

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

*MEETING DATE: May 5, 2021
TELECONFERENCE STATE OFFICE
RSA UNION BUILDING, MONTGOMERY, AL*

**Soil & Water Conservation
Committee Board**

Members Present:

Charles Holmes - Chair
Vaughn Poe - Vice Chair
Dr. Carol Knight
Johnny Lee
Jake Harper
Ricky Cornutt
Andy Chamness – Proxy Jared Dyess
Dr. Mike Phillips
Dr. Paul Patterson

Other:

Brian Harden, ALFA
Bob Plaster, ADAI
Rick Pate, ADAI
Cynthia Price, AG Statistics
Eve Brantley, Auburn
Dr. Gary Lemme

NRCS:

Ben Malone
Richard Collier
Steve Musser
Christopher Davis
Greg Dansby
Brandon McCray

Shannon Weaver
Caleb Conner
Alice Love
Ginger Rider

Dr. William Puckett
Executive Director

SWCD:

Debbie Clements-Bibb, Rose Mary Smith-Butler, Jennifer Yates-Calhoun, Dorris Skipper-Coffee, Cletis Mixon-Conecuh, Kathy Holmes-Cullman, Spencer Hardy-Coosa, Allison O’Neal-Covington, Jennifer Childers- Etowah, Emmie Burke-Houston, Vickie Watkins-Macon, Craig Hall-Mobile, Whitney Lower-Monroe, Kim Joiner-Shelby, Charity Mitcham-St. Clair, Mickey Smith-Sumter, Stacy Williams-Walker, Stephanie Platt-Washington

AACDC:

Rhonda Bryars
Shelly Hyde

AACD:

Sabra Sutton
Courtney Curenton

SWCC:

Debra Brooks
Kathy Gotcher
Ashley Henderson
Perry Oakes
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 in-person for this meeting.

The meeting was available via WebEx for all participants.

Invocation – Johnny Lee

Roll call of Board Members – Charles Holmes called roll of the board members with each member verbally stating their presence. Mr. Holmes asked other participants to type their name and affiliation in the chat box or email their information to Debra Brooks.

Welcome Guest – Charles Holmes welcomed guest.

Recognition of Dr. Gary Lemme – Charles Holmes presented Dr. Lemme with a small token of appreciation for his service on the Committee. Dr. Lemme thanked everyone for the opportunity he had to work with everyone.

Minutes - Motion made by Rickey Cornutt to approve the minutes of January 13, 2021; seconded by Dr. Carol Knight; motion carried with no objections.

Appointment/Reappointment of District Supervisors - Motion made by Jake Harper to approve list of appointments, reappointments, resignations, and deceased supervisors; seconded by Johnny Lee; the Committee approved the reappointment of 46 Supervisors, 10 new Supervisors, 3 supervisors pending upon receipt of reappointment of Oath of Office, accepted resignation of 3 Supervisors and 5 deceased supervisors. Motion carried with no objections.

COVID-19 Update and District Impacts - Dr. Puckett reported on COVID-19 and it's impacts on Districts.

FY21 Budget Update - Dr. Puckett gave an update on the FY21 Budgets. No action needed.

Travel approval for SWCC Board and Staff – Motion made by Dr. Carol Knight to approve travel for committee members and SWCC staff for below meetings; seconded by Vaughn Poe; motion carried with no objections.

*ACDEA/AACD/SENACD Annual Meetings August 4-11, 2021, Gulf Shores, Alabama.

Introduction to AHERO Veterans Assistance Program- Lee Stuckey, Founder and Board President of AHERO Veterans Assistance Program, is currently serving as a Colonel in the United State Marine Corps. Mr. Stuckey stated that he started AHERO to connect Veterans through outdoor activities as a means to recover from their physical wounds and psychological trauma to reintegrate with American life. Mr. Stuckey stated that the AHERO Veterans

Assistance program not only started in Shorter, AL but has expanded to over 40 states and 8 different countries. Mr. Stuckey is continuing to help veterans find new careers. Dr. Puckett stated that districts could assist Veterans with work opportunities in local conservation activities. Mr. Poe wanted this topic added to the agenda for the DC fly-in.

Implementation of District/NRCS Memorandum – Brandon McCray stated that the partnership with districts was over 80 years old. He also stated that it was the most important partner relationship to execute the NRCS mission at the local and state levels. Districts offer nontraditional programs with positive impacts that NRCS is not able to offer. The Memorandum between NRCS and Districts supports the sustainability of program delivery. New employees for both NRCS and Districts need to be provided guidance on the history and importance of the relationship. Brandon asked the board for feedback on how to improve the relationships and make them more active. Mr. McCray suggested that a joint agency memo be sent to all NRCS/District staff and supervisors that summarizes the relationship and history of the partnership. He also suggested that a short documentary training video be developed utilizing experienced district supervisors and staff and NRCS staff to provide training to younger staff and supervisors. Mr. McCray asked the board to think about these suggestions and provide him or Mr. Malone feedback.

Marketing Tactics for Feral Swine - Ashley Henderson updated the group about the Feral Swine project especially marketing tactics including online ads (Facebook, Google, AL.com) using Dogwood Media and Alabama Media Group. Additionally, information about the updated website (www.alabamasoilandwater.gov), partner outreach and expos were included. The website includes such features as the Hog Blog, education videos, job sheets, approved manufacturers, and other resources. Partner outreach including an article in the Alabama Wildlife Federation was highlighted. Additionally, Ms. Henderson reminded the group that the project consists of free trapping conducted by USDA-Wildlife Services and financial incentives (70% rebates) on feral swine traps.

Update on Irrigation, Feral Swine, and Other Programs – Ashley Henderson updated the group on the Alabama Irrigation Initiative (ALII) in the Middle Tennessee River Watershed. Thirteen producers have been paid over \$1M to date. Four additional systems are close to completion. Supply chain issues related to COVID-19 and the amount of rain in North Alabama has slowed the construction process. Remaining applications are in different areas of the review process with NRCS.

Ms. Henderson also updated the group about ALII in Choc-Pea Rivers basin. The Choc-Pea Watershed Plan has been updated with all comments addressed. The comments and responses are currently being uploaded to a new NRCS system for further review. In the meantime, we are reviewing applications with NRCS to determine ranking. The preliminary ranking has been completed and we are currently working on a more detailed ranking for water. We hope to have the ranking completed by the time the plan is signed at NRCS headquarters in Washington, DC.

Additionally, the Auburn University/University of Alabama-Huntsville team is working on the Preliminary Investigation for the Middle Alabama River basin. The first outreach meeting was held in Marion Junction with around 50 people attending. Issues include the need for deep wells,

the cost of power and the need to adjust cost-share rates for some practices. Additional scoping meetings will be held soon.

Ms. Henderson reported on other grant applications including the Geneva Feral Swine Control program, which was awarded, the Regenerative Agriculture RCPP, which was awarded at a reduced rate of \$500,000, and the Longleaf Management for Small Acres RCPP, which was not awarded. The NRCS concern with the RCPP grants was the lack of ability to match funding 1 to 1. The Geneva Feral Swine Control grant is for \$1.5 M and will include two district employees—one in Geneva County and one in Coffee County.

Ms. Henderson reported on the phosphorous investigations completed by Dr. Rishi Prasad. Additionally, Auburn University has asked for ALSWCC to assist with handling cost share for cover crop payments as part of the Conservation Incentive Grant they received. The cover crop element in the ALSWCC Conservation Incentive Program has been modified to come more in line with NRCS practices. The proposed changes are in the attachments and include allowing the payment amount to be set by the funding source and according to an approved conservation plan.

The Riparian Buffer RCPP has approximately \$300,000 left to spend. The ALSWCC website has been updated and can now be found at www.alabamasoilandwater.gov.

Mr. Ricky Cornutt motioned to approve items agenda items 14 a, b, and c as written. Mr. Vaughn Poe seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Updates on AACDC Financial Assistance Program – Rhonda Bryars updated the board on the FY20 CIP and stated that around \$60,000 would be reverted. Three counties should finish their practices by May 2021, then fiscal year 2020 should be closed out. Rhonda stated that counties had obligated around \$468,000 with 111 applicants for FY21.

Erosion and Sediment Control – Perry Oakes reported on the activities for the Erosion and Sediment Control Program. Mr. Oakes informed the board that Clear Water Alabama 2021 will be held in Cullman, AL, September 15-16 at Camp Meadow Brook. The Erosion and Sediment Program has a new landing page off the new ALSWCC webpage. The app to access the “Field Guide for Erosion and Sediment Control on Construction Sites in Alabama” has been completed by Shelly Hyde for both the android and iPhone platforms. Perry Oakes will be presenting at the upcoming Mississippi/Alabama Engineer meeting. The MS4 Stormwater Conference will be held in Huntsville June 7-9, 2021. Mr. Oakes and Mr. Norton continue to work with IECA to coordinate field day activities for this conference.

AACD Areas I and VI appointments for Committee Members expire 10/25/2021 – Dr. Puckett reminded the Board that AACD Areas I and VI were up for appointment this year.

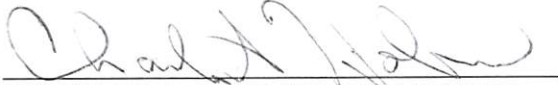
Statement of Economic Interest due April 30, 2021 for previous Calendar year 2020 – The Board was reminded to complete and submit their statement of Economic Interest to the Alabama Ethics Commission.

Partner Updates: Agency updates were suspended due to time constraints.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 am.

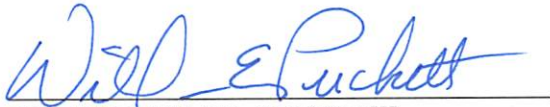
Next Scheduled Meeting – The next meeting will be at the RSA Union Building, Room 300 on September 22, 2021, at 9:00 am.

Submitted by:



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

9-22-2021
DATE



DR. WILLIAM E. PUCKETT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

9-22-2021
DATE



DEBRA BROOKS
RECORDING SECRETARY

9/22/2021
DATE