



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District  
 2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A  
 Columbia, SC 29204  
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October 11, 2021 • 6pm  
 Lizard's Thicket, 3147 Forest Dr, Columbia, SC 29204

#### **Commissioners Present**

Kenny Mullis, Chair  
 Hemphill Pride, III

#### **Associate Commissioners Present**

Tim McSwain  
 Charles Weber

#### **Others Present**

Aric Jensen, Richland County Assistant Administrator  
 Quinton Epps, Richland County Conservation Division Manager  
 Chanda Cooper, Richland County Conservation Education Analyst  
 Beau Sorenson, SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition Pasture Planner  
 Russell Hubright, SC Forestry Commission Forest Management Chief  
 Charles Davis, Clemson Extension County Agent  
 Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez, USDA-NRCS District Conservationist  
 Dr. Buz Kloot, UofSC/Soil Health Labs Researcher  
 Dr. Gabe Kenne, UofSC/Soil Health Labs Researcher

#### **Welcome and Call to Order**

Mullis called the meeting to order at 6pm and facilitated round robin introductions. Hubright gave the invocation. No quorum was present so no actions were taken.

#### **Local Work Group Meeting**

Mullis explained the purpose of the Local Work Group meeting is to provide input to USDA-NRCS on local resource concerns and conservation funding priorities. Sorenson, who develops pasture plans for producers statewide, outlined the resource concerns he believes are most prevalent for livestock producers. Hubright provided an overview of the top three issues facing forestland in Richland County, as identified in the Forest Action Plan: **(1) public perception about forestry (smells, noise, smoke from prescribed burns, unsightliness following timber harvest, etc.); (2) water quality and quantity; and (3) fragmentation and parcelization of land.** He also outlined the major resource concerns facing forest managers. Davis described the most important resource concerns on cropland in Richland and Calhoun Counties. Following discussion, the group agreed on the following resource concerns as priorities for FY22. Highlighted priorities were noted as being of especial importance:

### Pastureland

- #1-4 – Soil erosion
- #7 – Soil compaction
- #8 – Organic matter depletion
- #20 – nutrients to surface water
- #22 – pesticides to surface water
- #24 – Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids, or compost applications transported to surface water
- #30 – sediment to surface water
- #37 – plant productivity and health
- #38 – plant structure and composition
- #39 – plant pest pressure
- #41 – Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
- #42 – Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms
- #43– feed and forage imbalance
- #44 – Inadequate livestock shelter (maybe not a big issue?)
- # 45 – Inadequate livestock water quantity, quality, distribution

### Forestland

- #1 - Soil erosion – sheet and rill
- #4 - Soil erosion - Classic gully
- #30 - sediment transported to surface water (BMPs fix this—streamside management zone, road design, firebreaks, water bars)
- #37 - Plant productivity and health (state cost-share for replanting, tree/shrub establishment)
- #38 - Plant composition and structure
- #40 – wildfire hazard from biomass accumulation (prescribed burning – Newberry SWCD has a prescribed burn trailer; need more landowners certified for burning)
- #41 – Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
- #42 – Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms

### Cropland

- #1 - Soil erosion – sheet and rill (cover crops, especially problem in sandy soils)
- #7 - Compaction
- #8 - Organic matter depletion
- #10 - Soil organism habitat loss and degradation → fix with cover crops; interest growing
- #18 – Naturally available moisture use
- #19 - Inefficient use of water/irrigation – irrigation testing
- #20 - nutrients to surface water
- #22 - Pesticides transported to surface water (keep what's on the field in the field)
- #24 - Pathogens to surface water
- #37 - Plant productivity and health
- #41 – Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
- #42 – Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms

**Reports:**

- **USDA-NRCS:** Bonilla-Gonzalez reported 85 EQIP applications were eligible for funding out of 93. Of those eligible, 73 applications were obligated. This represents a record-setting year for obligations in both counties. 22 of the funded applications were in Richland County; 51 were in Calhoun County. \$2,923,690 were allocated through the EQIP program in Richland and Calhoun Counties combined. (\$949,740 was obligated in Richland County alone.) Of the 22 funded applications in Richland County, 16 of those applications were from historically underserved producers—another record! The next EQIP application deadline is October 15<sup>th</sup>; nearly 50 applications have already been submitted. Only about 10 applications are rolling over from last year. There are lots of new EQIP participants, and many of them are small producers. There has been a big increase in small farmers in Richland County recently.
  
- **Financial:**
  - Checking Account (9/30/21 Statement)**  
 Starting Balance: \$44,499.31 (9/1/21)  
 Deposits: \$500 (Friends of RSWCD Contribution)  
 Expenses: \$6,247.87  
 Ending Balance: \$38,751.44 (9/30/21)
  
  - Credit Card (10/5/21 Statement)**  
 Starting Balance: \$1,238.29 (9/5/21)  
 Payments: \$1,238.29  
 Purchases: \$145.67  
 Ending Balance: \$145.67 (9/30/21) <<This balance has since been paid in full
  
  - Easement Stewardship Account**  
 Starting Balance: \$56,563.63 (8/1/21)  
 Ending Balance: \$56,839.54 (8/31/21)
  
  - SCACD Contribution Agreement Account**  
 Starting Balance: \$252.51 (9/1/21)  
 Ending Balance: \$17,718.97 (9/30/21)
  
- **Affiliate Membership:** RSWCD has 22 current Friends; there have been no renewals since the last meeting. RSWCD is now able to accept online contributions through a PayPal account.
  
- **Pinewood Lake Park Pollinator Garden:** Reese organized a pollinator garden workday on 9/18/21; one volunteer (Jensen) participated. Richland County Public Information Office published a video promoting volunteer opportunities in the pollinator garden on 10/1. Questions about the pollinator garden should be directed to Robert Reese at [rreese4@bellsouth.net](mailto:rreese4@bellsouth.net).  
  
 Jensen explained Richland County cannot invest in repairing the dam at Pinewood Lake Park because the County does not own the dam. The County may be willing to accept ownership of the dam and very likely has funding to make repairs if the County owns the dam.
  
- **Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC):**
  - RCCC continues to develop its annual plan of work.

- Dr. Buddy Atkins has resigned his role as an RCCC Commissioner. He will be missed!
  - RCCC commissioners are completing an online survey to develop an advocacy plan.
  - Weber attended a Friends of Harbison State Forest event and expressed his support for holding a joint RCCC/RSWCD Holiday Drop-In.
  - Epps reported the new Land Program Planner will start on November 8. Salary negotiations are ongoing for the potential new Conservation Program Analyst. Applications are still being accepted for the Administrative Assistant position.
- **Education:**
    - **Seed Sanctuary:** Lindsay held a volunteer seed packing event with 9 participants from Beta Sigma Phi. 31 community members have registered as Seed Sanctuary volunteers to date. RSWCD will partner with the Richland County Public Library to open a physical location for the Seed Sanctuary in the Eastover Branch. Lindsay submitted an application for \$5,000 to Dominion Energy for funding to expand and continue the Seed Sanctuary. Approximately 12,500 seed packets have been distributed since April, 2020.
    - **SC Conservation District Employees Association (SCCDEA) Training:** Cooper presented about the Seed Sanctuary program and the community connections it has fostered at the SC Conservation District Employees Association training in Beaufort last month. Mullis also gave reports from the regional and national conservation district associations at this meeting.
    - **Class Presentations:** RSWCD has shared SuperSoil! programs with 40 students/2 classes at the Center for Inquiry (District 8/O. Walker) and 70 students/3 classes at HE Corley Elementary (District 1/B. Malinowski) since the last meeting.
    - **Poster Contest:** The FY22 poster contest theme is Healthy Soil: Healthy Life. Entries are due April 15, 2022. Richland County Public Information Office has assisted with publicity.
    - **Conservation Education Mini-Grants:** FY22 Mini-Grant application deadlines are October 1 and February 4. These grants provide awards up to \$1,000 for school projects. Three applications were received for fall funding; Burts, McSwain, Lindsay, and Cooper will serve on this year's grant review committee. An award announcement is expected by the end of October.
    - **Environmental Educator Professional Development Events:** RSWCD partnered with the Environmental Education Association of SC (EEASC) to host a September Midlands Meetup for 24 participants. Cooper led an Elementary Science Education Workshop for 17 UofSC students. RSWCD is assisting with the national accreditation process for the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification Program, planning the 2022 EEASC annual conference, assisting with the development of an executive director staff position, and providing support for the Regional Landscape Analysis being conducted by the Southeast Environmental Education Alliance. RSWCD also supports SC Project Learning Tree (PLT), which provides environmental education curricula for preK-12 educators and students. Cooper chairs the SCPLT Marketing Committee, which recently made recommendations for new brochure designs, EE center and tree trunk publicity, and video development.

- **SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition (SCFGLC):** RSWCD supports the SCFGLC, which is developing conservation plans for producers, sponsoring winter annual forage plot demonstrations at several locations statewide, funding a grazing cover crops research project in Eastover, hosting rainfall simulator demonstrations, providing scholarships for producers and natural resource professionals to attend the NatGLC conference, and hosting a Small Ruminant Workshop November 5-6 in the upstate.
- **Communications:** Lindsay's monthly e-newsletter reaches 3,114 subscribers. RSWCD has 1,010 Facebook followers, 453 Twitter followers, and 539 Instagram followers.
- **Advocacy:** Commissioner Jim Rhodes recently spoke with Councilman Derrek Pugh about the RSWCD.

#### **Old Business**

- **City Roots Equipment Donation:** Eric McClam will check with Robbie McClam about whether the equipment in question is still available.

#### **New Business**

- **SCACD Policy/Position Statements:** SCACD's revised policy/position statements were not available in time for this meeting.
- **2021 Fundraiser:** Cooper will facilitate a fundraiser/membership drive planning session during the next board meeting. Commissioners set a goal to raise \$4,000 through the Friends of RSWCD program in FY22.

#### **Public Input:**

- Burts has procured items for RSWCD to donate to the SCACD silent auction. She is also planning the Holiday Drop-In for December 14 at 4:30pm, pending approval from RCCC and Richland County to proceed.

**Next Meeting:** RSWCD's next meeting will be held on Monday, November 8, 2021 at 6pm. Location TBA.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Kenny Mullis, Chair

Chanda L. Cooper, Conservation Education Analyst