

MINUTES OF MEETING
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2020
TELECONFERENCE STATE OFFICE
RSA UNION BUILDING, MONTGOMERY, AL

**Soil & Water Conservation
Committee Board**

Members Present:

Charles Holmes - Chair
Johnny Lee - Vice Chair
Dr. Carol Knight
Vaughn Poe
Ricky Cornutt
Jake Harper
Andy Chamness
Dr. Gary Lemme

Dr. William Puckett
Executive Director

Other:

Bill Bailey, FPAC
Bob Plaster, ADAI
Leigha Cauthen, AAC
Cynthia Price, AG Statistics
Brian Harden, ALFA
William Green, ALFA
Russ Durrance, ALFA
Dr. Eve Brantley, Auburn Univ.
Dr. Mark Smith, Auburn Univ.
Joey Koptis, PSC
Rita Dailey, Wilcox SWCD
Cassandra Guilford, Henry SWCD
Mickey Smith, Sumter SWCD
Jack Wadsworth, Autauga SWCD
Rhonda Bryars, AACDC
Shelly Hyde, AACDC

NRCS:

Ben Malone
Richard Collier
Steve Musser
Christopher Davis
Greg Dansby
Jeff Thurmond
Vernon Abney
Alex Vaughn
Brandon McCray
Nicholas Williams

AACD:

Sabra Sutton
Courtney Curenton
Casey Fulford
Cayla Jackson

SWCC:

Debra Brooks
Kathy Gotcher
Ashley Henderson
Julia Soohoo
Earl Norton

Charles Holmes called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Debra Brooks and Rhonda Bryars recorded the minutes. Prior notice of the meeting was given in accordance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act.

A lawful quorum was present for this meeting.

The meeting was conducted via WebEx and meeting materials were mailed to Committee members on September 3, 2020.

Invocation – Bob Plaster

Roll call of Board Members – Charles Holmes

Welcome Guest – Charles Holmes

Minutes - Motion made by Rickey Cornutt to approve the minutes of May 6, 2020; seconded by Johnny Lee; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote. Dr. Puckett stated that the memo on the Attorney General's Opinion on Liability had been sent out since the last meeting. He also stated that 66 of the 67 districts had responded to the request on information by the Examiners Office on district bank accounts and Foundations.

Appointment/Reappointment of District Supervisors - Motion made by Dr. Carol Knight to approve appointments, reappointments and resignations; seconded by Dr. Gary Lemme; the Committee approved the reappointment of 26 Supervisor, 8 new Supervisors; accepted resignation of 4 Supervisors and 2 deceased Supervisors. Dr. Lemme asked if progress had been made increasing diversity on district boards. Dr. Puckett responded that some progress had been made but he would send a letter to all districts to encourage diversity of boards. Motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.

COVID-19 Update and District Impacts- Dr. Puckett referred the Committee to the memo in the meeting materials that were mailed out September 3, 2020. The memo was in response to Governor Ivey's Order extending "Safer-at-Home" until October 2, 2020. Dr. Puckett stated that six memos on COVID-19 had been sent to districts since the last meeting. Dr. Puckett also stated that under Safer-at-Home, reopening of districts, staffing, telework, and flexible schedules were up to the local district boards and should be coordinated with NRCS.

FY20 Budget Update- Dr. Puckett gave an update on the FY20 Budgets for both the Committee and Commission. No action needed.

FY21 Budget Approval- Dr. Puckett gave an update on the FY21 Budgets. Motion made by Jake Harper to approve the FY21 Budgets; seconded by Johnny Lee; Dr. Puckett stated that approximately \$80k had been added to the Soil Health RCPP for additional phosphorus work by Dr. Prasad at Auburn. He also stated that the agreements with ADEM on CAFO reimbursements, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for Education Trust Funds, and Soil and Water Conservation Society for Erosion and Sediment Control Program were signed or were the process of being signed for FY21. Motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.

Travel approval for SWCC Board and Staff, FY21 Travel Memo and Financial Checklist- Motion made by Dr. Gary Lemme to approve the travel for the (a) 75th NACD Annual Meeting, Feb. 6-10, 2021, New Orleans, LA; (b) FY21 District Travel Memo and (c) Annual District Financial Checklist; seconded by Vaughn Poe; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.

Update on Feral Swine Research Project – Mark Smith, Auburn University, gave an update on the Feral Swine Research Project.

Updates and Approvals for Irrigation and Feral Swine Programs – Ashley Henderson updated the committee on the Irrigation and Feral Swine Projects. Ms. Henderson also asked board for the approval of:

- (a) **Approval to apply for FY21 RCPP** - Motion made by Dr. Carol Knight for the approval to apply for FY21 RCPP; seconded by Jake Harper; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.
- (b) **Approval of 2nd Irrigation Sign-Up and 100% cost of Water Management Plan of Middle TN River Basin** - Motion made by Johnny Lee for approval of 2nd Irrigation Sign-Up and 100% cost of Water Management Plan of Middle TN River Basin; seconded by Jake Harper; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.
- (c) **Approval for Chair to sign Choc-Pea Agreement with NRCS** - Motion made by Vaughn Poe for approval for Chair to sign Choc-Pea Agreement with NRCS; seconded by Dr. Carol Knight; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.
- (d) **Approval of Ranking Criteria Concept for Choc-Pea Watershed** and
- (e) **Approval to proceed with Irrigation Sign-Up in Choc-Pea, date to TBD by SWCC Staff** - Ms. Henderson asked that the Approval of Ranking Criteria Concept for Choc-Pea Watershed and the Approval to proceed with Irrigation Sign-Up in Choc-Pea, date to TBD by SWCC Staff be combined to be voted on. Motion made by Johnny Lee to approve Ranking Criteria Concept for Choc-Pea Watershed and the Approval to proceed with Irrigation Sign-Up in Choc-Pea, date to TBD by SWCC Staff; seconded by Jake Harper; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.
- (f) **Approval to sign agreement with AACDC on Feral Swine Control Program** and
- (g) **Advice and Consent on AACDC Financial Assistance Program for Feral Swine** - Mrs. Henderson asked that Approval to sign agreement with AACDC on Feral Swine Control Program and the Advice and Consent on AACDC Financial Assistance Program for Feral Swine be combined to be voted on. Motion made by Jake Harper for Approval to sign agreement with AACDC on Feral Swine Control Program and the Advice and Consent on AACDC Financial Assistance Program for Feral Swine; seconded by Dr. Carol Knight; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.

SWCC Website and Phone App Update – Shelly Hyde reported on the progress of updating the SWCC Website and development of Phone Apps for the Erosion and Sediment Control Program. Ms. Hyde stated that she was also working on software for the upcoming irrigation and feral swine sign-ups.

Update on MOU and District Level Cooperative Agreement – Rhonda Bryars gave an update on the progress for completing the agreements between NRCS and each conservation district. She stated that the deadline for districts to complete the agreements was September 30, 2020.

Approve Ray Deese as a Professional Soil Classifier – Joey Koptis asked the Board to approve Ray Deese as a new Professional Soil Classifier. Motion made by Jake Harper to approve Ray Deese; seconded by Dr. Carol Knight. Ray Deese took the Exam on August 11, 2020 and passed. Motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.

AACD Areas II and III appointments for Committee Members expire 10/25/2020 – Dr. Puckett stated that AACD areas II and III had nominated individuals for appointment by the Governor to the Committee. Letters with the nominated individuals will be delivered to the Appointment Secretary in early October 2020.

Approve Ethics Commission notification for William E. Puckett to have Legislature contact for 2021- Motion made by Johnny Lee to approve Ethics Commission notification for William E. Puckett to have Legislature contact for 2021; seconded by Jake Harper; motion carried with no objections. Charles Holmes asked the SWCC Board for a roll call vote.

Partner Updates:

FPAC -Bill Bailey reported on FPAC activities.

Natural Resources Conservation Service- Ben Malone reported that Chief Matt Lohr had resigned last month. Kelvin Norton will serve as acting Chief. NRCS staffing cap had been increased from 149 to 153. Mr. Malone updated the staff on NRCS activities.

Alabama Forestry Commission- No report. AFC personnel not in attendance on the teleconference.

AG Statistics Service – Cynthia Price gave an update on NASS activities. NASS office is open, and the staff is back at work. The irrigation survey will be available December 17, 2020.

Alabama Department of Agricultural and Industries- Bob Plaster, Assistant Commissioner, reported on the CARES Act to assist agriculture impacted by COVID-19. The funds were used to establish the Alabama Agricultural Stabilization Program. Mr. Plaster stated that more information was available on the ADAI website.

Alabama Association of Conservation District- Sabra Sutton, gave an update on AACD upcoming events in 2021. She stated that the SENACD meeting was rescheduled for August 2021. Ms. Sutton also stated that no decision had been made on the AACD meeting scheduled for November 2020.

Erosion and Sediment Control Program - Earl Norton stated that the Steering Committee met on June 17, and decided to change Clear Water AL, 2020 scheduled for Cullman, to a virtual meeting with 6 webinars. The webinars will be October 15, 22, and 29 at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm. Registration is coordinated by the International Erosion Control Association and more information is available on their website. Mr. Norton stated that this is an opportunity for SWCDs to offer high quality training to local engineers, contractors and government officials for

a bargain basement price of \$25 for all 6 webinars. He also stated that Alex James is available to help local governments initiate stream protection planning with their local communities.

ACDEA – No report. ACDEA personnel not in attendance on the teleconference.

ALFA – Brian Harden thanked the Committee for their work and stated that he was excited about the irrigation and feral swine programs.

Other Business- No other business was discussed.

Motion made by Rickey Cornutt to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Vaughn Poe. Motion carried with no objections.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 am.

Next Scheduled Meeting – The next meeting will be at the RSA Union Building, Room 300 on January 13, 2021, at 9:00 am.

Submitted by:

CHARLES A. HOLMES, CHAIRMAN
STATE SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

DATE

DR. WILLIAM E. PUCKETT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE

DEBRA BROOKS
RECORDING SECRETARY

DATE