**NORTH CAROLINA**

**SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION**

**WORK SESSION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**May 13, 2025**

 Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

Division of Soil & Water Conservation

Virtual through Microsoft Teams

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| **Commission Members**  | **Guests** | **Guests Online** |
| Barbara Bleiweis, Chair | Shelby Kaplan | Taryn Thompson |
| Billy Kilpatrick | Jennifer Roach | Anne Coan |
| James Lamb | Lisa Fine | Aaron Franks |
| Brian Parker | Michael Shepherd | Sam Just |
| George Teague | Elise McLaughlin | Robert Moore |
| Gail Hughes | Chris Love | Demico Guy |
| Patrick Baker | Ken Parks | Starr Silvis |
| Porche Spence | Tinesha McNeil | Heather Reichert |
|  | Paula Day |  |
| **Commission Counsel** | Bryan Evans |  |
| Phillip Reynolds | Allie Dinwiddie |  |
| **Guests Online** | Brandy Myers |  |
| David Williams | Lorien Deaton |  |
| Julie Henshaw | Matthew Berens |  |
| Matt Safford | Dalton Buchanan |  |
| Kristina Fischer | Rob Baldwin |  |
| Rick McSwain | Steven Porson |  |
| Josh Vetter | Madeline |  |
| Vivien Zhong | Sam Edwards |  |
| Kori Higgs | Stephanie Alstson |  |

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Bleiweis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**II. PRELIMINARY:** Chair Bleiweis stated that this would be a working session with no voting only discussion.

Chair Bleiweis charged the Commission members to declare any conflict of interest, or appearance of conflict of interest, that may exist for agenda items under consideration, as mandated by the State Ethics Act.

Commission Member Gail Hughes stated that she might have a conflict with Orange County Supervisor Contract – Attorney Phillip Reynolds said it is not a confict.

Commission Member Patrick Baker stated that he may have a conflict with item 12. Request for Exception to Citeria for Extension of Previous Program Year Contracts Policy – Section 3.

Chair Bleiweis recommended that in the Work Session we would focus on key items in order to go into more detail beginning with item 6 on the agenda.

**III. BUSINESS:**

1. **Approval of Agenda**
2. **Approval of Minutes**

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. **Division Report**
2. **Association Report**
3. President’s Report.
4. Executive Director’s
5. **NRCS Report**

**ACTION ITEMS**

1. **Consent Agenda:** Chair Bleiweis recognized Ms. Kristina Fischer, Mr. John Beck, Mr. Joshua Vetter and Mr. Michael Shepherd to present. Copies of the reports are included as an official part of the minutes.
	1. **Supervisor Appointments:**
		* Brad Smith, Avery SWCD, filling the unexpired elected term of Chales Ballard for 2022 through 2026.
		* Eliseo Pascual, Mecklenburg SWCD, filling the expired appointed term of Morgan Rinehart for 2024-2028
		* George Pegram, Vance SWCD, filling the unexpired appointed term of Rodney Dickerson for 2022-2026
	2. **Supervisor Contracts:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **County** |  **Contract****Number** | **Supervisor Name** | **BMP** |  **Contract** **Amount** | **Comments** |
| Ashe | 05-2025-004 | Terry Munday | Spring Development, Watering Tanks, Fencing,HUAPs | 13,661 |  |
| Caldwell | 14-2025-009 | Michael Willis | Non-field Farm Road Repair | $16,312 | Pending JAA approval Hurricance Helene funding |
| Caldwell | 14-2025-010 | Russell Dellinger | Emergency Access Restoration | $6,670 | Hurricance Helene funding |
| Gates | 37-2025-101 | Rick Morgan | Water Supply Well | 10,500 |  |
| Hertford | 46-2025-002 | C. Gray Pierce | Cover Crop | $4,211 | Applicant: C. Pierce Farms IncImpaired & Impacted Streams Initiative funded |
| Iredell | 49-2025-801 | Tracy Jenkins | Water Supply Well | $1,625 | Applicant: Westward Farms LLC Supplement to 49-2023-803 |
| Mecklenburg | 60-2025-002 | Daniel Austin | Water Supply Well | $457 | Applicant: Austin-Kidd Farm Supplement to 60-2024-004 |
| Orange | 68-2025-009 | Richal Vanhook | Heavy Use Area Protection, Livestock Exclusion Fencing, Tanks, StreamCrossing | $13,087 |  |

 **Total** $66,523

**Total Number of Supervisor Contracts: 8**

* 1. **Job Approval Authority Applicants:**

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| --- |
| JAA APPLICANTS FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE MAY 2025 NC SWCC MEETING |
| **APPLICANT NAME** | **EMPLOYER** | **TYPE OF JAA REQUESTED** | **JAA RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL** |
| Chuckie Bass | Cabarrus SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Cropland Conversion - Grass |
| Amy Cook | Cabarrus SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Cropland Conversion - Grass |
| Byron Currin | Granville SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Agricultural Pond Sediment Removal |
| Dillan Howard | Wilson SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Cover Crops |
| Cameron Knudsen | Sampson SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Cropland Conversion - Grass |
| Payton Lane | Johnston SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Critical Area Planting |
| Darren Layton | Alamance SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Heavy Use Area Protection |
| Mikey Woodie | Wilkes SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Agricultural Road Repair/Stabilization |
| Rodney Wright | Rockingham SWCD | Submission of completed designs, certifications and skills | Heavy Use Area Protection |

* 1. **Technical Specialist Designation: :** Chair Bleiweis recognized Mr. Michael Shepherd to present. Mr Shepherd explained that The Soil and Water Conservation Commission has authority to designate water quality technical specialists based upon specific criteria and procedures (02 NCAC 59G). Mr. Mark Seibert, Division of Soil and Water Conservation, has requested to be designated technical specialist for the Waste Utilization Planning/Nutrient Management (WUP/NM) category. He has successfully completed the required training and technical proficiency has been verified by DSWC staff. Therefore, the Division recommends this designation for approval**.**
1. **Overview of Emergency Watershed Program/Helene Site Assessment Tool**
2. **Approval for Helene-affected Districts to use Remaining 2022 funds on Different Progect Types:** Chair Bleiweis recognized Mr. Matt Safford to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.
	* + StRAP Program Updates included 750.5 Miles of work completed. $31,363,742.44 paid in reimbursements and 87 contracts closed out, 23 ongoing for FY22. FY24 Contacts included 90.4 miles of work completed, $3,316,272.26. Correction of 10 contacts closed out, with 96 contract still in effect.
		+ Asking for approval for Helene-affected Districts to use remaining 2022 funds on different project types. Of the 23 remaining organizations that have funding remaining from the FY22 contracts 14 Grantees have expressed interest in using remaining funds for streambank stabilization projects and potentially other projects as necessary following Helene. They have cited needs based on higher priority. At this time Madison, Macon and Buncombe SWCD have requested to use their remaining funds for bank stabilization instead of debris removal. This would be a Scope of Work change and not a contract amendment.
3. **Agriculture Cost Share Programs (ACSP) Best Management Practices and Policy Revisions:** Chair Bleiweis recognized Mr. John Beck to present. Micheal Sheperd presented items B & C together. There was much discussion on item D. Use Exclusion Fencing. The number of days for flash grazing, spring and fall season, zoning, as well as clarifying language for including the 20 foot minimum setback requirement being a heavy topic. A copy of all reports are included as an official part of the minutes.
4. **Manure Composting Facility:**
* Updates to definition/purpose to differentiate from mortality management system BMP. Minor technical updates to NRCS standard references. Revised wording on the WMP requirement to limit the scope to the confined animal facility’s waste production area impacted by the composter – changed “operation” to “facility” – the focus of the plan is the impacted portions of the animal facilty. Modified the summary table JAA and reference materials
1. **Waste Impoundment Closure: Revision**
2. **Retrofit of On-going Animal Operations: Revision**
* **Proposed change to average cost Contracted off sludge survey volume**
* **RFP paid based on actual volumes applied + dam stabilization**
* **Contract maximums $75K & 90K remain**

Proposed ACSP Average Cost Payment Rates:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Component | Units | Unit Cost |
| Waste Impoundment Closure | Gallon | $0.04 |
| Waste Impoundment Closure – Stabilization for Breach/Freshwater Pond Conversion | Job | $4,000 |

* Submit land application records to verify gallons removed
* Flat rate for decommission stabilization
* For backfill, use vegetation component
* Also applies to the Retrofit of On-Going Animal Operations BMP
1. **Use Exclusion Fencing (new BMP)**
* Use Exclusion Fence
* Modifications were applied to the existing ‘Livestock Exclusion Fencing’ BMP policy, including:
* Revised definition/purpose
* Modified fencing requirements
* Added flash grazing provisions
* Added a temporary water supply failure exception
* Added a policy on contract modifications
* Added an annual spot check requirement
1. **Supervisor Failure to Attend - Forsyth :** Chair Bleiweis recognized Kristina Fischer to present. Edward Jones has missed three consecutive meetings since January 2025. The Division recommends sending Supervisor Jones to the Inquiry Committte established under 02 NCAC 59A.0302 for consideration. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.
2. **Inquiry Committee Findings:** Chair Bleiweis recognized Ms. Kristina Fischer to present. For the 2020-2024 terms, two supervisors were considered due to failure to meet training requirements – Daniel McConnell (Henderson) and Trent Talbert (Pender). After deliberation, the Inquiry Committee voted that 1.5 STC hours achieved in March 2025 will be applied to the previous term for Supervisor McConnell. For Supervisor Talbert, the Inquiry Committee voted that evidence of neglect of duty has occurred and he is referred to a hearing by the Commission. The Inquiry Committee considered supervisor Cody Waters who had failed to attend three consecutive regularly schedule meetings between December 1, 2023, and November 30, 2024. After deliberation, the Inquiry Committee voted that evidence of neglect of duty had occurred and he is referred to a hearing by the Commission. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.

Council Phillip Reynolds stated that for the ones that have been referred to the Commission for a full hearing, we’ll need to save questions for those infividuals until that meeting, once the record is in front of you.

1. **Request for Exception to Criteria for Extension of Previous Program Year Contracts Policy**
2. **Nutrient Sensitive Water (NSW)- Strategies Update**.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Chair Bleiweis asked for any public comments. Attourney Phillip Reynolds announced that this would be his last meeting serving as legal counsel for the commission. Brian McGinn would be taking on this role moving forward. The Commission thanked him for his services.

**V. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 8:12p.m.

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David B. Williams, Director Tinesha McNeil, Recording Secretary

Division of Soil & Water Conservation, Raleigh, N.C.

***These minutes were approved by the North Carolina Soil & Water Conservation Commission on July 23, 2025.***