Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)
2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A
Columbia, SC 29204
Phone: (803) 576-2080 • Fax: (803) 576-2088
soilandwater@richlandcountysc.gov • www.richlandcountysc.gov/rswcd

Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2026, 6 pm
Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Road, Columbia, SC 29209

Commissioners Present
Kenny Mullis, Chair
Jim Rhodes, Vice Chair
Mary Burts, Treasurer
Tim McSwain

Associate Commissioners Present
Shawn Goff
Mary Beth McSwain
Charles Weber

Additional Attendees
Shea Davies
Marcella Domka
Quinton Epps
Chelsea Holliday
Aric Jensen
Jennifer Mancke
Carter Weston

Welcome, Introductions, and Invocation: Mullis called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. He introduced community member Carter Weston and SC Office of Resilience (SCOR) watershed coordinators Shea Davies and Marcella Domka. Jensen gave the invocation.

Approve Agenda and Minutes: The agenda was amended to add Carolina Cover Crop Connection Facebook Page under New Business and to remove Commissioner Appointment from the agenda. Rhodes moved to approve the amended agenda. T. McSwain seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously. T. McSwain moved to approve the minutes. Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously.

Special Presentation: Davies and Domka provided an overview of the SC Office of Resilience's resilience planning at the statewide, regional, and local levels. They noted the SCOR Resilience

Atlas is an online map tool available to the public, with additional layers available to government entities.

Reports:

Financial: Burts gave the following financial report:

Operating Account (09/01/26 Statement)
- Beginning Balance: $67,404.67+ (08/01/26)
- Deposits and Credits: $1,450.00+
- Checks: $4,432.78-
- Expenses and Debits: $2,976.67-
- Ending Balance: $61,445.22+ (08/31/26)

Credit Card (09/05/26 Statement)
- Beginning Balance: $1,610.52 (08/05/26)
- Payments: $1,610.52
- Purchases: $340.49
- Ending Balance: $340.49 (09/05/26)
- Rewards: $569.79

Easement Stewardship Account (07/01/26 to 07/31/26 Statement)
- Starting Account Value: $60,364.19 (07/01/26)
- Ending Account Value: $60,236.85 (07/31/26)
- Account Value with Pending Dividends & Accrued Interest: $60,725.23

SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (09/01/26 Statement)
- Starting Balance: $220.01+ (08/01/26)
- Credits: $0.00+
- Debts: $0.00-
- Ending Balance: $220.01+ (08/31/26)

PayPal Account (09/2026 Statement)
- Beginning Available Balance: $121.62 (08/01/26)
- Ending Available Balance: $146.62 (08/31/26)

*Easement Stewardship Account statements do not arrive monthly.

Burts reported the 2026 internal audit was completed successfully in August.

Mullis instructed staff to contact Ashton Defibaugh regarding the closure of the pass-through SC Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD) Contribution Agreement Account. Funds will no longer be deposited into the account, as SCACD is now able to manage the funds directly and RSWCD no longer needs to do so.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): No one from NRCS was present, and no written report was submitted. Mullis reported September is the district's final month working with NRCS District Conservationist Emily Bonilla-Gonzalez. Beginning October 1, RSWCD will work with the Kershaw District Conservationist.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR): No one from SCDNR was present. Holliday reviewed the written reports provided for July and August, noting key dates. The East Piedmont Area Meeting is on October 22 at 10 am and will be held at the Edward Kyzer Firehouse Station. The SCACD Partnership Conference is January 18-20, 2027, at Sonesta Resort on Hilton Head Island. SC Envirothon will be held on April 16, 2027, with a coaches training on January 30, 2027.

Holliday also reported RSWCD's nomination for East Piedmont Area Teacher of the Year, Kristina Dial, has been selected for the award. Dial will be recognized at the East Piedmont Area Meeting.

Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC): Weber reported Richland County and RCCC have partnered with Congaree Land Trust to purchase 71 acres of Lost Creek in the Harbison area. Once the purchase is complete, the property will be donated to the SC Forestry Commission and become part of Harbison State Forest.

The Goodwill Plantation property sale has closed. The Conservation Fund will hold the property for approximately 18 months, after which the property is expected to go to SCDNR. Jensen added Richland County Council has committed to contributing $600,000 to the effort. As it stands, the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism will manage the historical aspects, while SCDNR will manage the larger portion of the property, including its natural resources. Negotiations will address management of the historical elements and the extent of public access. Stakeholders are in the process of establishing agreements. A timeline has not been established.

RCCC has a grant from the SC Department of Environmental Services to do a watershed study of Crane Creek. The funds have been awarded to a group, and efforts are underway.

Weber encouraged attendees to fill out the Conservation Land Management and Open Space Plan Survey. The survey is located at https://richlandcountysurvey.org.

Weber shared his experience presenting on conservation at his church, noting attendees were not familiar with local conservation initiatives or organizations. He emphasized the need for greater community awareness of local conservation efforts.

RSWCD Programs: Epps reviewed the provided RSWCD program report for August and noted the July program report was attached to the meeting invitation but not included in the meeting packet.

Conservation Items Before County Council: Epps reported RCCC has an easement for approximately 80 acres and a land donation for approximately 22 acres along Broad River before

County Council. Attendees discussed potential uses for the land donation, including a greenway, as well as the benefits of accepting the property.

At the October meeting, RCCC will update County Council on the Conservation Land Management and Open Space Strategy.

Mullis reported he will give RSWCD's annual report to County Council on October 20.

Commissioner Advocacy: Mancke spoke with Councilwoman Cheryl English about solar installations. Epps noted Councilwoman English has made a motion for the September 15 council meeting to review solar farming. Attendees discussed the loss of agricultural land to urban development.

Attendees noted Richland County Councilmembers Jason Branham, Paul Livingston, and Chakisse Newton will step down this year.

Old Business:

Conservation Education Analyst: Epps reported Alexis Wallraf was hired to fill the conservation education analyst position; however, she is resigning for personal reasons. The position has been reopened. Wallraf's last day is September 25. The administrative assistant position has been posted as well.

2026 Local Work Group Meeting: The Local Work Group Meeting report and reporting form were presented for review and submission. T. McSwain moved to accept the Local Work Group report as presented and as it occurred at the Local Work Group Meeting. Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion was brought to a vote and passed unanimously.

ACEP Easement Monitoring: Commissioners and staff inspected a total of thirteen easements resulting in revenue for the district. Attendees vocalized challenges with the process and were encouraged to share their experience with NRCS.

New Business:

Conservation Education Programs: Applications for the 2026-2027 Conservation Education Mini-Grants are due by September 24. Entries for the 2026-2027 Youth Conservation Poster Contest are due by April 9. The 2027 Stewardship Week theme is "From Source to Sea: Every Drop Has a Journey." The 2027 SC Envirothon will be held on April 16, with a coaches training on January 30.

RSWCD Strategic Plan: Holliday reported staff is implementing the innovations discussed during the 2025 review of the strategic plan.

Attendees discussed timber production and how it relates to Goal 1 of the strategic plan.

Carolina Cover Crop Connection Facebook Page: Mullis reported Kirsten Robertson and other administrators of the Carolina Cover Crop Connection Facebook page are seeking replacement administrators. Time spent moderating the Facebook group can be applied toward the SCACD Contribution Agreement, allowing the district to receive funding for the hours worked. Staff agreed to look into the opportunity.

Executive Session: N/A

Public Input: Weston expressed interest in pursuing a long-term lease of the Mill Creek property and asked about next steps for submitting a proposal. County Administration is still considering plans for the property.

Mullis reviewed the upcoming events listed on the meeting agenda.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm.