



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)
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Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2023 • 6pm

Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, SC 29209

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair
Jeff Laney, Vice Chair
Jim Rhodes, Treasurer
Mary Burts
Tim McSwain

Associate Commissioners Present

Charles Weber
Mary Frances Hendrix
Logan Richardson
Mary Beth McSwain

Others Present

Quinton Epps
Chanda Cooper
Val Morris
Jennifer Mancke
Aric Jensen
Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez
Bailey Parker

Welcome and Call to Order: Mullis called the meeting to order and Jensen gave the invocation at 6:05 pm.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Rhodes made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Burts. The motion was put to a vote, and it passed unanimously. Additionally, Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by T. McSwain. The motion was brought to a vote, and it also passed unanimously.

Financial Report: Rhodes provided the following financial overview:

Operating Account (07/31/23 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$55,771.82 (07/01/23)
- Deposits and Credits: \$2,750.00
- Expenses and Debits: \$3,081.08

- Ending Balance: \$55,440.74 (07/31/23)

Credit Card (08/05/23 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$1,589.11 (08/05/23)
- Payments: \$1,589.11
- Purchases: \$1,286.14
- Ending Balance: \$1,286.14 (08/05/23) <paid in full 08/14/23

Easement Stewardship Account (07/31/23 Statement)

- Starting Account Value: \$51,954.52 (07/01/23)
- Ending Account Value: \$52,089.42 (07/31/23)
- Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$52,256.90 (07/31/23)

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (05/31/23 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$252.51 (07/01/23)
- Ending Balance: \$252.51 (07/31/23)

PayPal Account (05/01/23 Statement)

- Current Balance: \$0.00 (07/31/23)

Furthermore, Rhodes presented the findings of the FY23 audit report, which can be summarized as follows: The audit for RSWCD's fiscal year 2023 took place on August 1, 2023, with the participation of Commissioners Mary Burts, Tim McSwain, and Jim Rhodes (who also holds the position of Treasurer), alongside key staff members Quinton Epps, Chanda Cooper, and Val Morris. The group examined RSWCD's financial records and meticulously assessed its accounting procedures, aligning with the guidelines outlined in RSWCD's 2023 Audit Worksheet.

During the audit process, auditors put forth a recommendation: the staff proceed to secure a copy of the South Carolina Association of Conservation District's (SCACD) audit report for fiscal year 2022. This recommendation pertains to the inclusion of said report along with the bank statements from the SCACD Contribution Agreement Account. This practice is intended to persist until the SCACD's audit report for fiscal year 2023 becomes accessible.

It is worth noting that aside from this particular recommendation, no other suggestions were put forth by the auditors. All signed audit worksheets, which serve as an attestation to the thoroughness of the process, will be maintained with the RSWCD's financial records for the fiscal year 2023.

Friends of RSWCD Report: Laney reported, since the previous board meeting on 06/12/23, we welcomed one new Honorary Friend, Lizard Thicket Inc, as of now, our Friends count stands at a total of 43.

Administrative Report: Morris reported there was still time to register for the SCACD East Piedmont Area Meeting and the 2023 Mid-Year Meeting.

NRCS: Bonilla-Gonzalez provided an update, mentioning that they are in the process of finalizing certain outstanding obligations. She expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the Local Workgroup Meeting, deeming it a success. She noted that the event had a substantial turnout, but also shared her desire to

have had more producers in attendance. Bonilla-Gonzalez reported her intentions is to explore various approaches to encourage a greater presence of producers at next year's meeting.

SCDNR: Cooper reported the SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)

- SCDNR field team attended the EEASC conference in Beaufort, SC where they participated in a variety of Field Trips and Networking Events.
- SCDNR Conservation Districts team attended the field day Cotton Hills Farm hosted by SCACD President Jeff Wilson.
- SCDNR Director Robert Boyles and SCDNR Conservation District Program Manager Tyler Brown attended the South Carolina Farm Bureau and Trust Launch in Lowrys, SC.
- The SCDNR Conservation District team continue to engage and participate in Local Work Group Meetings with the local Conservation Districts across the state.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber reported he and other staff-members attended unveiling event of the butterfly garden at the Richland County Ballentine library, stating, they were recipients of a grant from RCCC that facilitated this project. He also reported the progress of the Forestry Stewardship Plan is still ongoing and a work in progress.

Education Report:

- RSWCD E-newsletter: 3,960 (+ 80) subscribers
- RSWCD Facebook: 1,204 (+14) followers
- RSWCD Instagram: 717 (+15) followers
- Ag + Art Facebook: 1,017 (+15) followers
- Ag + Art Instagram: 631 (+52) followers

Richland County Ag + Art Tour:

- FY23 Tour Report
 - 3007, visitors (>2x last year)
 - 100+ artisans (2nd most in the state)
 - 15 tour sites (2nd most in the state)
- **Budget:**
 - Total income: \$12, 500
 - Total expenses: \$11,063.62
 - Matching funds: \$43,639.82

Seed Sanctuary:

- > 5,372 packets distributed since 02/01/23
- 618 mail requests since 02/01/23
- 62 individual volunteers
- Still Hopes group packing continues
- Individual volunteers: Virginia Grace Laney, Emma Holsclaw, & Beatrice Barilla
- Distribution continues at 2020 Hampton Street and Richland Library Eastover

SC Project Learning Tree

- Facilitator Refresher:
Green Jobs Curriculum
- Quarterly Steering

Committee & Marketing
Committee Meeting

SC Forage & Grazing Lands Coalition:

- 60 pasture plans for producers across the state
- Native warm season grass demonstration in Abbeville
- Eight forage demonstration plots statewide w/Clemson
- Research/demonstration funding policy

Midlands Local Food Collaborative:

- Quarterly meetings: 9 attendees
- SC Local Food Summit sponsorship

Additionally, Cooper reported about the current open registration for the Mini Grant and Poster Contest. Detailed information regarding these opportunities can be accessed on the Richland County website. Mancke mentioned her attendance at the staff development day held at Pace Academy.

Advocacy: Mancke reported her involvement alongside the Ridge Road Community group in their dedicated efforts to oppose the development of the property on Ridge Road in Hopkins, SC. She highlighted their achievements in slowing down the pace of the development. Furthermore, she shared that they have engaged influential Senators to explore the possibility of acquiring the property for themselves.

Old Business: T. McSwain, Mancke, M. McSwain and Mullis reported on their experiences at the SENACD region meeting.

New Business:

- Local Work Group Meeting Report: There were 22 attendees at the meeting. T. McSwain motioned to approved the meeting report as presented which was seconded by Laney. Motioned passed unanimously.
- FY24 Budget Proposal: T. McSwain moved to approved the budget as proposed which was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.
- Dominion Energy Proposal: T. McSwain moved for RSWCD to apply for a 10K Dominion Energy grant to support education programs which was seconded by Rhodes. Motion passed unanimously.
- SCACD Contribution Agreement: Rhodes moved for RSWCD to request a 15K contribution agreement with SCACD motion was seconded by T. McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.
- Ag + Art Tour Funding Proposal: Laney moved for RSWCD to request a 5K sponsorship for the 2024 Ag+ Art Tour from the Richland County Conservation Commission motion was seconded by T. McSwain. Motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session: Rhodes motioned for the renewal of the Education/Outreach Contract as presented. This motion was seconded by T. McSwain. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Input: The participants engaged in a discussion concerning the dynamics of timber supply and demand in South Carolina.

Next Meeting: The next board meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 11, 2023 at 6pm at Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, SC 29209.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Val Morris, Conservation Administrative Assistant