

GEORGIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
Commerce, GA
March 17, 2011

Present were Chairman Garland Thompson, Commission Members Carl Brack, Dennis Brown, and David Hays. Participating from Commission staff were Executive Director Brent Dykes, Deputy Director Dave Eigenberg, Administrative Assistant Cynthia Wilbur, Rural Water Program Manager Bob Fulmer, Watershed Dams Technician Andy Dyar, and Regional Representative Robert Amos. Representing NRCS was Jeff Holloway.

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

On a motion by David Hays and second by Dennis Brown, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the January 21, 2011 Board Meeting.

On a motion by Carl Brack and second by Dennis Brown, the Board unanimously approved the resignations of Oconee River supervisor Boyd McLocklin, Rockdale County supervisor Ken Fonda, and Brier Creek supervisor Hugh Fulcher. On a motion by Dennis Brown and second by Carl Brack, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of new Fulton County supervisor Sally Mills, and new Brier Creek supervisor Robert Snider.

Mr. David Hays next presented the Board with two examples of erosion control plans recently submitted to the Commission's Erosion and Sediment Control plan reviewers in Newton County. Mr. Hays discussed the process involved in plan reviews and the proficiency of plan preparers.

The Board called on Mr. Brent Dykes to give the Executive Director's Report. Mr. Dykes began by explaining that no personnel changes had occurred since the last Board meeting in January. The Commission is in the process of advertising for the Region I Ag Project Specialist for the second time, with an application deadline set for the end of March. This position will be funded with grant dollars. To help cover current vacant positions, David Hall will be splitting his time between the Cochran and Milledgeville offices, and Tony Black will be working to cover Resource Specialist duties in Region V in addition to his irrigation duties.

Mr. Dykes next discussed the process for the revocation of third-party trainer certifications. He informed the Board that due to probable necessity, the Commission is working with the Attorney General's Office to create a formal process for trainer certification revocation, and that more information will be presented at the next meeting.

Next, Mr. Dykes updated the Board on the State Budget. The Amended FY2011 budget currently calls for a 5% cut from the original FY11 budget. Mr. Dykes explained that 5% was the amount that the Commission's financial department had planned for, and so that percentage was

manageable. He went on to explain that the Commission has received a 25% cumulative budget cut since FY2009. Mr. Dykes also added that the proposed House version of the FY2012 budget included a 9% cut, which would include an additional cut of \$25,000, equal to approximately 1% of the Commission's total operating expenses. In order to accommodate these cuts, Mr. Dykes explained that the Commission would consider reducing personnel hours and continuing to leave vacancies unfilled.

Mr. Dykes next updated the Board on the current Legislative Session. In particular, he elaborated on several proposed pieces of legislation that deal with zero-based budgeting, inter-basin transfers, and watersheds. Mr. Dykes also discussed the recent Natural Resources Conservation Team trip to Washington, D.C. The team was able to meet with all legislators except for Congressman Paul Broun's office. Mr. Dykes explained that the team took a different approach to the visits than in past years; including advocating for the National Peanut Lab in Dawson and the USDA Ag Research Station in Watkinsville, which is currently slated for closure October 1, 2011. Mr. Dykes explained that there will likely be no federal funding for the Pond and Partners for Wildlife programs this year, and probably none for next year as well, so maintaining current Farm Bill program funding levels is important.

To conclude his report, Mr. Dykes discussed the possibility of a Legislative Tour to be held in August in conjunction with the 2011 GACDS Supervisor Training. Invitees would include national legislators and their aids, and would include visits to several sites in the central and southwest parts of the state, highlighting Farm Bill programs and current Commission work, as well as agricultural commodities prevalent in Georgia. Mr. Dykes explained that the Commission and GACDS were in the preliminary planning stages, and would begin to reach out to prospective sponsors in the coming weeks.

The Board next called on Mr. Dave Eigenberg to give the Deputy Executive Director's Update. Mr. Eigenberg reported that the annual Water-Use Letters, which are sent to all ag water metering permit-holders annually with a listing of all meters and permits registered under each user, were sent out March 15th. Mr. Eigenberg also stated that the metering program staff had met with personnel from the Fish and Wildlife Service, and had provided them with the data for the Flint basin, as required, explaining that sub-basin info is not released due to privacy issues. Basin data was also shared with EPD and legislative office, as previously requested. Mr. Hays inquired after the program's funding, and Mr. Dykes replied that all meter program funding currently comes exclusively from the OneGeorgia Authority. Mr. Eigenberg further explained the scope of the program will be entirely dependent on future levels of funding—all meters will still be read, regardless of funding; however, maintenance levels will vary according to funds received. Mr. Eigenberg praised the work of the Commission's I.T. Director, Erik McCutcheon and Meter Program Manager Jake Fleming, both of whom were new to the annual water-use letter.

At this time, the Board called on Mr. Jeff Holloway to give the NRCS Update. Mr. Holloway stated that under EWP, NRCS and the Commission had completed work on two

auxiliary spillways, with work on a third nearing completion. A fourth located in Paulding County was in the process of securing additional funding. The Dam Rehabilitation funded by ARRA was on schedule with one dam complete, a second 95% complete, a third at 65% completion, the fourth at 25%, and only one left to begin due to land-rights issues. Mr. Holloway stressed that all future work was subject to levels of federal funding, with reduced funds resulting in reduced number of dams to be rehabilitated.

At this time, Mr. Fulmer gave a brief overview of the Commission's current watershed program activities, and provided the Board and attendees with maps and additional information regarding the sites included on the upcoming watershed tour.

Mr. Dykes invited all meeting attendees to participate in the Watershed Tour, and he reminded the Board that their next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, May 19th. Upon the Board's input, the decision was made to hold the meeting at the Commission's Athens office.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned for a tour of three active watershed rehabilitation projects.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cynthia Wilbur

Approved by:

 _____ 5-19-11

GSWCC Chairman

Date

 _____ 5-19-11

GSWCC Executive Director

Date