



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 • www.richlandcountysc.gov/rswcd

Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2025, 6 pm

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

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Treasurer

Tim McSwain

Associate Commissioners Present

Mary Beth McSwain

Charles Weber

Additional Attendees

Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez

Quinton Epps

Chelsea Holliday

Aric Jensen

Jennifer Mancke

Brody Smith

Jessica Thompson

Welcome, Introductions, and Invocation: Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. Laney gave the invocation. Mullis announced Thompson accepted the position of Conservation Education Analyst.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Laney motioned to approve the agenda. T. McSwain seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously. Rhodes motioned to approve the minutes. Laney seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously.

Reports:

Financial: Rhodes provided the following financial report:

November 2024 Financial Report

Operating Account (11/30/24 Statement)

- Beginning Balance: \$60,675.66 (11/01/24)
- Deposits and Credits: \$1,164.00
- Checks: \$2,809.27-
- Expenses and Debits: \$1,126.03-
- Ending Balance: \$57,904.36 (11/30/24)

Credit Card (12/05/24 Statement)

- Beginning Balance: \$1,019.11 (12/05/24)
- Payments: \$1,019.11
- Purchases: \$1,058.67
- Credit Card Rewards: \$462.32
- Ending Balance: \$1,058.67 (12/05/24) <paid in full (12/17/2024)

***Easement Stewardship Account (10/31/24 Statement)**

- Starting Account Value: \$55,333.18 (10/01/24)
- Ending Account Value: \$55,024.35 (10/31/24)
- Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$55,024.35

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (11/1/24 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$19,720.21+ (11/01/24)
- Credits: \$0.00
- Debts: \$19,500.20-
- Ending Balance: \$220.01+ (11/30/24)

PayPal Account (11/2024 Statement)

- Beginning Available Balance: \$0.00 (11/01/24)
- Ending Available Balance: \$250.00 (11/30/24)

*November 2024 statement not available.

December 2024 Financial Report

****Operating Account (11/30/24 Statement)**

- Beginning Balance: \$60,675.66 (11/01/24)
- Deposits and Credits: \$1,164.00
- Checks: \$2,809.27-
- Expenses and Debits: \$1,126.03-
- Ending Balance: \$57,904.36 (11/30/24)

****Credit Card (12/05/24 Statement)**

- Beginning Balance: \$1,019.11 (12/05/24)
- Payments: \$1,019.11
- Purchases: \$1,058.67
- Credit Card Rewards: \$462.32

- Ending Balance: \$1,058.67 (12/05/24) <paid in full (12/17/2024)

****Easement Stewardship Account (10/31/24 Statement)**

- Starting Account Value: \$55,333.18 (10/01/24)
- Ending Account Value: \$55,024.35 (10/31/24)
- Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$55,024.35

****SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (11/1/24 Statement)**

- Starting Balance: \$19,720.21+ (11/01/24)
- Credits: \$0.00
- Debts: \$19,500.20-
- Ending Balance: \$220.01+ (11/30/24)

PayPal Account (12/2024 Statement)

- Beginning Available Balance: \$250.00 (12/01/24)
- Ending Available Balance: \$350.00 (12/31/24)

**December 2024 statements not available.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Bonilla-Gonzalez reported NRCS is busy with Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) eligibility and applications as well as Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications. NRCS has 51 EQIP applications and 6 CSP applications for Richland County.

Not much is known on the NRCS side yet for the division field office for Richland and Calhoun County. Currently, an employee is working out of the St. Matthews office.

NRCS is also working on expired contracts and designs for structure projects to include Toms Creek Watershed.

NRCS will attend a rollout meeting on January 8 which will provide information on plans and procedures for 2025. NRCS hopes the state office will provide more information on the Farm Bill updates. Key changes are outlined at <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/farm-bill#updates> for review.

State Conservationist Ann English retired. Acting State Conservationist Odessa Armstrong's term is being extended. The job for State Conservationist has been posted. NRCS has not finalized their decision on an urban conservationist. Lastly, NRCS has had many staff changes. A number of engineers and biologists have been hired.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR): N/A

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber reported RCCC is offering grants for historic preservation and natural resources. The application deadline is February 1. Interested parties can contact RCCC Program Analyst, John McKenzie. Additionally, the Natural

Resources Committee has compiled a list of watersheds in Richland County to include over 40 watersheds.

RSWCD Programs: Thompson reviewed the provided RSWCD program report. Mancke noted RCCC/RSWCD held a garden clean-up at Pinewood Lake Park on November 13, 2024.

Conservation Items Before County Council: Jensen reported the County has sold conservation mitigation credits and will have conversations about the conservation bank development at some point in the future. Epps also reported the County has two new councilmembers, Councilmember Tyra Little (District 3) and Councilmember Tish Dozier Alleyne (District 8).

Commissioner Advocacy: Councilmembers Branham, Livingston, Newton, and Weaver attended the Holiday Drop-In. Jensen was informed of and attended various RSWCD activities.

Old Business:

Ag + Art Tour Sponsorship: Thompson reported the Richland County Ag + Art Tour planning committee has been requesting funds for the tour; however, the committee has not received any sponsorship confirmations to date. Thompson also stated Amanda Jones, Planning Committee Chair, is assisting with the FY2026 H-Tax grant application for the 2026 tour.

Resource Rodeo: Thompson reminded attendees the Resource Rodeo will be held on Thursday, January 30 from 9 am to 4:30 pm. Forty-one speakers will give presentations on extension and educational resources, regulatory land and production resources, federal resources, funding, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Mullis is one of the speakers and will present on behalf of soil and water conservation districts. Participant tickets cost \$25 and registration closes on January 23. Thompson reported \$4,000 have been raised in sponsorships. Proceeds not used for Resource Rodeo will be used for Midlands Local Food Collaborative (MLFC) initiatives.

New Business:

Associate Commissioner Reappointments: Rhodes motioned to reappoint Mary Frances Hendrix, Mary Beth McSwain, and Charles Weber. T. McSwain seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and approved unanimously. Holliday reported James Kilgo is not renewing his term as associate commissioner.

2025 Summer Internship Proposal: Thompson proposed a summer agritourism internship to support the 2025 Richland County Ag + Art Tour. The internship would be from May 15 to August 15 for approximately 20 hours/week. Epps and Thompson proposed a budget of \$4,545.56 for the internship and suggested using funds allocated for promotional items, Arbor Day, and the SCACD Conference as well as Visa card rewards. Epps noted RSWCD needs \$2,000 from FY25 to offer the internship. Rhodes motioned to hire a summer agritourism intern. T. McSwain seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and approved unanimously.

MLFC: Specialty Crop Block Grant Application: Thompson reported MLFC is considering seeking funds from the South Carolina Specialty Crop Grant program to implement a two-part

initiative to promote the state's specialty crops and strengthen the connection between local farmers and the culinary community. The first part of the initiative is a Farmer and Chef Mashup Event, an annual showcase pairing local farmers with chefs from Columbia area restaurants to create unique dishes highlighting South Carolina specialty crops. The second part of the initiative is a weeklong promotional campaign, Locavore or Eat Locally Grown Week, which highlights restaurants in the Midlands featuring specialty crops on their menu. Attendees discussed the grant proposal to include RSWCD staff participation and the possibility of including administrative fees into the proposal. Thompson stated the grant is a reimbursement process and purchases would be made using RSWCD funds. The board will vote whether to support the grant proposal at the February board meeting.

RSWCD Strategic Plan: Epps asked attendees to review the current strategic plan. Attendees agreed to discuss the plan at the February board meeting and then amend and re-adopt the plan if necessary at the March board meeting.

Executive Session: N/A

Public Input: N/A

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 10 at 6 pm at Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Road, Columbia, SC 29209.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.