Commission members and there were none. Vice Chairman Girouard called for a motion to accept the resignations of Mr. Jason Benoit, appointed position; effective March 14, 2019 and Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Timothy Wild, elected position; effective March 14, 2019.

**Motion:** Mr. David Daigle made a motion to accept the resignations of Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Jason Benoit, appointed position; effective March 14, 2019 and Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Timothy Wild, elected position; effective March 14, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Vice Chairman Girouard said there is one reappointment:

Grant SWCD, Mr. Ken Richardson, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began March 28, 2019 and end March 28, 2022.

Vice Chairman Girouard asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve Mr. Richardson's reappointment.

**Motion:** Mr. Larry Sayes made a motion to approve the reappointment of Grant SWCD, Mr. Ken Richardson, reappointed to fill his appointed position. Term will began March 28, 2019 and end March 28, 2022. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

Vice Chairman Girouard said there is one appointment:

Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Timothy Wild, to the appointed position formerly held by Mr. Jason Benoit. Term will begin March 26, 2019 and will expire June 11, 2019.

Vice Chairman Girouard asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve Mr. Wilds's reappointment.

**Motion:** Mr. Larry Sayes made a motion to approve the appointment of Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Timothy Wild, to the appointed position formerly held by Mr. Jason Benoit. Term will begin March 26, 2019 and will expire June 11, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business this month.

**NEXT MEETING**

Vice Chairman Girouard said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, 2019 at 1:15 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

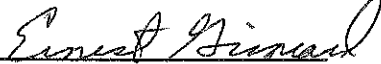
**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

Vice 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. John Compton made a motion to adjourn at 2:35 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

/s/ Dr. Ernest Girouard   
Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vice-Chairman  
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission