



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)
2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A
Columbia, SC 29204
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Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2024 6pm

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

Commissioners Present

Jeff Laney, Vice Chair
Mary Burts
Tim McSwain

Associate Commissioners Present

Sarah Burnham
Logan Richardson
Mary Beth McSwain
Charles Weber

Others Present

Quinton Epps
Chanda Cooper
Val Morris
Aric Jensen
Jennifer Mancke
Kirstin Bullington
Keith Willouby

Welcome and Call to Order: Laney called the meeting to order and T. McSwain gave the invocation at 6:03 pm.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Burts made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by T. McSwain. The motion was brought to a vote, and it passed unanimously. Additionally, T. McSwain made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Burts. The motion was brought to a vote, and it also passed unanimously.

Special Presentation: Keith Willouby, Executive Director of Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC), talked about EEASC's vision and mission. They aim to connect, support, and equip South Carolinians to promote environmental stewardship. Additionally, they assist governmental, business, and other organizations in connecting and providing resources about the environment.

Financial Report: Cooper provided the following financial overview:

Operating Account (01/31/24 Statement)

- Beginning Balance: \$69,734.13 (01/01/24)
- Deposits and Credits: \$14,350.00
- Expenses and Debits: \$3,325.33
- Ending Balance: \$80,758.80 (01/31/24)

Credit Card (02/05/24 Statement)

- Beginning Balance: \$430.41 (01/05/24)
- Payments: \$430.41
- Purchases: \$1,825.84
- Ending Balance: \$1,825.84 (02/05/24) <paid in full (02/12/2024)

Easement Stewardship Account (01/31/24 Statement)

- Starting Account Value: \$52,952.32 (01/01/24)
- Ending Account Value: \$53,151.26 (01/31/24)
- Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$53,604.61 (01/31/24)

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (01/31/24 Statement)

- Starting Balance: \$252.51 (01/01/24)
- Credits: \$39,374.48
- Debts: \$20,854.89
- Ending Balance: \$18,772.10 (01/31/24)

PayPal Account (01/31/24 Statement)

- Beginning Available Balance: \$100.00 (01/01/24)
- Ending Available Balance: \$542.28 (01/31/24)

Friends of RSWCD Report: Laney reported, since the last board meeting on 01/08/24, there have been no new Friends and one renewal from Carol Kososki totaling \$500. The current count of Friends stands at 26 (three of which are Honorary Friends). Our donation goal for the fiscal year is \$5,000.00 by 06/30/2024; as of today, we have received \$2,793.00. Morris introduced and explained the sponsorship calendar for a future “Thanks for Giving” Friends Drive.

Administrative Report: Morris reported Statement of Economic Interest reports are due by noon on 03/30/2024 and the Conservation District Day at the SC Statehouse will be 03/05/2024.

NRCS: None Reported

SCDNR: Cooper shared January SCDNR Statewide report and informed the group of SCDNR key dates and deadlines for the year of 2024.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber reported the Natural Resources Committee (NRC) finished selecting grant recipients, with more applicants than ever before. He expressed interest in the Stormwater Studios grant-supported Pollinator and Native Plant Garden, which he sees as a unique opportunity. Weber explained the creek running past Stormwater Studios, from the South Carolina Coliseum into the Congaree River, has been covered and dark for years, raising environmental concerns.

Education: Cooper reported on RSWCD's education activities since the last meeting on 01/08/24:

- **Youth Presentations & Project Mentorship:** Mancke provided updates on various projects she has been working on across the county.
 - Dutch Fork Elementary School -Science Fair Mentorship, 3 students
 - Hopkins Elementary School – Plarn/Upcycling, 25 students
 - Harmony School – Watershed Explorer, 11 students
 - Harmony School – Recycling, 11 students
 - Lower Richland High School – Science Fair Judging
 - Harmony School – Adopt-A-Stream Sampling, 11 students
 - JP Thomas – Recycling, Girls in STEM
 - Uhuru Academy
- **Communications:** RSWCD's e-newsletter has 4,435 (+11) subscribers; Facebook has 1,247 followers (+11); and Instagram has 756 followers (+3). The Richland County Ag + Art Tour Facebook has 1,050 followers (+15) and Instagram has 668 (+13).
- **Richland County Ag + Art Tour:** The event is on 06/08/24-06/09/24, with up to 20 tour sites. Apply to host a site by March 1st. Volunteer applications open March 15th, and artisan applications close April 15th. We're still looking for \$5,000 in sponsorships, with \$785 donated so far. The next planning meeting is on 02/20/24, at 1:00 pm.
- **Seed Sanctuary:** Associate Commissioner Dilihay and the East Columbia Rotary Club packed 480 packets in just 30 minutes! Impressive! We're moving to warm-season seeds at Richland Library Eastover and 2020 Hampton Street. We gave out 305 packets at two pop-up events and received 235 requests for seeds by mail.
- **Strategic Planning:** RSWCD organized a strategic planning meeting for the Midlands Local Food Collaborative. Around 17 people attended, and together they created a new draft strategic plan. **2024 Cultiv8 Agribusiness & Food Systems Summit:** Morris hosted a display at the Cultiv8 Agribusiness and Food Summit to reach out and partner with agricultural programs and organizations.
- **Congaree Research Symposium:** Cooper reported she, along with Epps, McKenzie, Jensen, and T. McSwain, attended the Congaree Research Symposium. Epps and Jensen were speakers, they discussed the Lower Richland Tourism Plan (LRTP). Jensen also emphasized the significance of the upcoming comprehensive plan revision process, which will begin later this year.
- **SC Envirothon Coaches and Training:** Cooper reported three teachers from Richland County attended the training. She is hopeful they will bring students to compete.
- **Richland Library Blythewood:** Cooper hosted a class called "Wonderful Worms" at Richland Library Blythewood. Approximately 11 participants learned about worm composting.
- **Green Steps:** Cooper reported she and Jane Hiller hosted a workshop with the Kershaw County Master Gardeners called "How Does Your School Garden Grow?", to recruit more mentors for school gardening projects.
- **Project Learning Tree:** Cooper participated in the PLT steering committee meeting and she is serving on the planning committee for the 2025 National PLT conference.
- **Poster Contest & Stewardship Week:** The 2024 K-12 poster contest theme is "May the Forest Be With You Always." Entries are due by 04/12/24. RSWCD will supply 24 sheets of poster paper to schools interested in participating. On 04/29/24, there will be a Governors Proclamation. April 30 is Classroom Education Day, 05/01/24 is Forestry Field Day at Harbison State Park, 05/02/24

is for Forest Recreation Awareness Publicity, and 05/03/24 is for Forest Industry Awareness Publicity.

- **Conservation Education Mini-Grants:** Cooper reported there were 13 grant applications, more than ever before; and the requested amount for the grants is \$11,817.95. RSWCD has just over \$3,000 available in grant funds; Cooper is seeking partnerships with other organizations to help gather more funds to support potential grant recipients.
- **Environmental Education Association of SC (EEASC):** The EEASC annual conference, Climate ResiliencEE, will be held at USC Upstate 6/20-22/24.
- **Adopt-A-Stream (AAS):** RSWCD's AAS kit continues to be used by two community volunteers each month.

SC Conservation Partnership Conference: T. McSwain said RSWCD had a good turnout at the conference. Treasurer Rhodes led the pledge of allegiance, and Epps was recognized for his 10 years of service as a district employee. Bullington was acknowledged as the Conservation Educator of the Year at the secondary level. McSwain mentioned that the conference was well organized and enjoyable, and he appreciated the opportunity to learn alongside representatives from other districts.

Conservation Items Before County Council: None reported.

Commissioner Advocacy: Laney asked staff to create a mechanism for tracking RSWCD's interactions with Council members and administration; staff will include a table in the meeting slideshows henceforth. Laney reported he spoke with Administrator Brown in January to commend Jensen on his support for RSWCD.

Old Business: Strategic Plan Amendment (Action Item)

- **T. McSwain moved to amend RSWCD's Strategic Plan Goal 5 by adding the following as Strategy 5:**
 - Commissioners will develop and maintain relationships and communications with members of County Council and County administration.
 - a. Commissioners will present an annual report to County Council each October.
 - b. Commissioners will attend County Council meetings.
 - c. Commissioners will communicate with their County Council members.
 - d. Commissioners will routinely communicate with the County Administrator and Assistant County Administrator.
 - e. Staff will provide Commissioners with information (such as program reports and photos) to facilitate Commissioners' communications with Council members.
 - f. An Advocacy Report will be included on each RSWCD regular meeting agenda. During this time, commissioners will review Goal 5, Strategy 5 and will report on progress.
- **The motion was seconded by Burts and passed unanimously.**

New Business:

Gills Creek Watershed New Total Maximum Daily Load: Epps explained a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) has been produced for Gills Creek requiring a 62% reduction in lead levels. The problem apparently stems from 19 small-arms firing ranges on Fort Jackson where spent ammunition is leaching

metals such as copper and lead in the upper portions of the watershed. Much of the lead and copper is attached to sediments and has already moved downstream, so removal may be challenging and expensive.

Assoc. Comm. Appointment – Bullington:

- **T. McSwain moved to accept the application for Bullington to become an Associate Commissioner for the RSWCD which was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.**

Commissioners Reappointments – Mullis & Laney:

Laney recused himself from the discussion due to a conflict of interest. Both Laney's and Mullis's commissioner appointments expire on 3/27/24. In order to be considered for reappointment by DNR, they must first be nominated by the RSWCD. The upcoming vacancies were advertised on RSWCD's website and office bulletin board; applications were submitted by Laney and Mullis.

- **T. McSwain moved to nominate Mullis and Laney for reappointment as commissioners, which was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.**

Master Gardener Conference Sponsorship:

- **T. McSwain moved to sponsor the SC Master Gardeners conference at \$100, which was seconded by Burts. Motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Session: N/A

Public Input: T. McSwain asked Epps to consider hosting a firefly viewing experience at Mill Creek. He also encouraged attendees to be vigilant and notice how streams and ponds are being protected or impacted during construction and development. He reminded commissioners of the challenges created for Blythewood residents by the development of the Crickentree golf course.

Next Meeting: The next board meeting is scheduled for Monday, 03/11/24 at 6pm at Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, SC 29209.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Val Morris, Conservation Administrative Assistant