



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A

Columbia, SC 29204

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

www.rcgov.us/rswcd • soilandwater@rcgov.us

November 9, 2020

Virtual Meeting/6:00pm

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair

Jim Rhodes, Secretary/Treasurer

Hemphill Pride, III

Mary Burts

Associate Commissioners

Charles Weber

Mary Hendrix

James Kilgo

Others Present

Quinton Epps, Conservation Division Manager

Chanda Cooper, Education Program Coordinator

Charlie Fisher, Administrative Assistant

Mary Hannah Lindsay, Community Outreach Coordinator

Anne Marie Johnson, Pollinator Garden Manager

Dr. Jamison Browder, Conservation Teacher of the Year

Racquel Slaton, Anderson SWCD

Bill Stangler, Congaree River Keeper

Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Mullis called the meeting to order, gave the invocation and welcomed guests.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Burts made a motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Laney. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Pride made a motion to approve the minutes of October 12 and was seconded by Commissioner Laney. Motion carried.

Special Presentation: Anderson SWCD

Ms. Slaton discussed the Anderson SWCD approach to their Affiliate Membership program. Letters are sent to local businesses, farmers, County Council and other interested stake holders. Affiliates are gifted with a bumper sticker and their names are shared on social media and in the monthly newsletter. For a contribution over \$200, the Affiliate receives a free ad in the newsletter. The Anderson Seed Library launch was affected by COVID since the Public Library was closed. However since the opening of the Library in September, 204 patrons have received up to five different packets of seeds. A monthly give-away, in partnership with the Library, has generated more visitor activity for the Library which in turn benefits the Seed Library. Seeds have been donated from the Greenville SWCD and Walmart.

Special Presentation: Waters of the US

Bill Stangler, Congaree Riverkeeper, explained the change in interpreting the federal Navigable Waters Protection Act is a complicated issue and spans many years. The new rule changes the definition of Waters of the United States and opens questions of where the Clean Water Act is applicable, and 404 Permit requirements to fill streams or wetlands. This issue has been debated by courts, presidential administrations, and the EPA. The Trump administration started the process to redefine the Waters of the US in 2017. EPA and Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) published a new rule which went into effect June 22, 2020. Many isolated wetlands and headwater streams, particularly ephemeral streams, are no longer jurisdictional under the new rule. It also means public notice of the land being disturbed will not be provided.

Federal regulation requires 404 jurisdictional projects to first try to avoid impacts to streams and wetlands, secondly minimize impacts, and then mitigate as a last resort. The ACOE office in Charleston reviewed the Holy Grail permit and determined the wetlands on site are not jurisdictional under the new rule. The Charleston District ACOE has determined wetlands involved with several permits are not jurisdictional, resulting in more fill and no mitigation for impacts to wetlands in SC.

The impact on water quality, habitat, and ecosystem services to larger water bodies will be considerable due to the loss of many acres of wetlands and headwater streams under the new definition. The new rule is likely to reduce the sale of mitigation credits affecting the county's mitigation bank. Without a jurisdictional finding, there will be less public notice that allows the public to understand the impacts of various projects. Lawsuits have been filed contesting the rule and the ACOE's implementation.

Financial Report

Deposits/credits totaled \$1387.50; checks and debits totaled \$3025.10; ending balance is \$58,422.20 as of October 30. The bank statement is balanced with the checkbook. The Charles Schwab account balance is \$53,213.21

Affiliate Membership

No new members to report since last meeting.

Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden Report

The demonstration pollinator garden was developed from an old raised garden bed and is now winding down due to cooler temperatures. There is a spate of activity for the remaining pollinators which are still flourishing due to the availability of nectar sources. The remaining gray and brown plant foliage has died down but is providing habitat which will offer winter protections for a host of different pollinators. The much appreciated volunteers stay busy with general cleanup, dead-heading and the harvest of seeds. Blueberry plants will soon be installed in the garden, the list of plantings in the garden is being compiled and repairs are being made to the irrigation system so it can be winterized.

Conservation Division/Conservation Commission Report (RCCC)

Mr. Epps reported RCCC is performing due diligence and considering several potential property donations. A report is expected on Walden Pond next Monday from the consultant. An effort is underway to have the Historical Grant Program funding restored after a budget reduction. Staff is discussing Holiday Drop –in alternatives such as a card mail out highlighting successful projects from the Division. County revenue projections will impact how long it will take to hire a new Conservation Program Analyst. During the current hiring freeze, only essential positions are being hired.

Education Report

Dr. Jamie Browder was recognized as the 2020 Richland County Conservation Teacher of the Year, receiving a \$100 cash prize and a \$500 Conservation Education Mini-Grant for his school, during a ceremony led by Chairman Kenny Mullis and Councilwoman Chakisse Newton. RSWCD awarded one \$1,000 Conservation Education Mini-Grant to Camp Discovery to support the development of virtual learning opportunities for Richland County students. The District also collaborated with Richland County Stormwater Management to publish a home composting educational video, and three additional educational videos were published ([7](#), [8](#), [9](#)) as a part of the “Bee-Friend Local Pollinators” Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant. District staff co-moderated a Champions of the Environment Environmental Education Workshop for 60 participants. RSWCD provided educational giveaways for 20 pre K students treated to an educational outing by Commissioner Burts.

Community Engagement Coordinator Hannah Lindsay shared information about the District and facilitated a Seed Sanctuary volunteer event for 20 University 101 students and their instructor. The current Plant of the Month article features goldenrod—an important native plant for pollinators and a current star in the Pollinator Garden. The District facilitated a Midlands Meetup for 22 environmental educators.

NRCS Report

Ms. Bonilla-Gonzalez is now in the office by herself since Antron Williams took a job in Georgia. 31 EQIP and 6 CSP applications have been received. These are new applicants and are very different in scope from previous years. Eligibility is being looked at and the deadline for enrollment is January 15. Mr. Epps questioned if there was anything RSWCD could do to assist NRCS. Further discussion will look into potential assistance.

Pollinator Demonstration Garden Project Continuation

The RSWCD Board has given their approval to pursue grant funding for continuation of the garden. Administrator Brown and Councilwoman Newton have also given approval for RSWCD to move forward with applying for additional grant funding to continue the project. RSWCD is on target with spending on the current grant but has received a grant extension through June 30, 2021. The call for applications for the NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation Grants should be released by the end of November. Mr. Epps, Ms. Johnson, and Ms. Cooper have met with five community members to discuss community engagement for when the Park reopens.

Associate Commissioner Application

Dr. Browder thanked everyone for the Conservation Teacher of the Year Award he received and explained his willingness to serve as an Associate Commissioner. He discussed his interest in gardening, storytelling which is a nice pathway to teaching young children about gardening, and teaching about at-risk foods which are facing extinction. Commissioner Rhodes made a motion seconded by Commissioner Burts to accept Dr. Browder as an Associate Commissioner. Motion passed.

No Till Drill Budget Amendment

It was necessary to purchase 12 new coulters for the No Till Drill at a cost of \$531 which exceeded the \$250 allocated for repairs. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Rhodes made a motion seconded by Commissioner Pride to increase the amount budgeted for No Till Drill to \$531 and to direct staff to determine the best line item to deduct the \$281 for the repairs from to balance the budget. SC Department of Corrections is scheduled to use the Drill on 500 acres which will generate income for RSWCD.

Affiliate Membership Program Proposal

Staff, Commissioners, and Associate Commissioners revised the District's affiliate membership program during a virtual strategic planning session. Staff has developed new levels of support and defined what the sponsorship levels will cover. Commissioner Laney suggested offering subscriptions to the SC Wildlife Magazine for certain levels of support. The value of the subscription will be deducted from the total amount of the contribution to calculate the tax deductible amount for the donor. Ms. Cooper is seeking volunteers to take on the administration of the program on a monthly basis. Commissioner Laney made a motion and was seconded by Commissioner Rhodes to add the magazine subscription to the \$100 plus donation level. Motion carried.

Friends of NACD Grant Proposal

The Seed Sanctuary program launch was funded by a \$2,500 grant. Funding for the startup was spent on seeds and packaging supplies. Ms. Lindsay proposes applying for a second \$2,500 grant to continue the highly successful program to expand community outreach. The additional funding from a second grant could be used to purchase promotional items for volunteers, tabling display items, signage and additional material for packaging seeds. Commissioner Laney made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Burts, for Hannah Lindsay to apply for a FY21 Friends of NACD Grant on behalf of RSWCD to expand community outreach through the Seed Sanctuary project. Motion carried.

Associate Commissioner Kilgo will represent RSWCD at the upcoming Watershed-Based Planning focus group for the Three Rivers Watershed.

Commissioner Burts was congratulated on her win in the election.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Charlie Fisher, Admin. Asst./CC