



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)

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Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2026, 6 pm

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

Commissioners Present

Kenny Mullis, Chair

Jim Rhodes, Treasurer

Mary Burts

Tim McSwain

Associate Commissioners Present

Mary Frances Hendrix

Mary Beth McSwain

Charles Weber

Additional Attendees

Quinton Epps

Shawn Goff

Chelsea Holliday

Jeff Laney

Jennifer Mancke

Jessica Thompson

Welcome, Introductions, and Invocation: Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm. Laney gave the invocation. Mullis announced Laney resigned from the board as of January 1, 2026.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: Rhodes motioned to approve the agenda. T. McSwain seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously. Holliday reported a scrivener's error: the credit card rewards should have read as \$626.28, and not \$677.18 as reported during the November 2025 meeting. Rhodes motioned to approve the amended November 2025 minutes. Burts seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously.

Reports:

Financial: Rhodes gave the following financial report:

Operating Account (12/01/25 Statement)

Beginning Balance: \$53,843.57+ (11/01/25)
Deposits and Credits: \$1,862.50+
Checks: \$100.27-
Expenses and Debits: \$682.56-
Ending Balance: \$54,923.24+ (11/30/25)

Credit Card (12/05/25 Statement)

Beginning Balance: \$677.18 (11/05/25)
Payments: \$721.95
Purchases: \$889.12
Ending Balance: \$844.35 (12/05/25)
Rewards: \$615.81

***Easement Stewardship Account (10/01/25 to 10/31/25 Statement)**

Starting Account Value: \$57,741.04 (10/01/25)
Ending Account Value: \$57,632.90 (10/31/25)
Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$56,632.90

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (12/01/25 Statement)

Starting Balance: \$18,361.11+ (11/01/25)
Credits: \$0.00
Debts: \$\$18,141.10-
Ending Balance: \$220.01+ (11/30/25)

PayPal Account (11/2025 Statement)

Beginning Available Balance: \$242.28 (11/01/25)
Ending Available Balance: \$242.28 (11/30/25)

*Easement Stewardship Account statements do not arrive monthly.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): No one from NRCS was present, and no written report was submitted. Mullis reported Shaun Worley is now the state biologist. Daniel Westcot now covers the entire state as Assistant State Conservationist – Field Operations, Area 1, and Acting Assistant State Conservationist – Field Operations, Area 2.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR): No one from SCDNR was present. Thompson presented the November 2025 SCDNR – Conservation Districts team statewide report.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber invited attendees to attend a historical marker presentation at Villa Tronco on Tuesday, January 13, at 4 pm. The restaurant, located at 1213 Blanding Street, Columbia, will be honored for being the oldest Italian restaurant in South Carolina.

RSWCD Programs: Thompson reviewed the provided RSWCD program reports for November and December. Mullis noted the no-till drill was used in December. Mancke added Blythewood High School is the number one producer of biofuel in South Carolina, and encouraged attendees to tour the school's operation.

T. McSwain inquired about the SC Farmer Resource Rodeo. Thompson stated Clemson Extension agent Ben Boyles does not have plans to hold the event in 2026.

Conservation Items Before County Council: N/A

Commissioner Advocacy: Councilmembers Cooper, Newton, Pugh, and Weaver attended the Holiday Drop-In. Former Councilmember Val Hutchinson was in attendance as well. Mullis reported he attended the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Executive Board Meeting. He stated NACD is asking for success stories to aid in their efforts to educate legislators.

Old Business:

Ag + Art Tour: Thompson reported the 2026 Richland County Ag + Art Tour will be held on Saturday, June 6, from 9 am to 4 pm, and Sunday, June 7, from 12 pm to 4 pm.

Clemson Extension is shifting more responsibility to counties, resulting in tour sites now carrying increased responsibility. Tour sites have been encouraged to recruit artisans and volunteers, and assist with funding and tour promotion. Tour sites must attend select planning committee meetings, a marketing workshop, and the volunteer appreciation party scheduled for May 31.

Tour sites and artisans will apply individually by county. Counties can choose their application windows. The artisan application window is January 12 through March 15, and approvals occur on a rolling basis. All artisans must apply online.

Fundraising for the tour is underway. Sponsorship questions or potential sponsors should be directed to Alexis Wallraf, RCAAT Fundraising Coordinator at wallraf.alexis@richlandcountysc.gov.

Increased hospitality-tax grant funds will support temporary road signs, enhanced printed tour guides, tour route passports, ADA-compliant portable restrooms, handwashing stations, and expanded marketing efforts.

Volunteer recruitment begins in March. The planning committee selected Carolina Blue as the tour's t-shirt color for 2026.

The next planning committee meeting is scheduled for January 7 at 12:30 pm.

New Business:

2025 Review of Strategic Plan: Thompson reported the outcome of the 2025 strategic plan review.

Innovations for Goal 1 include offering a cover crop workshop for small farmers, offering a fencing demonstration in collaboration with Clemson Extension, and creating a section in the district's monthly newsletter specifically for farmers. An improvement for Goal 1 includes calling farmers directly to invite them to the Local Work Group meeting.

Innovations for Goal 2 include promoting educational tools for educators on social media and in the newsletter during the summer, ahead of school starting in August, and potentially using the South Carolina Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition's Enviroscape model. There were no improvements for Goal 2.

Innovations for Goal 3 include partnering with the University of South Carolina Office of Sustainability students. The students could be mentors for Envirothon teams. There were no improvements for Goal 3.

Innovations for Goal 4 include participating in Climate Resiliency Week alongside local colleges and universities. There were no improvements for Goal 4.

There were no innovations or improvements for Goal 5.

Mancke inquired about the Teacher of the Year award. Attendees discussed the award program and previous recipients. T. McSwain motioned to reinstate the teacher of the year program. Burts seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously.

Executive Session: T. McSwain motioned to go into executive session to discuss a board matter. Burts seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously. T. McSwain motioned to come out of executive session. Burts seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously. No decisions were made, and no action was taken during executive session.

T. McSwain motioned to recommend Rhodes for appointment by SCDNR to fulfill Laney's unexpired term. Burts seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously.

Mullis announced the elected commissioner position currently held by Rhodes will be open and is up for election this fall.

Public Input: Laney expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve with RSWCD. Mullis referenced the upcoming events listed on the agenda.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:13 pm.