

GEORGIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
Savannah, GA
January 21, 2011

Present were Chairman Garland Thompson, Vice-Chairman Steve Singletary, and Commission Members Carl Brack, Dennis Brown, and David Hays. Participating via conference call was Kelly Clark Dudley with the Governor's Budget Office. Participating from Commission staff were Executive Director Brent Dykes, Deputy Director Dave Eigenberg, Administrative Assistant Cynthia Wilbur, Administrative Operations Manager Niki Strain, and Regional Representatives John Loughridge, Russell Toning, Keegan Malone, and Rahn Milligan. Present from GACDS was David Jackson. Guests included Robert Farris, Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission, and district supervisors Ellis Lamme, O.C. Prince, Travis Cook, Sam Payne, and Dell MacGregor.

Chairman Thompson called the meeting to order and asked Executive Director Dykes to give an invocation.

On a motion by Steve Singletary and second by Carl Brack, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the December 16, 2010, board meeting.

On a motion by Dennis Brown and second by David Hays, the Board unanimously approved the resignations of Blue Ridge supervisor Dallas Taylor, Oconee River supervisor Frank N. Fleming, and Lower Chattahoochee Supervisor Bill Welch. On a motion by Carl Brack and second by Dennis Brown the board approved the re-appointment of Cobb County supervisor Alan Bowling, and the appointment of new Alapaha supervisor Harold Simpson.

The Board called on Mr. Brent Dykes to give the Executive Director's report. Mr. Dykes began by giving the Personnel Update. The Commission has hired a new I.T. Specialist, Mr. Ernell Babb, who began work on January 4th. No other personnel changes have taken place since the Board last met in December 2010. Next, Mr. Dykes updated the Board on the state budget. The Commission is currently facing a 4.9% total cut for the Amended FY11 budget. This will be met in part by keeping the vacant Irrigation Specialist position open. For FY12, the Commission will have an 8% total cut, which Mr. Dykes noted was average compared to cuts being taken by other state agencies. These cuts will be met by taking a further reduction in supplies, travel budgets, personal services, and a \$30,000 reduction in funding for the Watershed Maintenance program. Mr. Dykes stated that the Commission did receive support for \$6 million in the state's bond package, and that \$45 million was set aside in the state budget for reservoir construction, to be dispersed to relevant state agencies. The Commission is still seeking funding for the Metering Program, and will apply for grants and other funds to meet those needs. Mr. Hays inquired about the average reservoir construction project timeline, and Mr. Dykes answered that most projects require 5-7 years from proposal to finished project, with some projects taking over 10 years.

Next, Mr. Dykes discussed the upcoming trip to Washington D.C. Mr. Dykes stated that the tentative dates were February 22-24, 2011, but that those dates were subject to change based on Congress' schedule. He explained that the Commission would be taking a different approach to federal appropriations requests due to the shift in Congress to Republican control of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Dykes next reported to the Board on the Watershed Rehabilitation program. Of the five dams slated for construction and/or rehabilitation maintenance, currently 3 dams under construction are on-schedule, with one experiencing slight delays and another delayed due to homeowner/landowner concerns.

Lastly, Mr. Dykes updated the Board on the DeKalb County lawsuit. The settlement is still being pursued between the County and the District.

The Board next called on Mr. Eigenberg to give the Deputy Executive Director's report. Mr. Eigenberg stated that the Metering Program had reached the data reading phase, and that all metering staff are currently busy working to meet the internal deadline of January 31, 2011 to get the data to the Commission's I.T. staff for dispersal to EPD and USGS. As of the end of 2010, approximately 90% of all meters maintained by GSWCC were functioning correctly, with approximately 9,000 data points collected.

Next, Mr. Eigenberg reported on grant applications and grants awarded to the Commission's various programs. The Commission applied for 7 grants, totaling \$1.6 million if all applications were successful. Due to the current economic conditions, grant-funding has become very competitive and only a portion these opportunities will provide revenue. Mr. Eigenberg expressed his thanks to Ms. Carrie Fowler, the Commission's NPS Program Specialist, for all of her hard work associated with the grant applications process. Mr. Robert Farris stated that the Georgia Forestry Commission is facing the same budgeting challenges as the Commission and also is applying for grants to help off-set program costs. Mr. Farris expressed his thanks for inter-agency partnerships.

The Board next called on Ms. Niki Strain to give the Financial Report. Ms. Strain reported that approximately 58% of the FY11 budget is still remaining, reflecting the savings in anticipation of additional cuts. Ms. Strain explained that the Commission is on-track with spending, and is at the projected half-way point. Ms. Strain expressed her appreciation that the Commission once again received a clean audit. Chairman Thompson thanked Ms. Strain and the rest of the Financial Team for their hard work to ensure the audit was satisfactory.

At this time, the Board called on Mr. David Jackson to give the GACDS report. Mr. Jackson said that GACDS is also in the process of continually applying for grants to off-set program costs, and that GACDS is always thankful for the partnerships they share with other conservation groups and agencies. He thanked the Board for their support of GACDS, and encouraged everyone present to enjoy the Annual Meeting.

Chairman Thompson asked if any guests had any comments they wished to share. The supervisors present expressed their desire to see some relief from the feral hog issue, which they said is especially prevalent in South Georgia.

Mr. Dykes reminded the Board that their next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, March 17th. He said that the suggestion had been made to conduct the meeting in conjunction with a brief watershed tour to highlight some of the watershed dams under maintenance and rehabilitation in the northeast Georgia area. The Board expressed interest in this option, and Mr. Dykes explained that a meeting location near Commerce would probably be used for the March meeting.

There being no further business, on a motion by Steve Singletary and second by David Hays, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cynthia Wilbur

Approved by:


_____ 3-17-11

GSWCC Chairman Date


_____ 3-17-11

GSWCC Executive Director Date