

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

*MEETING DATE: September 22, 2021
ROOM 300 – HYBRID: IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL
RSA UNION BUILDING, MONTGOMERY, AL*

**Soil & Water Conservation
Committee Board**

Members Present:

Charles Holmes - Chair
Vaughn Poe - Vice Chair
Dr. Carol Knight- Chris Langley
Johnny Lee
Rickey Cornutt
Jake Harper
Dr. Paul Patterson

Dr. William Puckett
Executive Director

Other:

Brian Harden, ALFA
Eve Brantley, Auburn
John Nichols, ALFA

NRCS:

Ben Malone
Walker Williams
Steve Musser
Christopher Davis
Greg Dansby
Brandon McCray
Shannon Weaver
Caleb Conner

SWCD:

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, Stephanie Kaylor-Marengo, Craig Hall-Mobile, Whitney Lowery-Monroe, Kim Joiner-Shelby, Charity Mitcham-St. Clair, Mickey Smith-Sumter, Donna Lake- Tuscaloosa, Stacy Williams-Walker, Stephanie Platt-Washington

AACDC:

Rhonda Bryars
Shelly Hyde
Lori Woodfin

AACD:

Sabra Sutton
Jack Wadsworth
Mickey Smith
Chris Langley
Cayla Jackson

SWCC:

Debra Brooks
Kathy Gotcher
Ashley Henderson
Jessica Jones
Perry Oakes
Earl Norton

Charles Holmes called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Debra Brooks 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 both in person and online.

Invocation – Johnny Lee

Roll call of Board Members – Charles Holmes called the roll of board members with each member verbally stating their presence. Board members were present in-person along with some guests. A virtual link was provided for other guests that did not attend in person.

Welcome Guests – Charles Holmes welcomed guests.

Minutes - Motion made by Rickey Cornutt to approve the minutes of May 5, 2021; seconded by Jake Harper; motion carried with no objections.

Appointment/Reappointment of District Supervisors - Motion made by Johnnie Lee to approve appointments, reappointments, and resignations, and deceased supervisors; seconded by Jake Harper; the Committee approved the reappointment of 13 Supervisors, 8 new Supervisors, accepted resignation of 2 Supervisors and 1 deceased supervisor. Johnny Lee and Jake Harper both amended the list to add Ronnie Holliday as a deceased supervisor. Motion carried with no objections.

COVID-19 Update and District Impacts - Dr. Puckett referred the Committee to the memo in the meeting materials concerning vaccinations. The SWCC memo was in response to a memo from USDA-NRCS on their guidance for Vaccination Verification and Certification of Vaccination of employees and others that occupy or enter USDA space. Dr. Puckett informed the Committee that the USDA guidance only affected USDA employees at this time and no action was needed by districts until additional guidance was given by USDA.

FY21 Budget Update and FY22 Budget Approval- Dr. Puckett gave an update on the FY21 Budget and presented the FY22 Budget for approval by the Committee. Motion made by Jake Harper to approve the FY22 Budget; seconded by Vaughn Poe. Motion carried with no objections.

Travel approval for SWCC Board and Staff – Motion made by Rickey Cornutt to approve travel for committee members and SWCC staff for below meetings; seconded by Dr. Paul Patterson; motion carried with no objections.

- a. NASCA Annual Meeting, Spokane, Washington, October 3-6, 2021
- b. Irrigation Association, San Diego, California, December 6-10, 2021
- c. NACD Annual Meeting, Orlando, Florida, February 11-17, 2022

Update on Alabama Examiners of Public Accounts Examination – Dr. Puckett updated the Committee members on the current status of the examination. Dr. Puckett asked the committee to approve the following items in response to findings related to the Professional Soil Classifiers:

- a. Approval to update Administrative Rule for Professional Soil Classifiers
- b. Approval to delete Fees for Reexamination, Initial Registration and Temporary Permits
- c. Approval to change Renewal Fee from \$40 to \$75
- d. Approval to refund overage on Renewal Fee charge for 2020
- e. Approval to add Provisions of AL Codes § 31-1-6 and § 31-12A-2 (2020)

Motion made by Jake Harper to approve items a-e; Seconded by Rickey Cornutt. Motion carried with no objections.

Dr. Puckett also asked the Committee members to be aware of § 36-25-9(a) and § 36-25-1(20 & 14) to ensure that all public officials, employees, and family members did not benefit from their relationship as a board member of the Professional Soil Classifiers.

Update on Irrigation, Feral Swine, and Other Program – Ashley Henderson updated the Committee on the progress of the ALII. In the Middle Tennessee River Basin approximately \$1,597,852.15 has been spent to help 16 producers complete 24 pivots and increase irrigation by 1600 acres. Additionally, 6 Irrigation Water Management Systems have been completed. In the Choctawhatchee-Pea River Basin, the plan has been approved for the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact. The team is currently working on ranking applicants. In the Middle Alabama River Basin, the team has held 3 public listening sessions, the AU-UAH team has completed draft preliminary investigation and is researching practices to cost-share at a higher rate for socially disadvantaged producers.

Ashley Henderson also gave an update on the NRCS Feral Swine Control Pilot Project. The project outreach has continued through social media, website updates, educational sessions, and word of mouth. The Conservation Incentive Program (federally funded) in four areas of the state is continuous with monthly batching periods. The Committee has requested that NRCS consider the entire county as eligible for CIP if it has part of the identified watershed in it.

Updates on AACDC Financial Assistance Program – Rhonda Bryars gave an update on Conservation Incentive Programs. Ms. Bryars stated that FY20 had been closed out. A total of \$340,349.67 was spent and \$61,650.33 was reverted to be pooled with FY22 funding. Ms. Bryars also updated the board that for FY21, 117 applications were approved of which \$467,979.60 was obligated and a total of \$131,637.21 had been paid.

Ashley Henderson requested that the Committee concur with the staff recommendations to AACDC for the 2022 CIP Program to address the feral swine control issue outside of the Federal project. Staff recommends that the Committee concur with the Commission targeting \$400,000 of CIP funds to feral swine control with the parameters set forth in the Technical Note Three

(attached), approve the AFI-5C trap job sheet (attached) and approve the counties to be targeted with the funding based on response from NRCS (map attached.) If NRCS does not approve the expansion of the Federal program, all counties in the hatched area on the map will be included in the State CIP program. If NRCS does approve the expansion of the Federal Program, the counties that are fully included in the Federal program will not receive state funds. Additionally, the Committee staff recommends that each producer be capped at \$2,000 with a 70% cost share rate based on receipts. The ALSWCC staff will be allowed to make minor modifications to the implementation of the program, if necessary, for operational control. Jack Wadsworth and Mickey Smith explained their experience with the net traps. Motion made by Rickey Cornutt to approve the concurrence on FY22 Alabama Conservation Incentive Program as proposed and the concurrence on AFI-5C-Other Traps for Feral Swine for the federally funded programs and the Alabama CIP; seconded by Jake Harper. Motion carried with no objections.

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 was live in Cullman, AL. Approximately 95 people attended the seminar and 75 attended the field day. Erosion and Sediment website and app continues to be well received by the industry. Mr. Oakes and Mr. Norton continue to work with IECA to coordinate field day activities. Perry Oakes presented at the Alabama/Mississippi Chapter of ASPE meeting. The update on the handbook will take place in 2022.

Approval to Ethics Commission for William E. Puckett to have Legislative contact in 2022- Motion made by Jake Harper to approve the Ethics Commission for William E. Puckett to have Legislative contact in 2022; seconded by Vaughn Poe; motion carried with no objections.

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

Partner Updates:

- a. **Natural Resources Conservation Service** – Ben Malone, State Conservationist, reported on COVID requirements and staffing statewide.
- b. **Alabama Forestry Commission** - No Attendance
- c. **AG Statistics Service** - No Attendance
- d. **Alabama Department of Agricultural and Industries** - No Attendance
- e. **Auburn University Water Resource Center** - Ashley Henderson reported for Eve Brantley
- f. **Alabama Association of Conservation Districts** - Sabra Sutton, reported on the AACD/SENACD meeting in Gulf Shores, Alabama.
- g. **Alabama Conservation District Employees Association** – No Attendance

Other Business - None

The meeting was adjourned at 11:22 am.

Next Scheduled Meeting – The next meeting will be at the RSA Union Building, Room 300 on January 26, 2022, 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

DRAFT