



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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November 8, 2021 • 6pm

Jim Hamilton – LB Owens Airport • 1400 Jim Hamilton Blvd. • Columbia, SC 29205

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners Present

Tim McSwain, Richland County Conservation Commission

Charles Weber, Richland County Conservation Commission

James Kilgo, SC Rural Water Association

Jamie Browder, Heathwood Hall

Others Present

Leonardo Brown, Richland County Administrator

Aric Jensen, Richland County Assistant Administrator

Quinton Epps, Richland County Conservation Division Manager

Chanda Cooper, Richland County Conservation Education Analyst

Sierra Hylton, DHEC Adopt-A-Stream Coordinator

Chenille Williams, Richland County Stormwater Education Coordinator

Claudia Santiago, Congaree National Park Biological Sciences Technician

Vi Hendley, Congaree Riverkeeper Representative

John Grego, Richland County Conservation Commission Chair

Robert Reese, Pinewood Lake Park Volunteer Garden Manager

Angela Vandelay, Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions Engineer

Becca Smith, Sustainable Midlands Executive Director

Welcome and Call to Order

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

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Cooper asked that “grant proposals” be added to the agenda. Rhodes moved to approve the agenda as amended. Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Rhodes moved to approve the minutes of the September 13 and October 11, 2021 meetings. Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

SC Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) Community Engagement: Hylton spoke about community engagement through SC AAS. SC AAS is a statewide volunteer water quality monitoring program where volunteers attend a free workshop, get certified as monitors, choose a stream to monitor, and collect and report monthly or quarterly data. Hylton provided an overview of watersheds, the water cycle, and factors affecting water quality. Locally, drinking water comes from Lake Murray and the Broad River. Our drinking water quality is affected by local landscape uses as well as upstream impacts. The #1 threat to water quality is non-point source pollution, including bacteria, sediment, and thermal pollution.

Richland County's land uses impact four watersheds—the Broad, Saluda, Congaree, and the downstream Santee watershed. The County's eastern and southern borders are the Wateree and Congaree Rivers, respectively. Columbia is unique in having three major rivers in the heart of a major city, and this creates opportunities for the local economy, recreation, tourism, and education.

All data collected by AAS volunteers is available in an online public database. DHEC also offers a Watershed Atlas and Fish Consumption Advisory tool. Hylton asked the group to identify additional water quality tools and resources. Williams said Richland County Stormwater is launching a monitoring dashboard which will display all Richland County monitoring data, a story map highlighting watershed awareness projects, and an outreach map. Reese reported a new water quality monitoring initiative is launching at Congaree National Park (CNP); Santiago provided details: the project will be a partnership between South East Rural Community Outreach and CNP. Scientists are evaluating the AAS protocol for use in streams in and around CNP and will recommend modifications to the protocol if needed (current AAS protocols are designed for wadable streams, and many CNP streams are deeper). The monitoring initiative will also be culturally framed around the local community. Mullis reported SC Department of Natural Resources is coordinating a watershed basin planning process for all river basins statewide; the Broad River Basin Planning Meeting is tonight.

Laney requested a cost comparison of preventing environmental problems through best management practices vs. correcting problems after they occur. Vandelay said the Twenty-five Mile Creek 319 grants reduced water quality standard exceedances from 60% to 23%. A new technology from a company in England allows for real-time monitoring of bacteria levels. (It currently takes 24 hours to get bacteria results.) Hylton asked the group to brainstorm ways to engage more community volunteers and adopt additional streams in Richland County. Ideas discussed included:

- Ask each high school in Richland County to monitor one site; include high schools in both Richland 1 and Richland 2, as well as private schools such as Heathwood Hall and Hammond. Contact representatives from the science department at these schools.
- Involve Green Steps Schools (connect with Jane Hiller)
- Engage groups at City and County parks
- Engage churches
- Engage Envirothon teams
- Sell the program at the principal and school district level; have club sponsors receive some stipend or perk for taking on the AAS club
- Partner with Gills Creek Watershed Association
- Target schools that are close to streams
- Create mentoring opportunities between high school and middle school students; college students and high school students; etc.
- Offer scholarships or internships to “pay” students for monitoring
- Connect AAS to high school teachers who are members of EEASC

- Engage homeschool groups, girl scouts, boy scouts
- Challenge: engaging a teacher, staff member, or other club sponsor to do extra/after-school work to lead the program
- Challenge: kit access; two student groups are sharing RSWCD's kit and arranging the pickup/dropoff is a logistical hurdle
- A teacher curriculum is coming soon

Contact Sierra at hyltonsf@dhec.sc.gov or 803-898-4168 to discuss more ideas.

Financial Report:

Checking Account (10/31/21 Statement)

Starting Balance: \$38,751.44 (10/1/21)

Deposits and Credits: \$3,770.00

Expenses and Debits: \$3,392.58

Ending Balance: \$39,128.86 (10/31/21)

Credit Card (11/5/21 Statement)

Starting Balance: \$145.67 (10/5/21)

Payments: \$291.34

Purchases: \$304.55

Ending Balance: \$158.88 (11/5/21) <<This balance has since been paid in full

Easement Stewardship Account

Starting Balance: \$56,839.54 (9/1/21)

Ending Balance: \$56,248.32 (9/30/21)

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account

Starting Balance: \$17,718.97 (10/1/21)

Ending Balance: \$15,583.65 (10/31/21)

RSWCD's finance committee met and reformatted the approved FY22 budget to include information about the Easement Stewardship and SC Association of Conservation District (SCACD) Contribution Agreement Accounts. RSWCD's application for state appropriations was also revised to include information about these accounts. The committee reviewed and approved recordkeeping changes resulting from FY21 audit recommendations, including a new format for RSWCD employee timesheets, language for an Easement Stewardship Fund History, and a revised audit worksheet.

Affiliate Membership: Laney reported 21 current Friends of RSWCD, with two renewals and one new Friend since the last meeting. New and renewing members include Carolina Money Minders, Eargle Acres, and George and Catherine Walker.

Pinewood Lake Pollinator Garden: Reese thanked Jensen for volunteering at the recent volunteer workday. A variety of greens are available; Reese will contact Cooper to advertise vegetable harvest and giveaway. Mary Hannah Lindsay has published a set of graphics showing fall-blooming plants.

NRCS: No report. Mullis said SCACD is standardizing Local Work Group meeting protocols and will host a training at the upcoming Conservation Partnership Conference.

SCDNR: No report.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber and McSwain reported RCCC is negotiating a property purchase and potential mitigation credits. The new Land Program Planner, Walker McDonald, started work today. The new Conservation Program Analyst will start on November 22.

Education: Cooper reported on activities since the October 11 meeting. Lindsay is working with the Eastover Branch of the Richland County Public Library to establish a physical location for the Seed Sanctuary. A Seed Sanctuary volunteer event is planned with U101 students at UofSC. Staff have not yet heard the results of their Dominion Energy funding application. Staff led classroom conservation programs for 40 students at HE Corley Elementary and 10 students at Cutler Jewish Day School. The RSWCD's rainfall simulator was demonstrated for 350 students in UofSC Environmental Science 101 Labs and is now on loan to 4th grade students at Heathwood Hall. RSWCD's AAS kit is being used at Spring Valley and Dreher High Schools. The conservation poster contest is ongoing; entries are due April 15. The October Midlands Meetup for environmental educators had 14 participants. During tomorrow's Meetup, Cooper will "pass the torch" of presidency of the Environmental Education Association of SC (EEASC) to Williams. RSWCD continues to support EEASC in a variety of ways, including planning the 2022 conference in Aiken, SC and assisting with the regional Landscape Analysis. RSWCD also supports SC Project Learning Tree, which provides environmental curriculum workshops for educators across the state; and the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition, which recently hosted a Small Ruminant Workshop and supports pasture planning, continuing education scholarships for livestock owners, rainfall simulator demonstrations, a grazing cover crops project in Eastover, SC, and seven winter annual forage plot demonstrations across the state. RSWCD's e-newsletter reaches 3,102 subscribers; Facebook reaches 1,011 followers; Twitter reaches 454 followers; and Instagram reaches 545 followers. The Holiday Drop-In will be held Tuesday, December 14, 4:30-6:00 in the 3rd floor atrium of the Administration Building.

Advocacy: In September, Rhodes and Kilgo spoke with council members Pugh and Terracio, respectively. Rhodes also spoke with Pugh in October. Laney and Mary Frances Hendrix contacted council member Newton in October but have not yet met. Jensen, Epps, Grego, and Mullis toured Lower Richland earlier this fall.

City Roots Equipment Donation: Commissioners tabled this item.

Budget Amendment for SCACD Conference: Laney moved to increase the SCACD Conference travel budget from \$2,000 to \$3,000 to cover costs for two commissioners, one associate commissioner, and one staff member to attend. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.

2021 Fundraiser Planning: During the FY22 budget process, RSWCD committed to raise \$4,000 through the Friends of RSWCD program. Laney moved to hold the Fundraiser/Friends Drive in December. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.

SCACD Policy/Position Statements: The revised statements have not yet been released by SCACD.

Grant Proposals: Three grant opportunities may be available to RSWCD before the next meeting: Public Services Grant through Richland County Community Development, due November 14; Friends of NACD Grant, due November 30; and NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant, due January 30. Following discussion, Burts moved authorize staff to apply for all three grants, subject to staff availability and

staff's assessment of the feasibility of implementing grants if awarded. The motion was seconded by Laney and was unanimously approved.

Next Meeting: January 10, 2022 at 6pm; location TBA. Mullis will be out of town; Laney will chair the meeting in his stead.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst