



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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April 11, 2022 • 6pm

American Legion Post 6 • 200 Pickens St • Columbia, SC 29205

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners Present

Logan Richardson

Tim McSwain

Charles Weber

Others Present

Aric Jensen

Quinton Epps

John McKenzie

Chanda Cooper

Robert Reese

Morgan Kiser

Welcome and Call to Order

Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:05pm. Rhodes gave the invocation.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Rhodes moved to approve the agenda as presented; Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Rhodes moved to approve the minutes from the March 14, 2022 meeting as presented; Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Financial Report: Rhodes reported the following:

Operating Account (3/31/22 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$50,049.45 (3/1/22)
- Deposits and Credits: \$4,411.77
- Expenses and Debits: \$8,878.37
- Ending Balance: \$45,582.85 (3/31/22)

Credit Card (4/5/22 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$2,194.05 (3/5/22)

- Payments: \$2,194.05
- Purchases: \$1,134.46
- Ending Balance: \$1,134.46 (4/5/22) <paid in full 4/7/22

Easement Stewardship Account (2/28/22 Statement)

- Starting Account Value: \$55,551.53 (2/28/22)
- Ending Account Value: Statement not yet available (4/8/22)

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (3/31/22 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$15,701.99 (3/1/22)
- Ending Balance: \$252.51 (3/31/22)

PayPal Account (4/8/22 Statement)

- Current Balance: \$0.00 (4/8/22)

Friends of RSWCD Report: Laney reported since the last RSWCD board meeting on March 14, one new affiliate (Charlene J. Fisher) has joined. There are 40 current Friends. Laney also reported Congaree Land Trust will hold a Game and Garden Soiree on April 21; tickets cost \$65/person. He and Mullis plan to attend.

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 will schedule a volunteer day next week and will forward the invitation to Cooper so she can forward it to commissioners and other volunteers. Burts volunteered to assist with Tour festivities on June 11. Richardson announced Warrior Creek Outfitters is a potential new Friend of RSWCD, and they may design a shirt to sell at the Ag & Art Tour. If so, they may split profits with RSWCD. Richardson also announced Bumble is interested in supporting RSWCD and could send volunteers to assist with the Ag & Art Tour.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): No NRCS report was available.

SC Department of Natural Resources (DNR): The newly-published [SC conservation districts annual report](#) was presented at Conservation Districts Day at the statehouse last week. Epps and Burts represented RSWCD at the event. Conservation districts are requesting an increase of \$606,154 to the state DNR budget to increase conservation district funding by \$10,000 per county per year and to add two full-time district support positions. The request was not passed in the House, so commissioners are encouraged to contact representatives on the Senate Finance Committee in the days ahead.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber and McSwain reported the RCCC is exploring a land purchase and mitigation credit purchases. RCCC approved changes to its historic preservation and natural resource conservation grants, and those grants will now go to County Council for approval. Richland County planning services manager Brian Crooks attended the latest RCCC meeting to discuss the Land Development Code, which has already been approved, and the new zoning recommendations, which are under consideration. Attendees expressed concerns about the perceived lack of public input in the Land Development Code rewrite process and the seemingly preemptory zoning recommendations which appear to anticipate how the land may be used in the future rather than reflect how it is currently used.

Jensen and Epps explained the Land Development Code rewrite process has been underway for more than five years (since updates to the Comprehensive Plan were completed) and there have been many opportunities for public input along the way. Public engagement in these processes has been historically low, but now that proposed zoning changes have hit residents' mailboxes, there is more interest.

Education: Since the last RSWCD board meeting on March 14:

- RSWCD hosted a ribbon-cutting at Richland Library Eastover on April 2. Councilwoman Cheryl English attended, and Dr. Arlene Marturano led a "Seeds to Salads" activity for families.
- RSWCD hosted Pop-Up Seed Sanctuary events at Brookhaven Food Truck Festival (attended by Councilman Derrek Pugh) and the Richland County Administration Building. Seven more pop-up events are scheduled in the next two months.
- Staff led classroom presentations for an Earth Surface Processes class at the University of SC (UofSC) (20 students), Pendergrass Fairwold School (42 students), Lonnie B. Nelson Elementary (18 students); and H.E. Corley Elementary (60 students).
- Staff coordinated an Adopt-A-Stream volunteer training for the School of the Earth, Ocean and Environment at UofSC. RSWCD's stream monitoring kit was used by two community groups.
- Poster contest entries are due April 15, 2022. RSWCD has provided poster-making supplies to Bethel-Hanberry Elementary School, Forest Heights Elementary School, and the Cutler Jewish Day School.
- RSWCD's e-newsletter reaches 3,144 subscribers. There are 1,043 Facebook followers, 457 Twitter followers, and 564 Instagram followers.
- RSWCD sponsored the Sustainable Yard Tour on April 3; Burts volunteered at the event on behalf of RSWCD.
- RSWCD is a sponsor for the Environmental Education Association of SC's annual conference, which will be held June 8-11 in Aiken, SC. Cooper is the conference co-chair.
- RSWCD provides support to the SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition (SCFGLC), which continues to provide conservation plans for producers statewide. Other SCFGLC projects include winter annual forage plot demonstrations and field days; a grazing cover crops research project in Eastover, SC; an SC Forages Handbook; Alfalfa in the South Field Day; and soil science education at Camp Discovery.

Advocacy: Rhodes has spoken with Senators Tim Scott and Mike Reichenbach about the conservation districts' state budget request. Mullis asked Jensen for a date for RSWCD to address County Council; Jensen recommended late July.

SCACD Policy/Position Statements: The group reviewed the SCACD's 2021 Awards Committee and Districts Operations Committee Policy/Position Statements for three reasons: (1) to increase familiarity with the state recommendations; (2) to note anything RSWCD should add or improve in its work plan; and (3) to note anything RSWCD would like to recommend to SCACD. Discussion points included:

- RSWCD may consider recognizing a farmer/conservationist of the year (Awards Committee Ongoing Policy/Position J, page 6).
- RSWCD's Local Work Group meeting will be held in June, 2022, following a more uniform statewide process (Conservation Districts Operations Committee Action Item 3, page 7). RSWCD will approve the Local Work Group's report before it is forwarded to NRCS.
- RSWCD will explore creating a commitment form for commissioners to sign annually acknowledging their duties (Conservation Districts Operations Committee Item 1, page 8).

- RSWCD will keep its officer elections in fall (target: September) (Conservation Districts Operations Committee Item 1.I, page 9).
- Tyler Brown will provide more information to districts RE: communications with DNR board members (Conservation Districts Operations Committee Item 1.N, page 9).
- RSWCD will consider supporting the SC Conservation Districts Foundation in its next budget (Conservation districts Operations Committee Item 3.B, page 11).
- RSWCD does not post the recommended nondiscrimination statement on its published materials because it is not co-located with NRCS (Conservation Districts Operations Committee Item 4.B and 4.E, page 12).
- RSWCD will work with RCCC staff to “develop a policy to annually review and document compliance with...easement requirements” (Conservation Districts Operations Committee Item 4.F, page 12).

National Watershed Coalition Request: Following discussion of a request for support from the National Watershed Coalition, Rhodes moved to contribute \$75 to the organization. Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Equipment Rental Rate Changes: RSWCD currently provides low-cost rental of a no-till drill to promote soil health. The rental rate is \$10/acre for the first 50 acres and \$7 per acre for each additional acre, with a \$50 minimum. In FY22, RSWCD has received \$3,300 in rents from six renters who used the drill on a total of 413 acres. Parts and repairs to the drill cost \$2,266.68 in the same time period. Mullis donates his time to manage the drill rental program. Following discussion, Mullis agreed to explore whether eliminating the “large acreage discount” will deter any current users from renting the drill.

Public Input: Kiser introduced herself and requested support for Senate Bill 497 to establish mandatory boater education in SC. SC is one of only three states without such a requirement. Kiser is a member of the Forestry Association of SC and is working with them to launch an interest group to provide information and support to vulnerable landowners (such as recent inheritors of property).

Next Meeting: May 9, 2022, at Heathwood Hall Episcopal School.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst