



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District  
2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A  
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May 10, 2021  
6pm • Via Zoom

#### **Commissioners Present**

Kenny Mullis, Chair  
Jeff Laney, Vice Chair  
Mary Burts

#### **Associate Commissioners Present**

Charles Weber  
Tim McSwain

#### **Others Present**

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager  
Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator  
Robert Reese, Pollinator Garden Manager  
Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez, District Conservationist  
Mary Hannah Lindsay, Community Outreach Coordinator  
Tyler Brown, SC Department of Natural Resources  
Eli Crisan, Dreher High School  
Ian Saracila, Spring Valley High School  
Annette House, Administrative Coordinator

#### **Welcome and Call to Order**

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

#### **Approval of Agenda**

Laney made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Laney made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Burts and was unanimously approved.

#### **Special Presentation: Adopt-A-Stream Monitoring**

Eli Crisan (Dreher High School junior) and Ian Saracila (Spring Valley High School sophomore) discussed their community water monitoring project and the importance of water monitoring. They have been trained through the Adopt-A-Stream program and regularly monitor air temperature, water

temperature, pH balance of the water, oxygen, bacteria and conductivity in a local waterway. They are using a monitoring kit provided by the Richland SWCD.

Cooper reported the Adopt-A-Stream program is a statewide monitoring program co-sponsored by DHEC and Clemson University. It is a citizen science monitoring project where volunteers monitor stream health for physical, chemical, bacterial and macroinvertebrate parameters. Some of these parameters are monitored monthly or weekly. Required is a training process, a test and an annual recertification process so monitors are consistent on how they are collecting the data and analyzing it.

Burts asked the gentlemen if they have considered doing this as a science project; the University of South Carolina sponsors the regional science fair every spring.

*Crisan & Saracila exited the meeting after answering questions and discussing plans for the program.*

### **Financial Report**

Cooper provided the Financial Report in the absence of Rhodes: the beginning balance was \$60,924.00. There was one deposit of \$250.00, and one credit of \$2,882.00, which is the contribution agreement payment for the months December, January and February. There were nine checks totaling \$3,365.00, 10 debits totaling \$3,777.00, and an ending balance of \$56,913. The bank statement does balance with Quickbooks as of April 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Affiliate Membership Report**

Laney reported there are no new affiliate members that have renewed or joined since the last meeting.

### **Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report**

Reese reported regular maintenance continues at the Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden. Volunteers are monitoring the moisture in the soil, making sure everything is up and running the way it should. Everything is looking wonderful. Reese is writing a proposal to the US Department of Agriculture for a garden (not a pollinator garden) that is being cultivated in the Eastover area.

Reese answered questions and discussed writing the proposal for the garden. He reported on a community meeting in Lower Richland where community members expressed concerns about new developments and the environmental impacts of urbanization. He requested more information about how RSWCD and the Richland County Conservation Commission are involved with issues of development and urbanization. Weber suggested Mullis, Epps and Grego meet with Reese to provide more info.

*Reese exited the meeting.*

### **NRCS Report**

Bonilla-Gonzalez provided the NRCS report for the month of April (Attachment A). She has been working on regular active contracts in EQIP. She completed the ranking and assessment deadline on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and all longleaf and quail preapproved applications were completed. She completed five site visits for new customers and received applications. Five applications are up for CSP renewal and she is working on the assessments and plans for the new applications. Mullis asked Bonilla-Gonzalez if she had been receiving out of state calls or just in state. Weber asked for an explanation of the acronyms. EQIP is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program that provides financial incentives for landowners to

implement conservation practices. It is the main program that is used to assess and resolve conservation issues.

### **SCDNR Report**

Brown shared a picture taken during Soil & Water Stewardship Week of the Governor's Proclamation Award being presented to representatives of the Newberry SWCD. Last week SCDNR hosted their Virtual Envirothon; five teams competed. No schools from Richland competed. Lots of teachers had interest, but it was hard with the students being remote. Spartanburg won and will be going to National Envirothon which will be virtual.

### **Education Report**

Lindsay reported the Seed Sanctuary was featured in the NACD blog and has a total of 15 volunteers. The call for volunteers has been advertised on social media, and she is making connections to people in the community who want to help out with conservation. Staff have mailed seeds out to a total of 1500 requests, with 250 more requests packed and ready to mail. Entries for the poster contest Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities were due April 30<sup>th</sup> with 85 entries submitted. Judging is next week. RSWCD's social media presence has grown to 963 Facebook followers, 449 Twitter followers, 493 Instagram followers, and 3,135 e-newsletter subscribers.

Cooper reported the Public Information Office at Richland County issued two press releases about Soil & Water Conservation Districts for Stewardship Week; one was a general "hey it's *Stewardship Week*, follow our social media pages for fun facts" and the second post was specifically about the national Stewardship theme of Healthy Forests= Healthy Communities and highlighted some of the ways Richland SWCD promotes forest health. There are fewer schools participating in the Green Steps School program this year due to COVID and virtual learning; Harmony School is one of the schools that Richland SWCD mentors and they did a fantastic job! They have a new teacher who has kept up all the projects.

Cooper also report that the Richland SWCD supports professional development opportunities for environmental educators through a partnership with EEASC (Environmental Education Association of South Carolina); through that partnership, since the last meeting, there was a Marketing Best Practices workshop for educators with 20 participants. It was led a marketing director who works with Lake City in their Art Fields events. She provided a lot of great information for educators and educating sites. A "Staffing Your Affiliate" webinar was hosted by the southeastern regional environmental education affiliate; session leaders talked about how to transition from having an all-volunteer board to having staff, which EEASC hopes to do within the next year. The May Midlands meet up will be held tomorrow with 29 people registered to attend the monthly networking session for educators.

Richland SWCD is a sponsor for the EEASC Annual Conference which is scheduled for June 10-12.

Through the partnership with EEASC; there are scholarships available for educators to attend the Triple Facilitator Workshop. At a Triple Facilitator Workshop; the educators are trained in three different environmental education curricula:

- Project Learning Tree (*Forestry/Forest focus*)
- Project Wild (*Wildlife focus*)
- Project Wet (*Water education for teachers*)

Richland SWCD also supported South Carolina Project Learning Tree-Steering Committee's marketing committee. \$2,000.00 was provided to Project Wild to restart that curriculum in South Carolina from

EEASC. The Southeastern Region environmental education landscape analysis is ongoing; it is an effort to document and map all of the education sites that deal with outdoor recreation, environmental studies, and nature-based education from all across the eight states southeast region.

### **Richland County Conservation Commission Report**

Weber & McSwain reported their last meeting was a discussion on the budget.

### **Old Business: Richland County's FY22 Budget**

Mullis provided an update on Richland County's FY22 budget. Laney, Grego and Mullis met with Administrator Brown to discuss budget issues. Richland SWCD was asked to provide a proposal as to how it would like to be re organized. Mullis reported that, according to Brown, the Commission and the District are viewed as one entity and that is why administration proposes combining funding. In order to be viewed as separate entities, Brown advised the Commission and District they should not share staff. A proposal was presented to Brown showing the organizations are separate and not sharing staff. No response on the proposal has been received. Mullis and Grego were invited to speak in front of Council at the next budget session which scheduled for Thursday. Laney asked if the invitation to the budget session was a response to the proposal. Grego was going to schedule a meeting along with Mullis and Asst. Administrator Lori Thomas to discuss the particulars of the presentation to Council; Mullis said it is unclear if that's two minutes for the District and two minutes for the Commission, or two minutes total? Weber suggest that Mullis seek clarity from Thomas.

Weber reported he received an email from Councilman Malinowski who wants specifics.

### **New Business: Ag & Art Tour Sponsorship**

Cooper reported the Ag and Art tour is an agritourism adventure; it's held in several counties across the state. Last year the District sponsored at the level of \$300.00; the tour was cancelled and the sponsorship was rolled over. We are considered a sponsor of this year's Ag and Art tour, but they also sent out the requests for sponsorships again, and anything extra will rollover for next year. The Eastover Community garden (which Reese mentioned) is one of the tour sites this year.

Mullis commented he would like to see RSWCD provide a \$1000.00 sponsorship.

Burts made a motion to sponsor Ag and Art Tour for \$1000.00 for 2021 year.

The motion was seconded by Laney and unanimously approved.

Burts suggested to Cooper try to get Richland County's Pollinator Garden on the tour for next year.

### **Commissioner/Associate Commissioner Input**

Mullis asked if Reese has the talking points and the email sent by Administrator Brown to Council with the responses on it. Quinton replied the talking points generated were for Commissioners. Mullis indicated it would be good if he could it into the hands of all Council members.

*Rhodes joined the meeting.*

Mullis recapped the discussion of the meeting to get Rhodes up to speed.

Weber stated the RSWCD, Conservation Division and RCCC had no input to the proposed FY22 budget and that's a violation of County rules. Rhodes suggested that Mullis and Grego bring that matter up first in their remarks to Council.

Cooper asked where will the next meeting be held? Commissioners agreed to return to Lizard's Thicket.

**Public Input**

NA

**Next Meeting**

Monday, June 14, 2021 @ 6pm @ Lizard's Thicket, 402 Beltline Blvd., Columbia

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:49pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Kenny Mullis, Chair

Annette House, Administrator Coordinator

**NRCS Monthly Report  
April 2021****Programs****EQIP**

- On Active Contracts
  - Working on practice checkouts, contract reviews and modifications.
  - Regular management of active contracts
- EQIP FY21
  - Completed the ranking and assessment deadline on April 23 for the 47 applications
  - All Long leave and quail preapproved applications are completed, Still working on Sustainable Forest Planning and Organic. Worked on conservation planning and contract documentations
  - Completeing site visits and meeting with producers to complete the planning portion.
  - Completed site visits for new producers 2 Richland 2 Calhoun
- EQIP FY22
  - Completed 5 site visit for new customers and received applications

**CSP**

- CSP Renewal FY2022
  - 5 applcaitions are up for renewal. All producers have been contacted to check for their wishes to renew the contracts
- CSP Classic
  - Working on the assessments and plans for the new Applications
- Active CSP
  - Working with producers on implementations of practices.

**General**

- Complete Trainings and attended Virtual meetings and teleconferences
- Working on CTA designs
- Working on Training For Planner Certification