



## **GASWCC BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**April 8, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.**

**Erosion Day**

**UGA Continuing Education Center**

**Room Q (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)**

**1197 S. Lumpkin Street**

**Athens, GA 30602**

**In Person and Via Zoom**

### **TIME AND PLACE OF THE MEETING:**

The Board Meeting for the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at Erosion Day in person and via zoom.

### **CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION:**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Martin at 10:01 a.m. Robert Amos gave the invocation.

The following board members appeared in person: Chairman Bob Martin, Edwin Nix, Jason Winters, and Jim Waters (new Board member). The following board members appeared via zoom: Vice Chairman Vikki Consiglio. A quorum was established.

Supervisors in attendance in person: Ellis Lamme, Gwinnett County Supervisor, and George Kelecheck, Rockdale County.

Partners in attendance via zoom: Jena Leone, GACD, and Terrance Rudolph, NRCS. Keith Porter, Silt Saver

Members of the Public in attendance via zoom: Dr. Shamita Johnson

Attending members of the Commission who appeared in person were: Mitch Attaway, Executive Director, Robert Amos, Deputy Director, Marla Whittington, Financial Analyst, NancyAnne Conner, Region III Conservation Regional Manager, Michelle Conner, Region IV Conservation Regional Manager, and Leslie Peterson, Resource Specialist Region IV. Attending members of the Commission who appeared via zoom

were: Greg Walker, Rural Project Manager, and Jacqueline Holt, Administrative Assistant.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chairman Martin asked for approval of the minutes from the February 11, 2025 meeting. There was a motion by Jim Waters to approve the minutes, a second by Jason Winters and the motion carried to unanimous approval.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT BY MITCH ATTAWAY:**

#### **Old Business:**

##### **SB 96:**

Attaway stated the bill had passed. We are just waiting on the signature of the Governor. Governor Kemp should sign it because he supported it. This bill shifts the stakeholder advisory board responsibility to the overview council. We will start working to shift the duties and it should start on July 1, 2025.

#### **Update on AFY 25 & FY 26 Budget:**

##### **AFY 25:**

Attaway stated the FY 25 Budget passed with no adjustments.

##### **FY 26:**

Attaway stated FY 26 kept the \$150,000 dollars in Dam maintenance which allows us to continue and utilize funds better than in the past. The Senate put in \$100,000 dollars to establish a Feral Hog pilot program. The funds will be transferred to the DNR to be used but nothing has been finalized yet.

#### **Financial Report:**

Attaway stated the report will not be available until April 15 as this is the last quarter of the year. Once he has the report, he will share it with the board.

#### **New Business:**

Human Resources: There is one new employee, Jake McCannon was hired as the new intern in the Urban Land Program. There is one promotion of Marla

Whittington to the Financial Analyst position to replace Karen Bruce. Karen's last day is scheduled for May 31, 2025. There is one open position for an E&S Specialist.

The Legislative session just wrapped up. The Governor appointed a new Deputy Chief of Office Operations, Amy Doehrman, and Mitch will meet with her on April 9, 2025.

#### **DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT BY ROBERT AMOS:**

##### **APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS:**

Amos reported there is a change to the resignations for a total of 3. The resignations are Travis Cook, Altamaha, Preston Jimmerson, Middle South Georgia, and Tom Harrison, Rockdale County. Amos stated the appointments are more unique this meeting because all of the appointments are new. After James McCranie passed, his son reached out to the Central Georgia district to replace him.

Chairman Martin asked for a motion to approve the resignations and appointments. There was a motion by Jim Waters to approve the resignations and appointments, a second by Jason Winters and the motion carried to unanimous approval.

##### **UPDATES:**

Regional offices are assisting Districts with holding Certification and Recertification classes. Region IV has a 1A Certification class scheduled for April 16 sponsored by the Walton County SWCD

The Regional offices are assisting local issuing authorities and have conducted multiple overviews. The Regional offices are also processing MOA requests that have come to the Districts. At the June meeting there will potentially be two MOAs for the Board to review and approve.

Regional offices have been assisting the public with erosion and sediment control complaints.

The Natural Resources Conservation Workshop will be June 8-13<sup>th</sup> and applications are available now.

The Envirothon competition was recently held and a team from the Fulton County SWCD won the competition.

There are approximately 6 signed contracts under the current NRCS agreement and several additional proposals are being prepared.

Regional offices have assisted Districts with field days and local school systems with Agricultural field days

Amos reported he will attend the National Association of State Conservation Agencies meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **URBAN REPORT BY BEN RUZOWICZ:**

#### **Updates:**

Due to Ruzowicz hosting Erosion Day, Mitch Attaway did the Urban Report. Attaway stated there are 305 vendors registered for Erosion Day. He stated there have been 1,022 plans reviewed from February 5, 2025 through March 31, 2025. Attaway stated there have been 215 courses with a total of 2,264 attendees. Of that total 1,425 were re-certifications and 844 were new certifications. I always like to see those numbers because it means new people are coming in.

There is one new BMP for approval from Silt Saver for a Slope drain bag. This product is applying to be equivalent to Dn1. Mr. Keith Porter is here to give more information on this product.

Mr. Porter discussed the product. He stated that the slope drain bag collects the sediment that comes out of pipes so that there is no sediment to clean up and it leaves a clearer area. He also stated that this opportunity came from working with contractors in South Carolina and North Carolina who were looking for ways to collect sediment at the bottom of hills or slopes. Normally on construction sites you see straw bales put out not rip rap and when I saw this being used for sediment control, I knew there was a better way.

Edwin Nix asked if the product could be reused. Mr. Porter stated no because once the non-woven fabric gets wet it cannot be used again.

Mr. Nix also asked what is the area of proposed coverage? Mr. Porter stated it is 200 Linear feet per ¼ acre with 12" pipe, ½ acre on 200-250 on 60 foot right of way

Chairman Martin called for a motion for approval of the BMP. Edwin Nix made a motion to approve the BMP, a second by Jim Waters, and the motion carried to unanimous approval.

### **RURAL REPORT BY BEN HYER AND GREG WALKER:**

See attached report.

**PARTNER UPDATES:**

GACD:

See attached report

NRCS:

See attached report

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Dr. Shamita Johnson asked questions regarding GSWCC recognizing her husband and Rockdale County Supervisor, Kenneth Johnson.

Vice Chairman Consiglio stated that she believes that GACD recognizes Supervisors. She stated that Jena Leone was on the zoom if she could confirm this. Leone did not respond. Consiglio stated Leone must have left the zoom.

Chairman Martin called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. There was a motion by Edwin Nix to adjourn the meeting, a second by Jason Winters and the motion carried to unanimous approval.

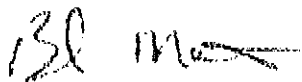
The next meeting will be June 10, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. via zoom,

Chairman Martin adjourned the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

Respectively Submitted by:

Jacqueline Holt

Approved by:

 6/10/25  
GSWCC Chairman      Date

 4/8/25  
GSWCC Executive Director      Date

## Watershed Dam Update

1. **Noon Day 17-** Construction drawings have been approved and a construction permit has been issued by EPD. There is one easement agreement remaining that needs to be executed. We have accepted the counteroffer from the landowner, and waiting for our attorney to execute the contract.
2. **Little River 25-** FNI has begun the detail design phase for this rehabilitation. The design may be altered from the original preferred option in the authorized SWP due to unexpected geotechnical findings.
3. **Little Sandy Trail 2** –FNI is under contract and a condition report with state storm permitting standards is under their internal review.
4. **Trion-Chattooga River Dike System-** - FNI has submitted the final SWP to NRCS in Athens for review. Final authorization has been slightly delayed due to authorization of the identified borrow site. Detail design will be funded by NRCS once the SWP has been authorized.
5. **Mill Canton 7** – Detail design proposal for this rehabilitation from Tetrattech has been accepted. GSFIC is currently working on the contract. NRCS has indicated that funding has been paused.
6. **Settingdown 54** - Detail design proposal for this rehabilitation from FNI has been accepted. GSFIC is currently working on the contract. NRCS has indicated that funding has been paused.
7. **Settingdown 56** - Detail design proposal for this rehabilitation from Schnabel has been accepted. GSFIC is currently working on the contract. NRCS has indicated that funding has been paused.
8. **Maintenance Funds-** Currently replacing dilapidated metal work and clearing clogged structures at multiple sites. Various mowing contracts are underway across the state to maintain dams that have been cleared of large trees in previous years. A significant maintenance project is being planned in coordination with the permitting of Settingdown 4 Watershed Structure.
9. **Bull Creek 3-** This project has reached material completion. Currently working on reimbursement from NRCS.
10. **Assessments-** We are working with EPD to complete Emergency Action Plans that are incomplete for remaining CAT 1, classified structures.
11. **Permitting-** Currently in the process of contracting multiple engineering firms to submit permit applications to GA Safe Dams for watershed structures that can possibly be permitted “as is” or with only minor repairs. Permit applications are currently underway for Sharp Mountain 14 and Settingdown 4,6, & 27 Watershed Structures.
12. **Sandy Creek 8-** Currently in the process of quit claiming this watershed structure to the landowner. The Oconee River District has signed the instrument, working with the landowner to finalize the release.

## Grants Update

1. The Hard Labor Creek and North Fork Broad River-Middle Fork Broad River (Banks, Franklin, Habersham, and Stephens.) and Wahoo Creek- Little River (Hall, Lumpkin and White) 319 Grant with GA EPD is complete.

The cow/calf manual and the poultry manual are in the final draft stages and will be available in digital and print form to these sector specific producers early in 2025. The manuals will provide information on technical and financial resources available to assist interested producers to successfully incorporate BMPs into their operations.

The Hard Labor Creek Watershed Management Plan was completed and is available for stakeholders' reference and utilize in BMP implementation projects to address identified areas for improvement with in the 104,778-acre watershed.

In FY24 GASWCC partnered with agricultural producers to implement a total project value of **\$233,875.00** worth of BMPs into their operations, in the effort to reduce pollutant loading into close proximity surface waters. In GSWCC contracted with agricultural project partners to implement:

Exclusion or Cross Fencing	20,725 linear feet
Pasture improvement	119.5 Acres
Heavy Use Area Protection	16,717 square feet
Streambank Protection	100 linear and 2500 square feet of stabilization
Cover Crops	124 Acres

2. An agreement with NRCS to continue conservation workshops and engage conservation districts in local funded projects was awarded funding. This new agreement will be implemented statewide, and new workshops and conservation projects commencing in 2024. \$400,000 in funding available for BMP implementation projects across all of Georgia's Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Each conservation district has been allocated a \$10,000 budget for a project/s.

8 projects have already been contracted, and include raised beds, pollinator habitat, and high tunnel structure instillation, and a hydroponic vegetable garden lab.

- GACD recently represented Georgia's Conservation Districts at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual Fly-In in Washington, DC.

GACD Board and Staff– Jimmy Bramblett, Katie Sponberger, Mark Masters and Rockdale Co SWCD Chair George Kelecheck spoke with Representative Austin Scott, Senator Raphael Warnock and several staff representatives for other key legislators on the importance of America's voluntary, locally led conservation delivery system is for producers and the healthy soil and water we all depend on for our food, fiber, and fuel.

They also discussed how Conservation Districts across the country are feeling the impacts of recent executive actions, placing a strain on producers, staff, and communities.

- In order to keep District Supervisors informed, GACD has been distributing memos weekly from NACD updating on how the federal executive orders have been impacting conservation delivery. We will continue to keep supervisors and partners informed and can add anyone interested to the notification list.
- Congratulations to Mark Masters who was elected in February as the First Vice President of the National Association of Conservation Districts– he will represent around 3,000 Conservation Districts across the nation and is only the second Georgian to ever serve on the NACD executive committee.
- GACD and Conservation Districts are working with state and federal agencies to coordinate four feral hog workshops and trapping demonstrations this year in each region of the state. Our GACD board is still actively taking hog control equipment requests from Conservation Districts as long as funding is available. Currently there are 23 Conservation Districts who are offering control services coving
- We hope you all will join us in August at our Annual Meeting to be held at the Jekyll Island Club.



NRCS Update:

Thank you, Mr. Chair

As always, it's good to see everyone. Thank you for your continued partnership and support. Right now, NRCS is transitioning through a reduction in workforce. Our National threshold of FTE's is yet to be determined, but we will be utilizing our 2019 numbers as a benchmark for developing our workforce reduction plan. Various options have been provided to employees to assist in this effort, such as Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), Fork in the Road, DRP 2.0, Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP), and RIP.

All employees are now back in the office in full swing.

Farm Bill Program activities – are in full swing, staff is working as usual with Landowners through General EQIP, CSP, RCPP, EWP, Watershed programs, and etc.... The only programs that are still frozen/paused are programs with IRA, Climate Smart Agriculture, and DEI associated with. We still have the end of July as our deadline to obligate all FB program funding.

All Agreements with DEI, IRA, and Climate smart agriculture are paused/frozen until further notice. All general agreements are still operational as of right now.

***Terrance O. Rudolph, State Conservationist***



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
355 E. Hancock Avenue, Room 200  
Athens, GA 30601

Office Phone: (706) 546-2272      Fax2Mail: 855-417-8490