

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

January 22, 2019
1:15 PM

M& F CONFERENCE ROOM
5825 FLORIDA BLVD.
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Skains called the regular monthly Commission Meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. and gave the invocation and ask Mr. David Daigle to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

Members and Alternate Members present:

Mr. Reggie Skains- Chairman
Dr. Ernest Girouard-Vice Chairman
Mr. David Daigle- LACD President
Mr. John Compton- Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Larry Sayes
Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter
Mr. Ed Yerger

Members absent:

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Ms. Amanda Mathis, NRCS State Conservationist
USDA-NRCS
Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC

Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director
SSWCC
Ms. LaClasha "Clay" Alexander, LDAF-OSWC.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members about the December 4, 2018 State Commission minutes and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the December 4, 2018 State Commission Meeting minutes.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to approve December 4, 2018 State Commission Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Skains 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 over one third of the districts had earned over 80% of their allocated farm bill funds. He said they are in the process of reviewing to determine if there are any additional farm bill funds that can be allocated to the districts.

LACD and NACD 2019 Annual Meetings

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *LACD and NACD 2019 Annual meetings* and asked Mr. Daigle if he had any comments. Mr. David Daigle said that the LACD meeting was a success. He said Thursday's General Session began with Commissioner Strain giving the Louisiana Agriculture report and after his report he introducing Governor John Bel Edwards. He said there was also a presentation on Water Quality Trading and on the Governor's Watershed Initiative and the meeting also included some great breakout sessions. Mr. Daigle said that they also passed two resolutions; one requesting the Legislator to reaffirm its support to the Office of Soil and Water Conservation and the second resolution was in support of continuing EQIP funding. He said that the Master Farmers' Awards luncheon recognized thirteen new master farmers in the state and twenty-three recertified master farmers. He said the LACD awards also showcased some great award winners. He said there was an outstanding group of nominees to select from as well.

Mr. Daigle said that the NACD Annual Meeting is scheduled for February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX. He said that there seems to be quite a turnout expected from Louisiana. Mr. Spicer said the NACD Spring Fly-In is scheduled for March 13th in Washington DC.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Acting NRCS State Conservationist, Ms. Amanda Mathis to give the NRCS report. Ms. Mathis reviewed the status of NRCS during the lapse in federal funding. She said NRCS has a combination of funds from the appropriations prior to the shutdown, and mandatory program funds to cover continuing operations. She clarified that NRCS has not been given any indication that there are office closures needed.

Ms. Mathis stated that staff will continue working with Mr. Spicer to ensure that the remaining balance in the farm bill assistance agreement is sufficient to support remaining work in FY19 and will identify needs for FY20.

Ms. Mathis provided a summary of 2018 EQIP, CSP and ACEP obligations. She said signups have been announced and have past for most all 2019 EQIP fund accounts. She said NRCS systems are being updated to align with the passing of the new Farm Bill so Field offices have been encouraged to use this time to complete sound conservation planning and design work to increase contract integrity. She stated that NRCS anticipates FY 19 EQIP FA to be around \$22M and CSP to be around \$30M.

Ms. Mathis gave an update on several Water Resources and Coastal Restoration projects. She said the Watershed Program (PL-566) projects continue to receive funding to develop a Watershed Plan for the Grant Parish Irrigation project and received approval and funding for the Upper Terrebonne Basin Flood Prevention WS Plan development. She said NRCS will partner with the Upper Delta SWCD to contract for plan development. She said CWPPRA work continues on two Coast Wide Vegetative Planting projects (in grow out stage) and the Cameron Creole Fresh Water introduction design completed advertisement this winter. She said RESTORE work includes soliciting IDIQ firms for proposals to design the Bayou Dularge Ridge, Marsh and Hydrologic Restoration Project. Ms. Mathis said there are four Nutrient Reduction projects for NRDA work. She said Implementation plans are currently under development and lot of activity continues on EWP related to August 2016 floods. She said nine projects have been completed and one active project remains in Livingston Parish. Ms. Mathis said two EWP-Flood Plain Easement projects are in the works for the City of Gonzales and Pointe Coupee Parish.

Ms. Mathis said LA NRCS currently has 9 DC positions vacant and many other open field positions. She said NRCS will continue to advertise and hire positions in FY 19 but the process will be slow and will be within constraints of a staffing cap. She said NRCS will be strategic regarding decisions of what positions to advertise but will continue to focus on customer facing- field positions.

Ms. Mathis closed by sharing highlights of the new Conservation Update and the forestry practices implemented to restore a shortleaf pine savanna done on Wafer Creek Ranch located in Lincoln Parish and thanking the Commission for their partnership and the work that Districts do. She stated that she looks forward to working with the Commission during her time LA.

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondences for review are travel requests from East Carroll SWCD, Sabine SWCD, and Upper Delta SWCD requesting approval for out of state travel for supervisors and secretaries to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX.

Chairman Skains said the first out of state travel request is from East Carroll SWCD requesting approval for Mr. Donovan Taves to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX. Chairman Skains 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 East Carroll SWCD's out of state travel request.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve East Carroll SWCD's out state travel for Mr. Donovan Taves to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the second out of state travel comes from Sabine SWCD requesting approval for Mr. John Alan Williams to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX. Chairman Skains 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 Sabine SWCD's out of state travel request.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve Sabine SWCD's out of state travel for Mr. John Alan Williams to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the last out of state travel comes from Upper Delta SWCD requesting approval for Ms. Carlyn Morales, Mrs. Lindsey Gaspard, and Mr. Price Gay to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX. Chairman Skains 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 Upper Delta SWCD's out of state travel request.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve Upper Delta SWCD's out of state travel for Ms. Carlyn Morales, Mrs. Lindsey Gaspard, and Mr. Price Gay to attend the NACD Annual Meeting on February 2-6, 2019 in San Antonio, TX. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is an email from Mr. Tim Landreneu welcoming the Acting State Conservationist, Ms. Amanda Mathis. He said Ms. Mathis comes to us from Arkansas and she will make a great fit here in Louisiana. He said that Ms. Mathis grew up on a registered Beefmaster cattle operation where she began to develop her love for agriculture at an early age. He said that Ms. Mathis and her husband currently live on a small cow-calf operation near Mount Vernon, Arkansas. Chairman Skains said that she plans to work to enhance collaborative efforts to achieve the conservation mission and leads the Region Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) and the Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) for the state.

Chairman Skains said the next article is the *Army Central Review of State Legislative & Regulatory Actions*. He said Louisiana' section discusses the FY 2020 Draft Annual Plan: Integrated Ecosystem Restoration and Hurricane Protection in Coastal Louisiana. He said that the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

(CPRA) is requesting public input of the draft and a hearing is scheduled for January 29th. He said that the draft will also include the Atchafalaya Basin Program.

Chairman Skains said the next article is titled; *LSU unveils massive Mississippi River model expected to be major tool in coastal restoration projects*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments on this article. Mr. Spicer said the article is about the new LSU Center for River Studies. He said that members of CPRA were so impressed when they got an early view of the unfinished model that they started requesting models to be developed for the Atchafalaya and Calcasieu River Deltas. He said the Commission had a great experience viewing the Mississippi River model when they held meetings at the center last year.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence is a list called *NACD 2018 Government Affairs Priorities-Draft*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments on this article. Mr. Spicer said that this was a list of items that NACD will be working on in addition to items, each lists the items' objectives.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *2018 Farm Bill Breakdown: Conservation Stewardship Program 01/15/2019*. He said that this article is from NACD and it breaks down the changes that took place when President Trump signed the 2018 Farm Bill.

Chairman said the last article was *USDA to reopen Farm Service Agency offices for limited services during government shutdown*. He said the article discusses Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue's opening many Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to perform certain limited services for farmers and ranchers. He said that this will bring back 2,500 FSA employees to assist in services such as processing farm payments, continuing expiring financing statements, and opening high priority mail.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Skains said they would now take up resignations, reappointments, and appointments of supervisors. He said that Gulf Coast SWCD is requesting Mr. Bruce Watts appointed to fill the vacant appointed position formerly held by Ms. Cynthia Leblanc. Chairman Skains asked for comments from the public or Commission members and there were none; he asked for a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Bruce Watts to the Gulf Coast SWCD board of supervisors effective January 22, 2019 and expires June 11, 2019.

Motion: Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to appoint Mr. Bruce Watts to fill the vacant appointed seat formerly held by Ms. Cynthia LeBlanc with the term beginning January 22, 2019 and expiring June 11, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Skains asked Dr. Leonard if he had any comments. Dr. Leonard said he wanted to review some upcoming events and projects that are taking place soon:

January 30th-February 1, 2019- National Cattleman's Beef Association Convention and Trade Show- Ernest Morial Convention Center –New Orleans, LA
February 6-7, 2019- PSA Grower Training- Amite, LA
February 7, 2019- Northeast Louisiana Crops Forum- Delhi Civic Center
February 8-16, 2019- LSU Livestock Show-Baton Rouge, LA
February 11-13, 2019-Louisiana Ag Consultant Association- Marksville, LA
February 13-14, 2019- PSA Grower Training- Crowley, LA
February 14, 2019- Northeast Louisiana Rice Forum- Iona Gulf Course-Rayville, LA
February 20-21, 2019- PSA Grower Training- Bossier City, LA

Dr. Leonard said that LSU has been working with Ms. Amanda Mathis, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) on a project to enhance education in the dairy and beef cattle area in Southeast and Southwest Louisiana. He said that this will be similar to the Master Farmer's program with more focus on individual outreach. He said that they also submitted a project to the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation. He said that this project was requested by Ms. Taylor personally and it focuses on working with two model farms in Louisiana. He said that we can use this as outreach for all the Best Management Practices we can effectively use on the model farms.

Chairman Skains thanked Dr. Leonard for his report and asked Mr. Joey Breaux if he had any comments.

Mr. Breaux said he wanted to mention the passing of Mr. Allan Ensminger of Crescent SWCD. He said that Mr. Ensminger served on the Crescent board for many years after working as a leading wetland and wildlife biologist and service as Chief of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Refugee Division. He said Mr. Ensminger will be greatly missed. He said that Visitation will begin on Friday, January 25, 2019 from 5PM to 9PM at the Labby Memorial Funeral Home in DeRidder, LA.

Chairman Skains said the Commission and OSWC Staff greatly appreciated the contribution that Allan made to Louisiana.

Chairman Skains thanked Mr. Breaux for his remarks.

Chairman Skains said he wanted to discuss a meeting he had with the Lieutenant Governor Nungesser last Wednesday. He said that Mr. Daigle and Mr. Spicer also participated in the meeting. He said they discussed with the LT. Governor ways that they may get more funding for their programs. He said that everyone seemed very supportive of the effort. He said they discussed the possibility of funding coming in the form of a container deposit from cans, bottles, and styrofoam cups. Chairman Skains said he did not discuss the amount of each deposit as of yet but they are trying to come up with what the income stream would be. He said they are hoping to get a bill to the Legislature in this upcoming Regular Session. He said there hasn't been any negative feedback and that it is about working together towards getting more revenue for the conservation districts.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 26, 2019 at 1:15 P.M. in the Veterans Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman 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. David Daigle made a motion to adjourn at 2:15 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Compton and passed unanimously.

/s/


Reggie Skains, Chairman

State Soil and Water Conservation Commission