



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District
2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A
Columbia, SC 29204
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September 13, 2021 • 6pm
 Lake House, Sandhill Research and Education Center
 900 Clemson Rd., Columbia, SC 29229

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair
 Jeff Laney, Vice Chair
 Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer
 Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners Present

Mary Frances Hendrix
 Tim McSwain
 Charles Weber

Others Present

Jesica Mackey, Richland County Councilwoman, District 9
 Leonardo Brown, Richland County Administrator
 Aric Jensen, Richland County Assistant Administrator
 Paul Harris, Richland County Public Information Office
 Quinton Epps, Richland County Conservation Division Manager
 Chanda Cooper, Richland County Conservation Education Analyst
 Mary Hannah Lindsay, Richland Soil and Water Conservation District Community Outreach Coordinator
 Tyler Brown, SC Department of Natural Resources Program Coordinator
 Sierra Hylton, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control Adopt-A-Stream Coordinator
 Robert Reese, Pinewood Lake Park Garden Manager
 Laura Crisan
 Eli Crisan, Dreher High School
 Ramona Saracila
 Ian Saracila, Spring Valley High School
 Vi Hendley, City of Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission
 George Walker
 Catherine Walker

Welcome and Call to Order

Mullis called the meeting to order at 6pm and facilitated round robin introductions. Rhodes gave the invocation.

Approval of Agenda

Rhodes made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Laney and was unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes

Rhodes made a motion to approve the July 12, 2021 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Laney and was unanimously approved.

Special Presentation

Hylton provided an overview of the SC Adopt-A-Stream (SC AAS) program which enlists volunteers to take water samples statewide and maintains a database of the findings. SC AAS seeks to educate residents about their connection with rivers and water quality and to keep people informed about the health of waterways, leading to better decision making. Anyone can become a certified SC AAS water quality monitor by attending a free workshop. Volunteer training is available statewide by visiting www.scadoptastream.org.

Awards Presentation

Brown presented an Outstanding Youth Award to Dreher High School senior Eli Crisan, and Mackey presented an Outstanding Youth Award to Spring Valley High School junior Ian Saracila, on behalf of Richland County and the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD).

Reports

- **Financial:** Rhodes reported a starting balance of \$46,744.05 (8/1/21), deposits of \$1,522, and expenses of \$3,766.74, for an ending balance of \$44,499.31 (8/31/21) in the RSWCD checking account. The RSWCD's credit card starting balance was \$421.39 (8/5/21) and had payments of \$421.39 and purchases totaling \$1,238.29 for an ending balance of \$1,238.29 (9/5/21). The Easement Stewardship Account had a starting balance of \$56,438.72 (7/1/21) and an ending balance of \$56,563 (7/31/21). The FY21 audit was completed by Commissioners Burts, Rhodes, and Mullis and by Associate Commissioner Weber. Recommendations were noted on the audit worksheet.
- **Affiliate Membership:** Laney reported RSWCD has 22 current Friends and has had one Friend renew their membership at the \$500 level since the last meeting. RSWCD is now able to accept online contributions through a PayPal account. He reminded attendees that, as a political subdivision of the state, RSWCD is not a 501c3 non-profit organization, but contributions to RSWCD are tax-deductible under state and federal law.
- **Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden:** Reese has been managing the Garden since April. This month he is deadheading, pruning, and preparing for fall planting. A garden volunteer day will be held Saturday, September 18, at 8am; if you plan to attend, RSVP to rreese4@bellsouth.net. Cooper, Reese, and Harris filmed a video about community involvement in the pollinator garden last week; the video will be published soon. Lindsay has created a series of plant ID cards featuring the spring and summer-blooming plants in the pollinator garden which are available online at www.richlandcountysc.gov/buzzandblooms.
- **NRCS:** A report from District Conservationist Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez is attached (Appendix A).

- **SCDNR:** Brown explained SCDNR is the state partner that assists the 46 conservation districts statewide. He touted Richland as a model district. SCDNR hosted the Envirothon competition for high school students in July; SC's team from Spartanburg High School placed 3rd overall out of 41 competing teams from the US, Canada, and China. SC's team also had the top score in the soils station. Envirothon training trunks will be provided to SWCDs with active teams later this year. SCDNR is now accepting conservation districts' applications for aid through the annual state appropriations process. SCDNR will assist with the SC Association of Conservation Districts business meeting tomorrow.
- **Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC):**
 - McSwain explained the RCCC is developing an annual plan to share with Council and Administration. The plan does not include specific parcel information about easements or land purchases so as to avoid developing interest in the properties and increasing purchase prices.
 - RCCC is also interested in tree protection at the site of a QuikTrip gas station which is being developed off Atlas Rd/Shop Rd/I-77.
 - The hiring of vacant positions in the Conservation Division is a topic of concern.
 - RCCC is trying to raise Council awareness of the Lower Richland Tourism Plan (LRTP) and Forest Stewardship Plan. Reese said the LRTP is a hot issue in the community and has been discussed during at least five community meetings, with residents fully supporting having the LRTP brought to Council for approval and implementation. Epps reported Councilwoman Newton has requested a Council work session to learn more about the LRTP. Reese recommended the work session be made accessible to the public, since the LRTP is such an important issue to the community.
- **Education:**
 - **Seed Sanctuary:** Lindsay has distributed 1600 seed packets since the last RSWCD meeting in July and has had two community volunteers assist with seed packing. She is exploring a partnership with the Eastover Branch of the Richland County Public Library to establish a physical location for the Seed Sanctuary. Volunteer events are planned with a local service sorority and a UofSC service learning class.
 - **Class Presentations:** RSWCD has resumed class presentations and shared a SuperSoil! lesson with 60 students at Bookman Road Elementary School last Friday. Upcoming programs are scheduled at the Center for Inquiry and HE Corley Elementary School.
 - **Poster Contest:** The FY22 poster contest theme is Healthy Soil: Healthy Life. Entries are due April 15, 2022. Richland County Public Information Office has assisted with publicity.
 - **Conservation Education Mini-Grants:** FY22 Mini-Grant application deadlines are October 1 and February 4. These grants provide awards up to \$1,000 for school projects.
 - **Environmental Educator Professional Development Events:** RSWCD partnered with the Environmental Education Association of SC (EEASC) to host a July Midlands Meetup and Upcycled Art Bazaar for 20 participants; an August Midlands Meetup and Green Steps School Awards for 26 participants; and a Locklair Food Forest Field Trip for 16 participants. RSWCD mentors approximately 12 Richland County schools on conservation projects through the Green Steps School program. Additionally, RSWCD

helped host the EEASC quarterly board meeting and several committee meetings; is assisting with planning the 2022 EEASC annual conference; oversaw EEASC's FY22 budget process; coordinated the development and adoption of a policy and procedure manual; is assisting with the development of an executive director staff position; and is providing support for the Regional Landscape Analysis being conducted by the Southeast Environmental Education Alliance and the national accreditation process for the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification Program. RSWCD also supports SC Project Learning Tree, which provides environmental education curriculum for preK-12 educators and students. A new K-8 curriculum guide is available; Cooper and Lindsay have both been trained as educators in the new guide, and Cooper has been trained as a facilitator.

- **SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition**: RSWCD supports the SCFGLC, which recently hired a pasture planner who is developing conservation plans for 34 producers statewide. SCFGLC is also supporting winter annual forage plot demonstrations and field days in Sumter, Aiken, Darlington, Chester, and Saluda Counties. And, SCFGLC is funding a grazing cover crops research project in Eastover, SC with Soil Health Champion Jason Carter. RSWCD will assist with project outreach for these initiatives.
- **Midlands Local Food Collaborative**: RSWCD coordinated the quarterly MLFC meeting for 14 participants and serves as MLFC's fiscal agent. MLFC provided \$250/county sponsorships for 2022 Ag & Art Tours in midlands counties.
- **Communications**: Lindsay's monthly e-newsletter reaches 3,113 subscribers. RSWCD has 1003 Facebook followers, 454 Twitter followers, and 531 Instagram followers.
- **Advocacy**: During the last RSWCD meeting, commissioners agreed to connect with Council members on a more regular basis to keep them informed about our work and to report back to this group about their interactions. Rhodes spoke about RSWCD with Councilman Derrek Pugh, and Pugh volunteered to serve as RSWCD's liaison to Council. Hendrix and Laney are trying to connect with Councilwoman Newton. Associate Commissioner James Kilgo emailed a report about his conversation with Councilwoman Terracio; Terracio recommended RSWCD provide in-person education to Council when a significant project or budget request arises. Terracio also suggested RSWCD representatives attend Council meetings and network with Council members before the meetings begin.

New Business

- **Officer Elections**: Currently, Mullis is Chair, Laney is Vice Chair, and Rhodes is Secretary/Treasurer. Burts moved to keep officers as they are for the coming year. The motion was seconded by Laney and was unanimously approved.
- **City Roots Equipment Donation**: Eric McClam offered to donate a no-till drill and another piece of equipment to RSWCD several months ago. Details about the equipment were not available. Following discussion, commissioners agreed to table the topic until more information about the equipment is available.
- **Dominion Energy Grant Application**: RSWCD has an opportunity to apply for \$5,000 to support the Seed Sanctuary and related community outreach. Following discussion, Rhodes moved for

RSWCD to apply for the funding. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.

- **SCACD Contribution Agreement Application**: SCACD contribution agreement funds come from NRCS to SCACD, and SCACD administers the funds to conservation districts across the state to carry out farm bill program work. Rhodes moved for RSWCD to request \$12,000 through a SCACD contribution agreement in FY22. The motion was seconded by Laney and was unanimously approved.
- **Local Work Group Meeting Plan**: RSWCD is responsible for running a Local Work Group meeting to provide input from local producers to NRCS on local needs and conservation priorities. Richland usually holds a joint meeting with Calhoun County since we share a District Conservationist. Mullis opened the floor for suggestions as to when, where, and how the 2021 Local Work Group meeting should be held.

Public Input:

- Mullis thanked the Walkers for their support for conservation.
- Hendley requested information on the protection for grand trees in Richland County and asked whether stormwater credits are available for tree protection. Epps explained a grand tree protection ordinance does exist but stormwater credits are not available. He encouraged Hendley to submit comments on the Land Development Code rewrite. Hendley encouraged everyone to explore the National Tree Benefit Calculator.
- Reese requested information about why conservation overlays have been included in the Land Development Code and expressed concerns about how development will affect water management and ecological protection in Lower Richland.

Next Meeting: RSWCD's next meeting will be held on Monday, October 11, 2021 at 6pm. Location TBA.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst

Appendix A: NRCS Report**NRCS Monthly Report
August 2021****Programs****EQIP**

- On Active Contracts
 - Working on practice checkouts, contract reviews and modifications.
 - Regular management of active contracts
 - Working on contract modifications and cancellations
- EQIP FY21
 - Obligated contracts 47 in both counties
 - Calhoun 35
 - Richland 12
 - Working on second and third round of pre-approved applications additional 28 Assessments, raking, and contracting documents
 - Completing site visits and meeting with producers to complete the planning portion.
- EQIP FY22
 - Completed 1 site visit for new customers and received applications

CSP

- Active CSP
 - Helping producers with practice implementation

General

- Complete Trainings and attended Virtual meetings and teleconferences
- Working on practice design and implementation
- Working on Training for Planner Certification
- Help with CRP Planning