



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

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January 11, 2021

Virtual Meeting/6:00pm

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners Present

Charles Weber

Tim McSwain

Mary Frances Hendrix

Dr. Jamie Browder

Others Present

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager

Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator

Mary Hannah Lindsay, Community Outreach Coordinator

Anne Marie Johnson, Pollinator Garden Manager

Josh Castleberry, Central Carolina Technical College

Tyler Brown, SC Department of Natural Resources

Welcome and Call to Order

Mullis called the meeting to order. Laney gave the invocation.

Approval of Agenda

Rhodes made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by Laney. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes of November 9 and was seconded by Laney. Motion carried.

Special Presentation: Natural Resources Management at Central Carolina Technical College

Castleberry is a new commissioner with the Sumter Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and manages the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Program at Central Carolina Technical College (CCTech). Five certifications are offered at CCTech:

- 1) Certificate in Water Treatment Operations
- 2) Certificate in Wastewater Treatment
- 3) Certificate in Environmental Health and Safety
- 4) AAS Environmental Engineering Technology (excellent job prospects; placement rate around 95%)
- 5) AAS Natural Resources Management Technology (this program includes S190 and S130 wildland firefighting, fire breaks, BMP installations, electrofishing, forestry, wildlife management, soils, Take One Make One clinics, fish tagging, field trips, and more; good job prospects with a placement rate just under 90%)

The cost for programs is around \$200/hour or \$600/class without financial aid. Castleberry recruits at local high schools, FFA clubs, etc. Many students are non-traditional. The program allows for dual high school enrollment. CCTech is the only college that offers the Natural Resources Management program in SC.

Financial Report

Deposits/credits in December totaled \$400.00; checks and debits totaled \$4,417.19. The ending balance is \$50,787.54 as of December 31. The bank statement is balanced with the Quicken account, with one outstanding check in the amount of \$595.05.

Affiliate Membership

Since the last meeting, these are the new and renewing affiliate members:

- Kenny Mullis renewed @ \$100
- Dr. Steven Stancyk renewed @ \$100
- Pat and George Batten received \$25 gift memberships from Mary Burts
- Tim McSwain joined @ \$25
- Mary Beth McSwain joined @ \$25
- Aubrey McSwain joined @ \$25

Each commissioner was challenged to recruit two new affiliate members between the October strategic planning meeting and December 31, 2020; given that several have not met that goal, Laney moved to defer the deadline until the next meeting on February 8. The motion was seconded by Rhodes and was unanimously approved.

Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report

Since the last meeting in November, Johnson and garden volunteers have planted three rabbiteye blueberries, winterized the irrigation, removed dead annuals, and started transplants off-site for spring planting. Winter greens are growing as a demonstration vegetable crop. Vole damage continues to challenge plant survival. Johnson is planning for spring planting, purchasing seeds and ordering replacement plants, planning for spring clean-up, and preparing a management plan for the garden to enable a smooth transition to a new garden manager after Johnson's term of service expires on March 1. Commissioners and staff expressed their gratitude for Johnson's work over the past year, and consternation at the upcoming loss of her services.

Conservation Division/Conservation Commission Report (RCCC)

Epps reported the RCCC is preparing comments on the Land Development Code. The application period for FY22 Historic Preservation and Community Conservation Grants opened in late December and is ongoing. Meghan Sullivan and Brian Crooks from Planning Services are assisting with grant program administration. The RCCC is evaluating property purchases and donations at Lake Elizabeth in northern Richland County. RCCC has three commissioner vacancies and a fourth upcoming; these vacancies must be filled by County Council appointment. Vacancies exist or are upcoming in the Council districts of Councilmen Walker and Livingston and Councilwomen Mackey (formerly Jackson) and English. Carol Kososki stepped down as RCCC chair today and John Grego was elected to the role. Epps asked Richland SWCD (RSWCD) Commissioners and Associate Commissioners to recommend residents to fill these roles.

The RCCC was formed by ordinance in 1998 and is comprised of 11 Commissioners who are appointed by members of Richland County Council. The RCCC protects natural, historic, and cultural resources through grant programs (\$250,000 annual funding), conservation easements, land donations, mitigation banking, historical markers, and educational projects. McSwain encouraged RSWCD Associate Commissioners to consider serving as RCCC Commissioners.

Commissioner Rhodes exited the meeting, stating he would support both funding requests on the agenda and granting Mullis his proxy.

Education Report

- A virtual retirement party was held for former Administrative Assistant Charlie Fisher during the week before Christmas. Epps, Lindsay, and Cooper are now covering Fisher's duties.
- Commissioners' statements of economic interest forms are due by March 30.
- The Conservation Education Mini-Grant application deadline is February 1.
- Conservation poster contest entries are due by April 30.
- Nominations for Richland County's Conservation Teacher of the Year are also due by April 30.
- If the SC Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) holds a state conservation teacher of the year competition in 2021, Dr. Browder will be RSWCD's nominee; if SCACD defers the competition due to the pandemic, Dr. Browder will be nominated in 2022.
- Since the last RSWCD meeting, Cooper and Johnson have published 7 pollinator conservation videos in partnership with Richland County's Public Information Office. Epps reported these videos have been viewed >10,000 times.
- Cooper produced or co-produced one training video about the SC Envirothon's oral presentation station, a board orientation video for the Environmental Education Association of SC (EEASC), and a Green Steps School virtual training video.
- RSWCD supported/co-hosted two Midlands Meetups for environmental educators in partnership with EEASC in November and December; these events had 18 and 14 participants, respectively.
- RSWCD is providing planning support for the 2021 EEASC conference, which will be a hybrid virtual/face-to-face event June 10-12. RSWCD and SCDNR are both sponsors for this conference, since they provided sponsorships for the 2020 event.

- Cooper made one pollinator conservation presentation to 10 science educators at a virtual professional development event in November.
- RSWCD staff coordinated/supported the Midlands Local Food Collaborative's (MLFC's) quarterly meeting and are serving on the 2021 Grower/Buyer Mashup planning committee.
- RSWCD staff and Commissioners also participated in an SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition board meeting.
- Lindsay has taken over the design and distribution of RSWCD's e-newsletter; the January edition was sent to >3,000 subscribers last week.
- RSWCD's Seed Sanctuary program, which was originally funded by a \$2,500 Friends of National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) grant last spring, provided seed to >1,000 residents at no cost to the resident in 2020. Lindsay is working with a team of 10-15 volunteers to pack/prepare seed for spring 2021 distribution. Approximately 1,000 people remain on a waiting list to receive seed, and RSWCD will attempt to fill those requests first, before advertising the program for additional requests.
- Lindsay applied for a second Friends of NACD grant to provide funding to continue community conservation outreach/education through the Seed Sanctuary. Budget items requested in the application include pop-up banners, brochures, and other expenses associated with tabling at community events.
- RSWCD has 435 followers on Twitter, 920 on Facebook, and 430 on Instagram. Lindsay encouraged Commissioners and Associate Commissioners to "like" and "share" RSWCD posts to increase visibility.

NRCS Report

District Conservationist Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez emailed a written report earlier today; it will be attached to the minutes.

Funding Requests

RSWCD received end-of year donation requests from Camp Discovery and the SC Wildlife Federation (SCWF). Burts moved RSWCD support these donation requests but did not specify amounts.

Laney requested additional information about the Camp Discovery request. Camp Discovery received a \$1,000 Fall Conservation Education Mini-Grant from RSWCD to support their transition to virtual programming. After discussion, Laney and Mullis recommended RSWCD express its continued support for Camp Discovery's programming and encourage them to apply for a spring Mini-Grant. Epps questioned whether a motion was needed for this Camp Discovery decision; after discussion, the group agreed that no motion was needed.

Mullis requested information on how SCWF has interacted with RSWCD in the past. SCWF's Habitat Education Manager Jay Keck visited the Pinewood Lake Park pollinator demonstration garden last autumn and was featured in one educational video about how pollinator conservation supports other wildlife. Cooper has taught a session in SCWF's Midlands Master Naturalists course for several years; SCWF became an affiliate member of RSWCD as a result of that exchange. RSWCD will partner with SCWF to host an EE webinar on March 18. Laney

moved to make a \$250 contribution to SCWF. Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

RSWCD has also received a request for support for the 2021 Grower/Buyer Mashup. This event is a project of the MLFC, for which RSWCD provides administrative support and serves as fiscal agent. The event is a partnership with the SC Department of Agriculture and several other entities. It will be held at the State Farmers Market on March 22 and will bring farmers, buyers, and chefs together to promote local farming and local foods. Sponsorship levels start at \$100. Mullis reminded the group the MLFC evolved through the RSWCD. After discussion, Laney made a motion to contribute \$100 to support the Grower/Buyer Mashup. The motion was seconded by Burts and it was unanimously approved.

Laney asked what will happen to the contribution if the event is cancelled. Cooper stated since RSWCD is the MLFC's fiscal agent, RSWCD would have a say in what happens to the funds, but they would likely either be refunded (if they have not been spent on non-refundable purchase) or would be held by RSWCD on behalf of the MLFC for future MLFC events.

Budget Amendment

Since the last meeting, we have had to purchase \$595 in repairs and parts for the RSWCD's no-till drills. Cooper recommended moving \$750 from the Arbor Day line item into the no-till drill line item to cover these current expenses. This would also leave up to \$150 in the no-till drill repair line item for future expenses. After discussion, Laney moved to transfer \$750 from the Arbor Day line item to the no-till drill repair line item. Burts seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

MLFC Participation

MLFC has updated their Terms and Understandings document for official participants. Cooper recommended RSWCD sign the new document in order to continue RSWCD's participation in the MLFC and name Epps, herself, and Dr. Browder as RSWCD's official representatives to the MLFC. Burts moved to do so; Laney seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Mullis asked Cooper to provide background information about a bookkeeping recommendation. For the past 15 years, Fisher served as RSWCD's bookkeeper. Now that Fisher has retired, Cooper recommends the RSWCD move from Quicken, which is based on Fisher's computer, to QuickBooks, which is cloud-based and has additional features to make bookkeeping more efficient. The most appropriate plan for RSWCD, based on Cooper's research and the recommendation of accountant Ginger Spires, is the QuickBooks Essentials plan, which costs \$40/month. Cooper further recommends RSWCD have Spires assist with the set-up and transition, which Spires estimates will take 2-5 hours; and also to perform monthly or quarterly reconciliations (at least temporarily), which Spires estimates will take 1-2 hours each. Spires's rate is \$35/hour.

Several questions arose, including whether and why accounting software is needed at all, what benefits QuickBooks offers over Quicken, and whether RSWCD is required to do double-entry accounting, journal entries, or checkbook accounting. After discussion, Laney recommended

staff discuss the issues further and present again at the next RSWCD meeting. Mullis recommended staff consult with Spires to have specific questions answered.

2021 Meeting Schedule & Guest Speakers

No conflicts were reported with the proposed 2021 meeting dates. Two guest speakers were proposed:

- Camp Discovery Executive Director Amy Ellisor
- John de la Howe Governor's School for Agriculture representative

Cooper will request additional speaker ideas via email.

Announcements/Public Input

Brown reported the General Assembly convenes tomorrow to start their 2-year session; DNR and the SCACD are reviewing legislative action items for relevance to Districts and will share those items soon. The governor's executive budget for the year includes no planned budget cuts. DNR expects to send the second half of Districts' state allocations next week. The state's official budget surplus went from \$2 billion to \$200 million; much of this is non-recurring funds.

Laney moved to make Anne Marie Johnson an honorary affiliate member of RSWCD. Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Next Meeting

February 8 at 6pm via Zoom

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst