

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

October 23, 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. 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. Randell Fletcher-Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Ed Yerger
Mr. John Compton

Members absent:

Dr. Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter

Southern University Agricultural Center
Representative

A quorum was present.

Others Present:

Dr. Ron Levy, LSU AgCenter
Mr. Kevin Norton, NRCS State Conservationist
USDA-NRCS

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 any comments from the public or Commission members about the September 27, 2018 State Commission minutes. Mr. Spicer said that the members discussed the incorrect State Commission Election information in September. He said the minutes reflect the correct State Commission Election and request that it be reviewed and approved.

Motion: Mr. David Daigle made a motion to approve September 27, 2018 State Commission Meeting Minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. John 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 as of September 30, 2018, districts had earned approximately 90% of their farm bill allocation. He said that NRCS had added an additional \$400,000 to the Farm Bill agreement and it has been placed in the system for districts' access.

State Commission Convention Election- Area III and Area IV

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is *State Commission Convention Election- Areas III and IV* and asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments. Mr. Spicer said the election will be held in conjunction with the SSWCC meeting on Tuesday, December 4, 2018 at 11:00 AM the Dean Lee Research and Extension Center, 8105 Tom Bowman Drive, Alexandria, LA 71302 in the Rapides Parish Extension Service Office. He said a meal will be served after the Election Convention.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Skains said they would now take up New Business and asked NRCS State Conservationist, Mr. Kevin Norton to give the NRCS report. Mr. Norton said that in October's issue of the *Louisiana Conservation Update* is an article about a Franklin Parish Farmer named Gregg Kincaid. He said that Mr. Kincaid shows a deep appreciation and interest in his family and farmland that has been a part of his family for over 100 years. He said that it is really an honor to be able to service so many dedicated and diverse customers. He said that if there is an event that the districts would like to share with NRCS, they would be glad to include it in the *Conservation Update*.

Mr. Norton said NRCS has been in touch with the personnel in the field offices designated to complete the Workload Cycle Time Study. He said that Mr. Spicer sent out a message to the districts re-enforcing his own message encouraging district staff to complete the study. He said that the participation in the study is voluntary but if these offices want to be staffed according their workload, the study would be the way to show the current workload and to tell the story of what is currently happening and to show what is needed. Mr. Norton said Mr. Randolph Joseph and Mr. Kendal Hicks have been in touch with the participating districts and have offered assistance if needed. He said that it was an honor that Undersecretary Bill Northey recognized the partnership that NRCS has with conservation districts. He said the Undersecretary wanted to capture that in the districts participating in the workload study. He said with district participation it shows the full strength of the office not just the NRCS component. He said the importance of this study cannot be understated. He said that there is an office that currently cannot fill their vacant District Conservationist (DC) position because the previous Workload Cycle Time Study didn't show a need for the position in the office. Mr. Norton said it was the first time that the Workload Cycle Time Study had been conducted and the DC who previously worked there didn't work regularly in the office and didn't watch what was going on with employees. He said he believes the glitches have been worked out and the current workload study will show the actual workload in participating offices. He said this study is a developing model but isn't that far off base with its concluding reports. He said the study runs through the first week of November and hopefully the data will help to get them back on track with filling vacancies in the district offices.

Mr. Norton said that the Environmental Quality Incentives Program through the Omnibus Bill did get extended through 2019. He said that originally they were only going to do the initiative type work and wait to conduct general implementation work after the Farm Bill passed, but now they plan to move forward with program implementation. He said they have already announced signups and the evaluation period. He said that with this process EQIP will be handled and may even receive more funds when the Farm Bill passes.

Mr. Norton said that concluded his report and Chairman Skains thanked him.

Correspondence

Chairman Skains said the first correspondences for review are engagement letters from D'Arbonne SWCD and St. Landry SWCD. Mr. Spicer said both districts are requesting approval to enter into agreements with J Aaron Cooper, CPA, LLC to conduct their districts FYE June 30, 2018 audit at a cost of \$575 each. Chairman Skains

asked for any comments from the public or Commission members about the engagement letters and there were none. Chairman Skains called for a motion to approve the engagement letters.

Motion: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve D'Arbonne SWCD and St. Landry SWCD to enter into agreement with J Aaron Cooper, CPA, LLC to conduct their districts FYE June 30, 2018 audit at a cost of \$575 each. The motion was seconded Dr. Ernest Girouard and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the next correspondence for review is a travel request from Crescent SWCD. He said that Rebecca Livaudais, Blaise Pezold, Nina Ockman, Irvin Dares III, and Henry G. Schlorff request to travel out of state to attend the 2019 National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX on February 1-6, 2019. He said if there were no comments, he would call for a motion to approve the out of state travel request.

Motion: Mr. Ed Yerger made a motion to approve Crescent SWCD's request for Rebecca Livaudais, Blaise Pezold, Nina Ockman, Irvin Dares III, and Henry G. Schlorff to travel out of state to attend the NACD Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX on February 1-6, 2019. The motion was seconded by David Daigle and passed unanimously.

Chairman Skains said the first news article is *Boil Weevil Detection in Mississippi*. Mr. Spicer said the article states that two Mexican boll weevils were recently found in Mississippi. He said that as a precaution, LDAF has placed boll weevil traps along I-49 and I-20 corridors in North Louisiana. He said that the last boll weevil captured in Louisiana was in May of 2010. He said that boll weevils were declared eradicated in Louisiana in 2012.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *NACD Statement on USDA Forest Service Appointment*. He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments on this article. Mr. Spicer said the article is about the appointment of a new Chief of Forest Service, Vicki Christiansen. He said Ms. Christiansen had been a wild land firefighter and fire manager in Arizona for 36 years. He said President of NACD, Mr. Brent Van Dyke speaks very highly of her and that NACD looks forward to expanding their working relationship with the Forest Service and to continuing to make improvements in managing our nation's public and private forest lands.

Chairman Skains said the next article is the *Army Central Review of State Legislative & Regulatory Actions*. He said Louisiana' section discusses changes to existing rules that include adding periodic operation and maintenance requirements for Underground Storage Tank (UST) systems, and also addressing UST systems that were previously postponed from certain regulations, adding newly released prevention and detection technologies, updating code of practice and making editorial corrections and amendments.

Mr. Spicer also said the Department of Agriculture and Forestry adopted rules regarding quarantine for emerald ash borer. Quarantined areas include Bienville, Bossier, Claiborne, Jackson, Lincoln, Morehouse, Ouachita, Union and Webster.

Chairman Skains said the next article is *Farm Conservation Practices are Profitable, But Will Lenders and Insurers Step Up?* He asked Mr. Spicer if he had any comments on this article. Mr. Spicer said there are a lot of details in the article that should be of interest to all producers, but that if you keep the proper records then you would find that cover crops are profitable to the producers in the end. He said the article states that farmers are noticing savings in fertilizer, labor, equipment, and fuel costs while practicing non-till and using cover crop.

Chairman Skains said the next article is an email from Mr. Keith Owens. He said that the email is encouraging people to submit items for the NACD Live Auction that will be held during the 2019 NACD Annual Meeting. Dr. Girouard said that he wanted to mention that NACD sent out a survey to districts and the survey is well worth the time to fill it out. He said there was also an email from NACD regarding Sunset Review Policy and said districts boards should review and discuss the NACD sunset policies because some of them may not need to be deleted.

Chairman Skains said the next article announces the NACD Annual Meeting. He said the meeting will be held on February 2-6, 2018 in San Antonio, TX at the San Antonio Marriot River Center. Mr. Spicer said the OSWC sent a memo to the districts on behalf of Mr. David Daigle regarding the scholarship offered to first-time NACD annual meeting participants. He said that the scholarship covers registration fees as well as a ticket to the Appreciation Banquet. He said that the recommendation letters are due on November 30, 2018 and are to be sent to Ms. Rose Sharbeno, Calcasieu SWCD.

Chairman Skains said the last article is an email from Mr. Brent Van Dyke, NACD President. Mr. Spicer said the email is announcing the Next Generation Leadership Campaign. He said the campaign is in support of the next generation of conservation leaders. He said through this program NACD plans to identify and develop conservation leaders at the local, state, and national levels.

2019 LACD Annual Meeting

Chairman Skains said the next item on the agenda is the 2019 LACD Annual Meeting. He asked Mr. Spicer and Mr. Daigle if they have any comments on this. Mr. Spicer said that if anyone wishes to share any ideas or topics for inclusion in the meeting they should do so soon. He said that OSWC plans to send out the Registration packet for LACD within the next several weeks. Mr. Daigle said they are developing an excellent program and are looking for an increase in the number of district supervisors attending the meeting.

Supervisor Resignations/ Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Skains said that there are no resignations, appointments, and reappointments this month.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Skains asked Dr. Ron Levy if he had any comments. Dr. Levy said that Dr. Leonard asked him to review some upcoming events:

Growing Fruit in the Home Garden: October 23, 2018 at the Hammond Research Station from 6PM-8PM

Acadiana Cattle Producers Fall Field Day: October 24, 2018 at the Cecil McCory Exhibit Building in Abbeville, LA from 5:30PM-8PM

Trash to Treasure-Backyard Composting: October 30, 2018 at the Livingston Parish Library from 6PM-8PM

2018 Fall Horticulture Forum: November 7, 2018 at the Scott Center in Winnsboro, LA from 9AM-12PM

American Farm Bureau Federation Convention: January 11-16, 2019 in New Orleans LA

Conservation Tillage: January 30- February 1, 2019 in Baton Rouge, LA at the Crowne Plaza Executive Center

Dr. Levy said there has also been some progress made on the Water Trading Credits. He said the process will be similar to carbon credits. He said for example if you were reaching your maximum allowable discharge, you could purchase credits from other producers. He said that they are also in the process of looking at a couple of different grants. He said one being with DEQ dealing with beef cattle throughout the state. Dr. Levy also said that they are also working with Texas A&M on getting the value of the water credits. He said that they are working on a getting a better model together for Louisiana. He said Ms. Phyllis Taylor of the TOPS program is helping to fund some research with sugarcane conservation practices and crop conservation measures at LSU. He said LSU would develop models and use the models to evaluate and possibly improve the conservation practices on the farms.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Skains said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 4, 2018 at 1:15 P.M. at the Dean Lee Research Station, 8105 Tom Bowman Dr., Alexandria, LA 71302. He invites the Commission members to attend Area III and IV Convention Election at the same facility at 11:00AM and lunch at 12:00 NOON.


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. Ed Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ 

Reggie Skains, Chairman
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission