



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

(803) 576-2080 - Fax (803) 576-2088

www.richlandcountysc.gov/rswcd • soilandwater@richlandcountysc.gov

May 9, 2022 • 6pm

Heathwood Hall Episcopal School • 3000 S Beltline Blvd. • Columbia, SC 29201

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Hemphill Pride, III

Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners Present

Logan Richardson

Tim McSwain

Charles Weber

Dr. Jamie Browder

Mary Frances Hendrix

Others Present

Aric Jensen

Chanda Cooper

Stephanie Kimbrough

Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez & Family

Welcome and Call to Order: Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. Rhodes gave the invocation.

Tour of Edible Fruit Forest: Browder and Kimbrough introduced Heathwood Hall's outdoor/ environmental education initiatives, including a greenhouse learning center and edible fruit forest. These initiatives are being revitalized following several years of disuse. Students and community volunteers are invested in these projects and are guiding their development. Future plans for these initiatives include more signage in the fruit forest, more technology integration, and the addition of a classroom to the greenhouse.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Rhodes moved to approve the agenda as presented; Burts seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Rhodes moved to approve the minutes from the April 11, 2022 meeting as presented; Laney seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Financial Report: Rhodes reported the following:

Operating Account (4/30/22 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$45,582.85 (4/1/22)
- Deposits and Credits: \$4,487.50
- Expenses and Debits: \$3,587.64
- Ending Balance: \$46,482.71 (4/30/22)

Credit Card (5/5/22 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$1,134.46 (4/5/22)
- Payments: \$1,134.46
- Purchases: \$507.73
- Ending Balance: \$507.73 (5/5/22) <paid in full 5/9/22

Easement Stewardship Account (4/30/22 Statement)

- Starting Account Value: \$55,551.53 (2/28/22)
- Ending Account Value: \$53,603.21 (4/30/22)

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (4/30/22 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$252.51 (3/31/22)
- Ending Balance: \$252.51 (4/30/22)

PayPal Account (5/9/22 Statement)

- Current Balance: \$0.00 (5/9/22)

Friends of RSWCD Report: Laney reported no new Friends have joined since the last RSWCD board meeting on April 11. There are 40 current Friends. Former Richland County economic development director Nelson Lindsay will introduce Laney to the current economic development officer in hopes this connection can help RSWCD remain apprised of incoming large businesses. Laney presented a list of existing businesses in Richland County whose missions correlate with that of RSWCD and proposed that commissioners and associate commissioners (a) add to the list and (b) each choose a few to approach. Burts reported Fresh Market and Whole Foods will require a letter of request on RSWCD letterhead.

Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden: No report was available.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Bonilla-Gonzalez, who serves as District Conservationist for both Richland and Calhoun Counties, reported she has received 65 EQIP applications from the two counties. Approximately 25 of these applications are from Richland, and eight have been pre-approved for funding. Last year, approximately 75% of all applications were funded. Many of the current applications are from new and beginning producers, and Bonilla-Gonzalez sees more activity in the upper end of Richland County near Chapin. She would like to see more applications from urban producers. The Richland/Calhoun field office has been short-handed; Calhoun Soil and Water Conservation District has just hired a new part-time clerk to assist with the workload.

SC Department of Natural Resources (DNR):

- Governor Henry McMaster proclaimed April 24-May 1, 2022, Soil and Water Stewardship Week in SC.
- The SC Envirothon was held at the Sandhill Research and Education Center in Columbia on April 29; approximately 14 teams competed, and several RSWCD representatives volunteered at the event.

- The House of Representatives has adjourned debate on the State Budget. This means they will debate the budget next week, or during a Special Session, likely in June. If the House does not take up the budget next week, then the announcement of the conference committee members will be made during the Special Session. Once that committee is announced, SCACD will contact conservation districts with representatives on that committee to ask them to continue to support the Conservation Districts budget request. This request includes an increase of \$606,154 to the state DNR budget to increase conservation district funding by \$10,000 per county per year and to add two full-time district support positions.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber and McSwain reported Conservation Division Director Quinton Epps is pursuing grant funding to purchase conservation land in Richland County. Weber volunteered as an oral presentation judge at the SC Envirothon and was impressed by the event and by the student participants. He recommended RSWCD explore revitalizing its Junior Commissioner program.

Education: Cooper provided a written education report (Attachment A).

Advocacy: Burts reported Kirkman Finlay contacted her to express his thanks for her involvement in Conservation Districts Day at the Statehouse.

SCACD Policy/Position Statements: The group reviewed the SCACD's 2021 Education and Outreach Committee and Legislative Committee Policy/Position Statements for three reasons: (1) to increase familiarity with the state recommendations; (2) to note anything RSWCD should add or improve in its work plan; and (3) to note anything RSWCD would like to recommend to SCACD. No items were flagged for follow-up.

Equipment Rental Rate Changes: RSWCD currently provides low-cost rental of a no-till drill to promote soil health. The rental rate is \$10/acre for the first 50 acres and \$7/acre for each additional acre, with a \$50 minimum. The group noted these rates are very low and, with the increasing cost of parts, may cause the equipment rental program to run "in the red." Following discussion, Laney moved to increase the rental cost to \$12/acre for the first 50 acres and \$10/acre for each additional acre, with a \$60 minimum. Rhodes seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Proposed Summer Meeting Dates: Cooper proposed RSWCD meet on June 13 as usual, recess in July, and meet on August 1 (one week earlier than usual) due to scheduling conflicts.

Midlands Gives Funding Requests: RSWCD received donation requests from Congaree Riverkeeper, Congaree Land Trust, SC Wildlife Federation, Keep the Midlands Beautiful, Sustainable Midlands, and Camp Discovery during the Midlands Gives fund drive. Following discussion, the group agreed to accept these requests as information and consider providing support during the FY23 budget process in August.

Public Input: Mullis reminded the group two RSWCD commissioner seats are up for election this year. Jensen reported Richland County is re-starting the Land Development Code mapping process. Burts, Hendrix, and Richardson requested information about volunteering at the Richland County Ag & Art Tour; Cooper will send them links to the website and contact information for the local coordinator, Wendy Broman.

Upcoming Event: RSWCD will host the Richland County Local Work Group Meeting on Thursday, June 2, at 9am at the Sandhill Research and Education Center.

Next Meeting: June 13, 2022, at 6pm; location TBA.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:46pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst

Attachment A: Education Report

RSWCD Education Report 4/11/22 – 5/9/22

Classroom/Youth Programs

- “Wonderful Worms” vermicomposting program with 28 1st and 3rd graders at Cutler Jewish Day School (Council District 6, Joe Walker III), 4/29/22
- “Supersoil” soil science programs with 2 classes of 1st graders at A.C. Moore Elementary School (approx. 24 students, total) (Council District 5, Allison Terracio), 5/4/22
- Sponsored and coordinated Carolina Fence Garden, Pollinator Garden, and Nature Trail Workday at Lonnie B. Nelson Elementary School (Council District 8, Overture Walker). Four community volunteers assisted with the event. Students presented about their pollinator service learning unit to parents, teachers, and other classes during a virtual symposium.
- 111 poster contest entries from 9 schools; judging completed by Mary Burts, Mary Frances Hendrix, Hannah Lindsay, and Chanda Cooper; 20 winners selected; press release and awards coming soon
- SC Envirothon:
 - RSWCD sponsored a team from Spring Hill High School, coached by Lisa Ruth.
 - RSWCD sponsored the overall event. Fourteen teams from across the state competed on 4/29/22.
 - Chanda Cooper served as Oral Presentation Station Manager. She hosted a judges’ training for 14 judges (4/20/22) and managed the station on the day of the competition (4/29/22).
 - Chanda Cooper assisted with competition set-up on 4/28/22.
 - Mary Burts, Charles Weber, and Mary Frances Hendrix volunteered at the event (4/29/22).

Teacher/Educator Programs

- Participated in April Midlands Meetup for environmental educators (4/12/22)
- Participated in Project Learning Tree Meetup (5/4/22)
- Chaired SC Project Learning Tree Marketing Committee meeting (4/12/22)
- Participated in SC Project Learning Tree Steering Committee meeting (4/21/22)
- Participated in SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition Board meeting; Kenny Mullis serves as Past President and Chanda Cooper serves as Secretary (4/27/22)
- Participated in Environmental Education Association of SC Board and Executive Board meetings (4/13/22, 5/5/22)
- Chaired Environmental Education Association of SC 2022 Fundraiser, which raised \$9,021 for the organization (largest fundraiser to date!). Cooper was the top fundraiser and recruited \$1,595 for the organization.
- Developed successful grant proposal for EEASC to receive \$6,500 from the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance to support the implementation of landscape analysis recommendations
- Mentored SC Green Steps School projects at Brockman Elementary School (Council District 6, Joe Walker III) and Lonnie B. Nelson Elementary School (Council District 8, Overture Walker)
- Assisted with hiring of executive director for Environmental Education Association of SC

- Planning/co-chairing Environmental Education Association of SC Annual Conference (6/8/22-6/11/22)

Farmer/Natural Resource Professional Programs

- Participated in SC Conservation District Employees Association Training Committee meeting (4/28/22); helping coordinate upcoming employee training on grant-writing (5/27/22)
- Hosting Farmer Resources Workshop (5/19/22)
- Hosting Richland County Local Work Group Meeting (6/2/22)
- Coordinating next Midlands Local Food Collaborative Meeting (6/3/22)

Community Programs

- **Seed Sanctuary**
 - Completed final mailing (approx. 2,500 packets); all seed distribution henceforth will be done in person at Richland Library Eastover or Pop-Up Events
 - Completed Pop-Up Events:
 - Pine Grove Community Center, 4/16/22
 - Soda City Earth Day Event, 4/23/22
 - Upcoming Pop-Up Events:
 - Lake Carolina Upper Elementary, 5/16/22
 - Fox Hideaway Farm, 5/21/22
 - Blythewood Middle School, 5/23/22
 - Richland County Ag & Art Tour (details TBD), 6/11/22-6/12/22
 - Upcoming WACH Fox interview at Richland Library Eastover, 5/7/22
 - New marketing materials ordered: rain gauges, vegetable brush/peeler, reusable tote bags
 - Charlie Fisher has volunteered to assist with Seed Sanctuary maintenance at Richland Library Eastover; UofSC environmental science student Renee Hintz volunteered to complete seed mailings
- **Adopt-A-Stream**
 - Two community volunteers borrowed the kit

Communications

- 573 Instagram followers
- 457 Twitter followers
- 1,047 Facebook followers
- 3,393 Mailchimp e-newsletter subscribers