

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

May 22, 2018  
1:15 PM

VETERAN'S AUDITORIUM  
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. He asked Mr. Fletcher to give the invocation and Mr. Daigle to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by Ms. LaClasha Alexander

Members and Alternate Members present: Mr. Reggie Skains; Chairman; Dr. Ernest Girouard, Vice Chairman; Mr. Randell Fletcher, Mr. David Daigle, LACD President; Mr. John Compton, Secretary/Treasurer, Mr. Ed Yerger, and Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter.

Members absent: Southern University Agricultural Center Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present: Mr. Brad Spicer, LDAF-OSWC/Executive Director SSWCC; Mr. Claude Ross, Acting NRCS State Conservationist USDA-NRCS; Mr. John "Alan" Williams; LACD Vice President and Commission Alternate and Mr. Ray Reich, LDAF-OSWC.

Chairman Skains asked that the board entertain a motion to add an item to the agenda. He said that there is a request by members to discuss supervisor district board meeting attendance. Chairman Skains asked for any comments from public or Commission members regarding the proposed change. He said if there were no comments, then he would call for a motion to change the agenda to discuss supervisor attendance.

**Motion:** Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to accept the addition of an item to the agenda to discuss supervisor board meeting attendance. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members about the April 17, 2018 State Commission minutes. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the April 17, 2018 State Commission Meeting minutes.

**Motion:** Mr. Fletcher made a motion to approve the April 17, 2018 State Commission Meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton 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 said that at the last meeting, he mentioned that some of the districts were behind in earning their farm bill funds. He said that as of April, they have earned 52% of the Farm Bill funds. He said that there are a few districts that we will contact to ensure they are accurately logging Farm Bill work hours. He said that it is imperative that all districts continue to report Farm Bill hours even after they have earned their allocated funds. He said districts that exceed their allocation share in any available funds at the end of the agreement. Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and there were none.

### Legislative Regular Session/State Funding

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *Legislative Regular Session/State Funding*. He asked Dr. Leonard if he had any comments. Dr. Leonard said that the special session is starting today and that it will last approximately two weeks. He said that the main issue to be addressed is balancing the budget. He said that we still do not have a state budget for the next fiscal year and the legislator needs to pass it before June 30, 2018. Dr. Leonard said that it is important that everyone come together and make the decision on next year's budget. Dr. Leonard said that he knows that there will be lobbying on behalf of higher education. He said that education maybe on the chopping block and that we want to minimize the effect as much as possible. Dr. Leonard said the current proposed cuts would be devastating to the AgCenter. Chairman Skains asked if there were any further comments and there were none.

### District Supervisor Election-June 9, 2018

Chairman Skains asked Mr. Spicer to review the information regarding the District Supervisor's Election. Mr. Spicer said that that the nomination period ended April 30<sup>th</sup>. He said that Bogue Chitto SWCD is the only district that will hold an election on Saturday, June 9, 2018. He said they are working with the district to ensure the election will be conducted as per the election rules. He said that these are three nominees that sent in their petition late to the OSWC. He said D'Arbonne SWCD, Jefferson Davis SWCD, and Rapides SWCD are the districts that had the late petitions.

Mr. Spicer said these three districts are requesting that the Commission waive the late submission of their petitions. Mr. Spicer said the first letter is from D'Arbonne SWCD explaining that Mr. Kenneth Halley was late submitting his petition because he wasn't aware of the petition process until after the nominating period closed.

Mr. Spicer said the second letter is from Jefferson Davis SWCD explaining that Mr. Cody Hayes was late submitting his petition because he was not aware of the supervisor opening or nominating period until it was closed.

Mr. Spicer said the third and last letter is from Rapides SWCD explaining that Mr. Danny Coombs was late due to him receiving the petition late because of the district secretary's medical issues.

Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to waive the nominating period and accept nominating petitions from Mr. Kenneth Halley, D'Arbonne SWCD; Mr. Cody Hayes, Jefferson Davis SWCD; and Mr. Danny Coombs, Rapides SWCD.

**Motion:** Mr. David Daigle made a motion to waive the nominating period and accept nominating petitions from Mr. Kenneth Halley, D'Arbonne SWCD; Mr. Cody Hayes, Jefferson Davis SWCD; and Mr. Danny Coombs, Rapides SWCD. The motion was seconded by Mr. Randell Fletcher and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said six districts had new candidates to submit a petition; they are Mr. Chris Freeman, Catahoula SWCD; Mr. Kenneth Halley, D'Arbonne SWCD; Mr. William Bagley, DeSoto SWCD; Mr. Mickey Chandler, Dorcheat SWCD; Mr. Cody Hayes, Jefferson Davis SWCD; and Mr. Trevor Hair, Vermillion SWCD.

Chairman Skains said that three districts: Iberia, New River and West Carroll did not have any nomination petitions to submit, resulting in vacancies effective July 1, 2018 in their districts. He said their board members that are up for re-election chose not to run for re-election. He said although the districts advertised the election no other petitions were submitted to the districts by the April 30, 2018 deadline.

Chairman Skains said that the other forty-one districts have each returned one petition. He said that the State Commission has the authority to declare the forty-one nominees who had no opposition and met all qualifying requirements as duly elected supervisors.

Chairman Skains said that listed below are the petitions received from the forty-one districts that had no opposition for the 2018 Supervisors Elections. He said all petitions received including three petitions that were submitted late are in compliance with State Commission election requirements and the term of office for the candidates listed below starts on July 1, 2018 and expires on June 30, 2021.

DISTRICT	SUPERVISOR
Acadia	Gerard Frey
Allen	Gregory Monceaux
Avoyelles	Kyle Lemoine
Bodcau	Drew LaFler
Boeuf River	Elliot Colvin
Caddo	Mike Volentine
Calcasieu	David Daigle
Capital	Leeland Lee
Catahoula	<b>*Chris Freeman</b>
Crescent	Irvin Dares III
D'Arbonne	<b>*Kenneth Halley</b>
DeSoto	<b>*William Bagley</b>
Dorcheat	<b>*Mickey Chandler</b>
Dugdemonia	Robert Bruce Frazier
East Carroll	Stephen Lensing Jr.
Evangeline	Larry James Fontenot
Feliciana	Luke Fontenot
Grant	Thomas W. Smith
Gulf Coast	Gene Douglas Miller
Iberia	VACANT
Jefferson Davis	<b>*Cody Hayes</b>
Lafayette	Sidney Bowles, Jr.
Lafourche-Terrebonne	Jerome Henry Cantrelle
LaSalle	Steve Andrews
Lower Delta	Frankie A. Sotile
Madison	William L. Marsh
Morehouse	Robert Jeff Simmons
Natchitoches	Casey Messenger
New River	VACANT

Northeast	Greg Kincaid
Plaquemines	Nancy Dupont
Rapides	Danny Coombs
Red River	Jason Anderson
Sabine	Marjorie M. Brown
Saline	Richard Pullig
St. Landry	Lee Hampton
St. Martin	John Girard
St. Mary	Junius P. Hebert
Tangipahoa-St. Helena	Michael Smith
Tensas-Concordia	John Rife
Upper Delta	Morgan Chip Vosburg
Vermillion	<b>*Trevor Hair</b>
West Carroll	VACANT

**\*Denotes new nominee for supervisor**

Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members regarding the list of nominees as duly elected supervisors and there were none. He said if there were no comments, then he would call for a motion to duly elect the qualified supervisors.

**Motion:** Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to declare the above list of unopposed candidates duly elected district supervisors effective July 1, 2018 will expire on June 30, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Daigle and passed unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **NRCS State Conservationist Report**

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked Acting State Conservationist, Mr. Claude Ross to give the NRCS report. Mr. Ross stated that he had spoken to Mr. Norton recently and that Mr. Norton said the US House of Representative did not pass the Ag and Nutrition Act of 2018. He said that this vote would have reauthorized various farm, conservation, nutrition, and rural development programs that are set to expire in September. He said that conservation aspects of the bill are fine for everyone but the factors that are in question have to do with immigration, food security, the SNAP program.

Mr. Ross said that NRCS did get approved to hire 400 new employees nationwide with Louisiana being allocated 10 of those positions. He said that the positions would consist of District Conservationists (DCs) and support positions. He said that they expect to have more new position openings coming to Louisiana around August.

Mr. Ross said that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) submitted a proposal for pre-allocated funds. He said that these funds had already been approved but never used. He said that there was a total of 500 million dollars for Conservation efforts and Louisiana should receive about 21 million of that total. He said that Congress has 45 days to act and that NRCS is hoping to have these funds available in July or August.

Mr. Ross said NRCS has filled two key positions and that NRCS plans to do more hiring for planners and managers in other areas.

Mr. Claude concluded his report and Chairman Skains thanked him.

Mr. Spicer said that ALL supervisors and district employees are required to complete their Ethics training before December 31<sup>st</sup>. Chairman Skains said that the deadline for completing the Financial Disclosure forms is May 15<sup>th</sup> which has passed and that he hopes all supervisors completed these documents.

## Correspondence

Chairman Skains said they would review several articles and the first article is "Invasive Tree Frogs. He said Cuban tree frogs have snuck into Louisiana and they are not good neighbors." Mr. Spicer said that the article discusses the Cuban tree frogs taken root in Louisiana. He said that these frogs compete with the native tree frogs for shelter and food and they hide in plumbing and other tight fitting spaces in homes. He said that this is an example of another invasive species we must control.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Farm Bill goes down as Freedom Caucus votes against it". Mr. Spicer said that Mr. Ross covered this in his comments. He said that it is reported that the bill did not pass because the bill would have imposed stricter work requirements on SNAP recipients and that it was tied to immigration requirements.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "House Spending Bill repeals Obama WOTUS rule". Mr. Spicer said that this article discusses a draft fiscal 2019 spending bill for the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) that includes a provision to repeal the Obama-era waters of the United States rule, which would re-define what streams and wetlands fall under the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. He said that the bill would fund the Corps of Engineers 7.28 billion dollars which is a significant increase. He said it is likely the jurisdiction wetlands issue will be stripped from the COE bill.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "NACD's Take: The 2018 House Farm Bill". Mr. Spicer said that this is a summary of NACD opinion and it discusses NACD's priorities such as repealing the SAMS/DUNS registration requirements for conservation program participants and providing robust funding for Watershed programs. He said that it also enlightens you with information on a possible EQIP/CSP merger. He said some are concerned that with combining CSP & EQIP this could result in cutting funds.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Wait, there's profit to conservation practices" that discusses the lessons learned in the study of a farmer's adoption of no-till, cover crops and nutrient management. Mr. Spicer said the lessons include make sure economic viability comes first, knowing conservation requires a holistic view, and making sure land values reflect sustainability. He said that Oklahoma did a study showing the economic benefits of implementing soil and water conservation measures. He said he visited a farm in Missouri that implemented a 3 year study using enhanced grazing practices. He said the farmer found out that with the change in managing his pastures, he had extra time on his hands because he did not have to do all the extra work that he normally did to maintain his pastures. He said rotating his pastures and other practices reduced the time required to maintain his pastures and reduced his operating cost while improving the quality of his pasture and his cattle resulting in increased profits.

Chairman Skains said that the next article is "Do cover crops pay for themselves?" Mr. Spicer said that this article covers cover crops economic benefits. He said that it is hard to show the benefits numerically because it doesn't show in a crop budget. He said that economic benefits depend on cover crop species selected, crop rotation, duration the cover crop left on the land, and type of crop grown.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "Learning to live with too much or not enough water". He said that the article discusses finding ways to increase water availability in the West while keeping excess water out of homes and businesses in the East. He said that the 10 X Water Summit initiatives is developing a place where experts can explore, share, and communicate about critical issues across the world. He said that the biggest challenges that the initiative is facing are water energy, human migration, urban development, and global commerce.

Chairman Skains said the next article is "House cuts in Farm Bill leave conservation funds' future in question". Mr. Spicer said that the article discusses the House version of the bill which eliminates the Conservation Security Program and merges it with the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) program. He said that there are concerns that if CSP does end, they will not transfer all funds into EQIP?

Chairman Skains said the last article is "Farm Runoff in U.S. Waters Has Hit Crisis Levels. Are Farmers Ready to Change". Mr. Spicer said farmers across the country are searching for lasting strategies to keep farm nutrients out of waterways. He said that the article outlines an approach a father and son has taken to share the measures they have implemented to reduce nutrient runoff. He said the concern is that if farmers cannot reduce runoff impacts on water quality that in the near future, regulations will be used to ensure runoff is controlled.

#### Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Skains said they would now take up resignations, reappointments, and appointments of supervisors. He said that we have no resignations, eight reappointments, and one appointment.

Chairman Skains said that there are eight requests for the State Commission to reappoint supervisors and they are:

Acadia SWCD, Mr. Robert Dale Thibodeaux, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin June 11, 2018 and will expire June 10, 2021.

Bogue-Chitto SWCD, Mr. James Rogers, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin May 25, 2018 and will expire May 24, 2021.

Jefferson Davis SWCD, Mr. Joseph Tupper, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin June 11, 2018 and will expire June 10, 2021.

Lafayette SWCD, Mr. Eddie Blanchard, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin June 11, 2018 and will expire June 10, 2021.

Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD, Mr. Tim Allen, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin June 11, 2018 and will expire June 10, 2021.

St. Mary SWCD, Mr. Daniel Luke, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin June 11, 2018 and will expire June 10, 2021.

Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD, Mr. Larry McDaniel, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin May 25, 2018 and will expire May 24, 2021.

Upper Delta SWCD, Mr. Robert Morris, reappointed to fill his vacant appointed position. Term will begin May 13, 2018 and will expire May 12, 2021.

Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members and there were one, so he called for a motion to approve these supervisor reappointments.

**Motion:** Mr. Compton made a motion to approve the supervisor reappointments: Mr. Robert Dale Thibodeaux, Acadia SWCD, appointed position; Mr. James Rogers, Bogue-Chitto SWCD, appointed position; Mr. Joseph Tupper, Jefferson Davis SWCD, appointed position; Mr. Eddie Blanchard, Lafayette SWCD, appointed position; Mr. Tim Allen, Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD, appointed position; Mr. Daniel Luke, St. Mary SWCD, appointed position; Mr. Larry McDaniel, Tangipahoa-St. Helena SWCD, appointed position; and Mr. Robert Morris, Upper Delta SWCD, appointed position. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fletcher and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said that we had one new appointment and it is:

Gulf Coast SWCD, Mr. Bradley Pousson, appointed to fill the vacant appointed position formerly held by the late Mr. William Hardeman Jr. Term will begin June 11, 2018 and will expire June 10, 2021.

Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or SSWCC members and there were none, so he called for a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Bradley Pousson, Gulf Coast SWCD, appointed position.

**Motion:** Mr. Fletcher made a motion to approve the supervisor appointment of Mr. Bradley Pousson, Gulf Coast SWCD, appointed position. The motion was seconded by Dr. Girouard and passed unanimously.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Skains said that it has been brought to his attention that we needed to discuss supervisor board meeting attendance. He said that the Commission has been contacted by a SWCD in regarding a supervisor not fulfilling attendance requirements. He said that he would like to request that the Commission send a letter to this SWCD to ask that they make sure that all supervisors are fulfilling attendance requirements. Chairman Skains asked for any comments from the public or Commission members about sending a letter to the SWCD regarding supervisor attendance requirements. He said that if there were no comments, then he would call for a motion to have the Commission send a letter to the SWCD about supervisor attendance.

**Motion:** Dr. Ernest Girouard made a motion to send a letter to the SWCD in regards to supervisor attendance. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains asked Dr. Rogers Leonard to give a report from the LSU AgCenter. Dr. Leonard said that he had gotten a new assignment which is being in charge of most of the AgCenter animal programs.

Dr. Leonard commented on some upcoming events:

- 2018 LSU AgCenter Crop Production and Pest Management Field Day Expo- June 19, 2018 in Winnsboro, LA.
- H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station Field Day- June 27, 2018 in Rayne, LA.

Dr. Leonard concluded his report and Chairman Skains thanked him.

Chairman Skains asked Mr. Daigle to discuss his bus tour with Louisiana Grazing Lands Coalition Initiative (GLCI). Mr. Daigle said that they visited several different areas in Louisiana and a ranch in East Texas. He said that they had a great time and that he is shocked at some of the things he learns every time he visits a different part of Louisiana. He said that Louisiana does show way better conservation results by using animal power and limited use of fertilizer.

Chairman Skains said that he wanted to thank all the districts that contributed to the Southern Regional Woodland Clinic. He said that they had great participation and that the donations were greatly appreciated.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, June 26, 2018 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. Compton made a motion to adjourn at 2:13 P.M. The motion was seconded by Dr. Girouard and passed unanimously.



/s/ Reggie Skains

Reggie Skains, Chairman

State Soil and Water Conservation Commission