



**Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)**

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

Phone: (803) 576-2080 • Fax: (803) 576-2088

[soilandwater@richlandcountysc.gov](mailto:soilandwater@richlandcountysc.gov) • [www.richlandcountysc.gov/rswcd](http://www.richlandcountysc.gov/rswcd)

**Meeting Minutes**

March 10, 2025, 6 pm

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

**Commissioners Present**

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

**Associate Commissioners Present**

Mary Frances Hendrix

**Additional Attendees**

Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez

Quinton Epps

Chelsea Holliday

Aric Jensen

Elizabeth Jensen

Matthew Jensen

Jennifer Mancke

Bailey Mullis

Jessica Thompson

**Welcome, Introductions, and Invocation:** Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm and announced there were not enough voting commissioners present for a quorum. A. Jensen gave the invocation.

**Approve Agenda and Minutes:** Due to the lack of a quorum, the agenda and minutes could not be approved.

**Reports:**

**Financial:** Thompson gave the following financial report:

**Operating Account (02/28/25 Statement)**

- Beginning Balance: \$53,160.14+ (02/01/25)
- Deposits and Credits: \$2,345.00+
- Checks: \$3,782.48-

- Expenses and Debits: \$1,641.75-
- Ending Balance: \$50,080.91 (02/28/25)

**Credit Card (02/05/25 Statement)**

- Beginning Balance: \$1,641.75 (02/05/25)
- Payments: \$1,641.75
- Purchases: \$1,409.95
- Ending Balance: \$1,409.95 (03/05/25)

**\*Easement Stewardship Account (1/31/25 Statement)**

- Starting Account Value: \$55,675.95 (1/01/25)
- Ending Account Value: \$55,755.39 (1/31/25)
- Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$55,755.39

**SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (02/01/25 Statement)**

- Starting Balance: \$13,730.71+ (02/01/25)
- Credits: \$0.00
- Debts: \$13,510.70-
- Ending Balance: \$220.01+ (02/28/25)

**PayPal Account (02/2025 Statement)**

- Beginning Available Balance: \$375.00 (02/01/25)
- Ending Available Balance: \$810.52 (02/28/25)

\*The January 2025 financial statement was provided. The February 2025 statement was not available.

Mullis reported no payments are currently being made through the Contribution Agreement. Staff are still doing work but will not receive funds related to the Contribution Agreement until further notice.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):** Bonilla-Gonzalez reviewed the provided NRCS report. She also reported obligations for FY25 contracts have been paused until further notice, and NRCS could not keep its two new employees due to executive orders.

Bonilla-Gonzalez mentioned anyone needing to complete work at the St. Matthews field office should be aware of ongoing furniture changes, which may create challenges at this time. She also reported NRCS is going on site visits for applications at least twice a week and has completed tier 1 application assessments.

NRCS has also completed trainings and worked with Farm Bill Biologist, Garret Litwiler, for planning and completing certifications.

Mullis reported the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) asked all districts to submit a survey documenting the effect of the executive orders on their district, and he responded on behalf of RSWCD. Mullis stated farmers are heavily impacted due to having paid for work out of pocket and not receiving reimbursements for the work.

Bonilla-Gonzalez added NRCS was given clearance and has processed Inflation Reduction Act payments.

**South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR):** No one from SCDNR was present; however, the SCDNR-Conservation Districts Team Statewide Report for February was submitted. Mullis reviewed the report and noted he and Commissioner Jim Rhodes need to submit their statements of economic interest by March 30. He also noted the Palmetto Sportsman's Classic is March 28-30, and the SC Envirothon is April 25. He stated Stewardship Week is April 28-May 2 and the Southeast NACD Regional Meeting is August 2-6.

Mullis also reported approximately 45 attendees at the Conservation Districts Day at the State House and acknowledged SCDNR for their work in organizing the event.

**Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC):** Epps reported RCCC is working on several easement contracts, including renegotiating some easements and putting county properties into easements. RCCC is also working on several historic projects. Additionally, they are soliciting a conservation land management plan and want to hire someone to develop the plan. Epps also reported RCCC has an annual presentation to County Council scheduled for March 18.

Jensen expanded on the land management plan and added RCCC has recommended properties for acquisition. He stated this is the first time the County is reviewing its inventory and determining what lands they want to sell, keep, and acquire.

**RSWCD Programs:** Thompson reviewed the provided RSWCD program report.

**Conservation Items Before County Council:** Epps and Thompson reported Aneysha Laureano was selected as the 2024 NACD poster contest winner for the Grades 2-3 division. She will be recognized at the April 1 county council meeting, where County Council will issue a proclamation in her honor.

**Commissioner Advocacy:** Mullis referenced the Conservation Districts Day at the State House and stated RSWCD spoke with Representative Annie McDaniel. McDaniel is on the Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Environmental Affairs Committee and could be a potential resource in the future.

Jensen added the county has been searching for a site to host a larger recycling drop-off center for the Lower Richland area. Hansel Carter, also known as Mr. Bunky, was considering expanding the existing site before he passed. Jensen stated his successors are continuing this work.

### **Old Business:**

**Ag + Art Tour Sponsorship:** Thompson reported the Ag + Art Tour planning committee has acquired about \$2800 in sponsorships. Hendrix added Jill Lewis with Mr. Bunky's Market would

contribute. Mancke stated Patrick Dimig with Dimig Digs would contribute as well. Holliday added the deadline for donations was March 1, but because the planning committee is still expecting donations, the hard deadline is March 15.

Participants discussed the potential of Scout Motors being a donor. Mullis stated he is in contact with Scout Motors via the South Carolina Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition and intends to discuss RSWCD with Scout Motors in future conversations.

Mullis and Epps also reported Amanda Jones, the Ag + Art Tour Planning Committee Chair, will speak before County Council on May 13 about the Ag + Art Tour. In a one-minute presentation, she will acknowledge 2024 tour highlights, invite councilmembers to attend the 2025 tour, and thank them for their support.

**2025 Agritourism Internship:** Thompson reported RSWCD received twelve applicants. Staff will review the applications on March 13 and then interview candidates.

**MLFC: Specialty Crop Block Grant:** Thompson reported Jim Johnson, a business consultant with the SC Small Business Development Center and Co-Chair of the Midlands Local Food Collaborative, submitted the grant application.

**New Business:**

**Strategic Plan Review:** Due to the lack of a quorum, reviewing goal 1 of the strategic plan was deferred to the next meeting.

**SC Conservation Districts Training:** Mullis reported NACD initiated a nationwide charge for districts to be trained. SCDNR completed a training course for South Carolina conservation districts. Mullis proposed attending monthly RSWCD board meetings at an earlier time to complete the training together. Staff will send out an email to confirm this method.

**Executive Session:** N/A

**Public Input:** N/A

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 14 at 6 pm at Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Road, Columbia, SC 29209.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm.