



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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March 14, 2022 • 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

Mary Frances Hendrix

Logan Richardson

Tim McSwain

Charles Weber

Others Present

Aric Jensen

Chanda Cooper

Robert Reese

Welcome and Call to Order

Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:01pm and facilitated round robin introductions. Laney gave the invocation.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Laney moved to approve the agenda as presented; Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Burts moved to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2022 meeting as presented; Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Associate Commissioner Applicant Introduction: Mullis introduced Richardson, who has applied to become an RSWCD Associate Commissioner. Richardson has a bachelor's degree in Biology/ Environmental Studies and a master's degree in Agricultural and Environmental Systems. She is passionate about educating others about conservation and ecological interactions. She has served as an intern, contracted soil sampler, and youth education volunteer with the Newberry SWCD and currently works with Brown and Caldwell. RSWCD commissioners and associate commissioners introduced themselves and provided an overview of the RSWCD and the Richland County Conservation Commission for Richardson's benefit. Laney moved to appoint Richardson as an RSWCD Associate Commissioner. The motion was seconded by Rhodes and was unanimously approved.

Financial Report: Rhodes reported the following:

Operating Account (1/31/22 and 2/28/22 Statements)

- Starting Balance: \$37,816.19 (1/1/22)
- Deposits and Credits: \$20,450.00 (January) + 2,530.00 (February)
- Expenses and Debits: \$6,497.20 (November) + 4,249.54 (February)
- Ending Balance: \$50,049.45 (2/28/22)

Credit Card (2/5/22 and 3/5/22 Statements)

- Starting Balance: \$304.88 (1/5/22)
- Payments: \$304.88 (January) and \$1,647.48 (February)
- Purchases: \$1,647.48 (January) and \$2,194.05 (February)
- Ending Balance: \$ 2,194.05 (3/5/22) <paid in full 3/11/22

Easement Stewardship Account

- Starting Account Value: \$56,488.28 (11/30/21)
- Ending Account Value : \$55,551.53 (2/28/22)

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account

- Starting Balance: \$252.51 (12/31/21)
- Ending Balance: \$15,701.99 (2/28/21)

PayPal Account

- Current Balance: \$0.00 (3/11/22)

Friends of RSWCD Report: Laney reported since the last RSWCD board meeting on January 10, 10 new Friends of RSWCD have joined and five have renewed, for a total of \$2,030. In total, there are now 37 current Friends of RSWCD. There are \$4,000 outstanding in pledges from Charter Next Generation, Kirk Commercial Construction, and Jim Rhodes. Staff have added the “Passionflower” level of support for Friends who contribute over \$500.

RSWCD launched a “\$2,000 in two weeks” fundraising campaign in February to fund additional spring conservation education mini-grants. Thanks to the generous support of the Friends, RSWCD surpassed its goal in six hours and ultimately raised \$5,640 in donations and pledges during the fundraising period.

Mullis said the Chester SWCD contacted a new business moving into their county and received a large donation; he asked everyone to brainstorm how RSWCD can connect with new (and existing) businesses to develop more corporate support for RSWCD programs. The group discussed the Mark Anthony Brewing Company and an incoming Flower Bar as potential supporters. Laney will contact Nelson Lindsay; Jensen recommended connecting with the Chamber of Commerce and with Richland County’s Director of Economic Development, Jeff Ruble. Mullis will ask commercial real estate agents to notify him of new opportunities. Laney proposed contacting Budweiser of Columbia.

Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden: Reese requested assistance planning activities at Pinewood Lake Park to attract visitors there during the Ag & Art Tour June 11-12. He expressed appreciation for the support of Richland County staff members since he took over pollinator garden management one year ago. Irrigation will be turned on in the garden soon. Reese recently met with Eastover Community Garden Manager Mike Dantzler; they will work with local elementary and middle schools.

NRCS: No report.

DNR: Mullis reported on the Florida legislature's motion to dissolve Florida SWCDs. The original motion has been modified to allow SWCDs to continue, but to require that SWCD commissioners all be representatives of the agricultural community.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): McSwain and Weber reported:

- RCCC's conservation committee is proposing to rebrand as the natural resource committee.
- Recommendations for conservation grant awards will be presented to RCCC for approval at their next meeting. Following RCCC's approval, the recommended awards will be forwarded to Council for approval.
- RCCC provided input on the Land Development Code (LDC) rewrite. The new zoning maps based on the new LDC are now available and have prompted several questions from the community. One of the major concerns is whether the assessed value of land will change as a result of changes in zoning. Reese added the new LDC and zoning maps are an issue of concern in Lower Richland. Discussion ensued.

Education: Cooper reported:

- A physical location for the Seed Sanctuary has been established at Richland Library Eastover. A ribbon-cutting, storytime, and family fun event will be held Saturday, April 2, at 11am. Dr. Arlene Marturano of the garden-based learning network will present an educational program called "from seeds to salads." RSWCD will hold additional family education events in June, July, and August.
- Pop-Up Seed Sanctuary events have been held at the Lower Richland Vaccine Drive and Cottontown Art Crawl; additional events are scheduled at the Administration Building, Pine Grove Community Center, and Soda City Market.
- 40 volunteers are in the Seed Sanctuary database, and Hannah Lindsay is holding a seed packing event with a UofSC sorority tonight.
- RSWCD sponsored a Forest Health & Invasive Species Workshop at the Sandhill Research and Education Center on 3/10; approximately 35 people attended the event.
- RSWCD will partner with Carolina Farm Stewardship Association and other partners to hold a Farmer Resources Workshop on May 19 in Hopkins, SC.
- RSWCD is the fiscal and administrative agent for the Midlands Local Food Collaborative. Eight participants attended the recent quarterly meeting. The group is exploring a merger with Growing Local SC.
- RSWCD has helped the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition produce conservation plans for producers statewide; conduct winter annual forage plot demonstrations; launch a grazing cover crops research project in Eastover, SC, with farmer Jason Carter; sponsor the creation of an SC Forages Handbook; sponsor an Alfalfa in the South Field Day; and sponsor soil science education programs at Camp Discovery.
- Cooper presented a "Planting for Pollinators" session for approximately 55 attendees at the Blue Thumb Landscaper Conference. She also presented a virtual composting workshop for ~15 Richland County School District 1 educators and a Youth Education Training for ~25 attendees.
- RSWCD continues to assist and support the SC Project Learning Tree (SCPLT) Steering Committee; SCPLT's 2021 annual report was provided to meeting attendees.

- RSWCD also continues to assist and support the Environmental Education Association of SC; Cooper is co-chairing the 2022 annual conference June 8-11 in Aiken, SC.
- RSWCD provided Conservation Education Mini-Grants to Camp Cole (\$500); Brockman Elementary (\$1,000); Cardinal Newman School (\$1,000); and LW Conder Elementary (\$500). Weber assisted with compost bin and greenhouse repairs at Brockman Elementary School.
- RSWCD is a sponsor for the 2022 SC Envirothon and assisted with the Coaches Training in February. Cooper is the Oral Presentation Station Manager and is coordinating the judges for the event. RSWCD's Envirothon training trunk is on loan to Spring Hill High School.
- RSWCD's Adopt-A-Stream kit is being used by two citizen science volunteers.
- Cooper provided classroom education programs at the Cutler Jewish Day School (11 students/1 class) and Brockman Elementary (40 students/2 classes).
- 2022 poster contest entries are due April 15, 2022.
- RSWCD's monthly e-newsletter reached 3,303 subscribers. We have 1,038 Facebook followers, a Facebook post reach of 3,920, 457 Twitter followers, and 566 Instagram followers.

Advocacy: RCCC Chairman John Grego will present RCCC's annual report to Richland County Council during the administrator's report. Mullis asked Jensen to add RSWCD to the Council agenda for a regular (quarterly or bi-annual) report; Jensen will do so after July 1. Rhodes continues to provide updates to Councilman Pugh. Cooper will forward Reese a copy of the RSWCD annual report and e-newsletter so he can share news items with his council connections. Cooper has begun providing photos and announcements to Richland County PIO to share on social media and in the Richland Review e-newsletter. She is also notifying the Clerk of Council, who, in turn, can notify Council members of events in their districts.

SCACD Conservation Partnership Conference Review: Burts reported she learned about other SWCDs' Friends programs at the conference. Some districts work with city council members in addition to county council members. Mullis recommended commissioners have an "elevator pitch" about the work of the RSWCD prepared to share with others.

SCACD Policy/Position Statements: The item was deferred due to a lack of time.

FY22 Budget Review and Amendments: Rhodes moved to approve the following budget amendments. Burts seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

- add \$5,000 Seed Sanctuary Grant (Dominion Energy) to income
- add Community Development Block Grant (amount TBD) to income; RSWCD expects to receive some funding to provide conservation education programs to Title I schools in low income areas
- combine Branded Marketing Materials and Seed Sanctuary line items into a single line item, and increase the total budgeted amount from \$4,000 to \$5,000 (due to Dominion Energy grant)
- increase budgeted amount for Conservation Education Mini-Grants from \$4,700 to \$6,950
- increase budgeted amount for no-till drill repairs/equipment from \$1,500 to \$2,500
- change name of line item "Monthly Board Meetings" to "Monthly Board Meetings and Committee Meetings" and increase budgeted amount from \$1,500 to \$2,500
- increase budgeted amount for annual Quickbooks subscription from \$453.60 to \$1,036.80
- budget \$300 to purchase an office phone for Lindsay's use; Richland County will provide access to a phone line/number
- sponsor Sustainable Midlands's Sustainable Yard Tour in the amount of \$100

National Watershed Coalition Request: The group deferred a decision on the National Watershed Coalition's support request until the next meeting.

Equipment Rental Rate Changes: RSWCD currently charges \$10/acre for the first 50 acres and \$7/acre for each additional acre with a \$50 minimum. So far in FY22, RSWCD has received \$3,300 in rental payments from six renters who used the drill on 413 total acres. Five of those six rentals were for 33 acres or fewer. One large user used the drill on 310 acres. The group discussed a possible increase in the discounted \$7/acre rate to help cover the costs of parts and repairs, then deferred the decision until the next meeting.

Announcements: The legislative breakfast has been postponed due to a legislative furlough. The SCACD budget request did not proceed from the house ways and means committee. Mullis will send Rhodes talking points to share with state senators. Statements of Economic Interest are due March 31.

Next Meeting: April 11, 2022, at 6pm; location TBD. Rhodes volunteered to host the event at the American Legion on Pickens St.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst