



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD)  
2020 Hampton Street, Room 3063A  
Columbia, SC 29204  
(803) 576-2080 - Fax (803) 576-2088

[www.richlandcountysc.gov/rswcd](http://www.richlandcountysc.gov/rswcd) • [soilandwater@richlandcountysc.gov](mailto:soilandwater@richlandcountysc.gov)

**Meeting Minutes**

November 13, 2023 • 6pm

Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, SC 29209

**Commissioners Present**

Kenny Mullis, Chair  
Jeff Laney, Vice Chair  
Jim Rhodes, Treasurer  
Tim McSwain

**Associate Commissioners Present**

Sarah Burnham  
Logan Richardson  
Mary Beth McSwain  
Mary Hendrix  
Charles Weber

**Others Present**

Quinton Epps  
Bailey Slice Parker  
Kip Dillihay  
Chanda Cooper  
Val Morris  
Aric Jensen  
Jessie Egan

**Welcome and Call to Order:** Mullis called the meeting to order and Laney gave the invocation at 6:00 pm.

**Approve Agenda and Minutes:** T. McSwain made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Rhodes. The motion was brought to a vote, and it passed unanimously. Additionally, Rhodes made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by T. McSwain. The motion was brought to a vote, and it also passed unanimously.

**Special Presentation:** Bailey Slice Parker, Gills Creek Watershed Association Executive Director introduced herself and gave the group background information as well as the mission for Gills Creek Watershed Association. Parker shared insights into the successful projects they've accomplished in the past. She expressed her excitement about collaborating with communities, students, and other stakeholders to further the cause of maintaining clean watersheds and a clean environment.

**Financial Report:** Rhodes provided the following financial overview:

**Operating Account (10/31/23 Statement)**

- Starting Balance: \$50,562.28 (10/01/23)
- Deposits and Credits: \$3,305.00
- Expenses and Debits: \$5,171.87
- Ending Balance: \$48,695.41 (10/31/23)

**Credit Card (11/05/23 Statement)**

- Starting Balance: \$396.63 (11/05/23)
- Payments: \$396.63
- Purchases: \$4182.77
- Ending Balance: \$4182.77 (11/05/23) <paid in full (11/13/2023)

**Easement Stewardship Account (10/31/23 Statement)**

- Starting Account Value: \$52,394.52 (10/01/23)
- Ending Account Value: \$52,593.91 (10/31/23)
- Ending Account Value with Accrued Income: \$52,886.99 (10/31/23)

**SCACD Contribution Agreement Account (10/31/23 Statement)**

- Starting Balance: \$252.51 (10/01/23)
- Ending Balance: \$252.51 (10/31/23)

**PayPal Account (10/31/23 Statement)**

- Beginning Available Balance: \$0.00 (10/01/23)
- Payments Received: \$25.00
- Fees: -\$1.21
- Ending Available Balance: \$23.79 (10/31/23)

**Friends of RSWCD Report:** Laney reported, since the last board meeting on 10/09/23, there have been no new Friends, and seven renewals. The current count of Friends stands at 30, and as of today's date, 21 Friends have renewed in 2023.

**Administrative Report:** Morris shared a thank-you card received from the SC Conservation Districts Foundation which expressed gratitude for the District's consistent and generous support to the Foundation. Additionally, she brought to the group's attention to a discrepancy regarding the meeting scheduled for 11/11/24, which coincides with Veteran's Day holiday. Morris recommended to the group that the November meeting be rescheduled to the following day, 11/12/24.

- **T. McSwain moved to accept the recommendation given by Morris to reschedule 11/11/24 meeting to 11/12/24, which was seconded by Laney. The motion passed unanimously.**

**NRCS:** None Reported

**SCDNR:** Jessie Egan gave an introduction of herself, shedding light on her role and its responsibilities. She updated the group on the ongoing state allocation process and the recent addition of a new

watershed district coordinator at SCDNR. Additionally, she announced the upcoming dates for the SC Envirothon.

**Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC)**: Weber reported RCCC staff is actively working with county attorneys to draft a cemetery ordinance. He also announced RCCC staff and Commissioners will have a table at Soda City, downtown Columbia to promote the new grant cycle which will open up on 12/1/23 and run through 2/1/24.

### **Education:**

Cooper provide a report on RSWCD's education activities since the last meeting on 10/9/23:

- **Communications**: RSWCD's e-newsletter has 4,344 subscribers (-2); Facebook has 1,219 followers (+5); and Instagram has 743 followers (+10). The Richland County Ag + Art Tour Facebook has 1,032 followers (+5) and Instagram has 656 (+5).
- **Richland County Ag + Art Tour**: The event will be held 6/8-9/24 and will feature up to 20 tour sites. The next planning meeting will be held on 11/21/23 at 10am. RSWCD is consulting with the Lexington SWCD, as they are interested in supporting the Lexington County tour. The committee is still seeking \$5,000 in sponsorships (above and beyond the \$5,000 Richland County Conservation Commission sponsorship and the \$7,900 Hospitality Tax Grant allocations).
- **Seed Sanctuary**: RSWCD has distributed ~7,818 seed packets and has filled 945 mail requests since 2/1/23. 65 individuals have volunteered to pack seeds for the program, and last Thursday, 19 University 101 students from USC packed seeds as a classroom service project. Seed distribution continues at 2020 Hampton St. and Richland Library Eastover.
- **Mini-Grants**: In the fall award cycle, RSWCD received 10 requests for mini-grants totaling \$8,750. It made 4 awards totaling \$3,750. The next application deadline is 1/22/24.
- **Arbor Day**: RSWCD will celebrate Arbor Day on Friday, 12/1/23, at Watkins-Nance Elementary School with a tree planting at 9am and a school assembly featuring Councilman Paul Livingston and Edu-tainer Tim Womick at 12:30pm. Councilman Livingston will proclaim Arbor Day in Richland County. RSWCD will distribute goody bags with items from the US Forest Service, SC Forestry Commission, DNR, and Palmetto Pride to all students and staff.
- **Poster Contest**: The 2024 K-12 poster contest theme is "May the Forest Be With You Always." Entries are due 4/12/24. RSWCD will provide 24 sheets of poster paper to interested schools.
- **NACD Conservation Coffee**: Former RSWCD community outreach coordinator Hannah Feeley presented about RSWCD's Seed Sanctuary program at a recent NACD Conservation Coffee virtual event.
- **Environmental Education Association of SC (EEASC)**: RSWCD staff served on the EEASC Awards committee to facilitate the award of \$1,000 EEASC Mini-Grants to Dutch Fork Elementary School for commercial composting and to Spartanburg SWCD for a storm drain art project. RSWCD staff are serving on the EEASC Conference committee to help plan the 2024 EEASC conference, which will be held 6/20-22/24 at USC Upstate. Staff are also providing support for the EEASC 2024 fundraiser.
- **Educator Meetup**: RSWCD helped coordinate an October EEASC Midlands Meetup at Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve. The event was hosted by Calhoun SWCD and was attended by 15 participants.
- **Landscape Analysis**: The results of the second phase of the Landscape Analysis research project conducted by the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance, with the support of EEASC

and RSWCD staff, have been published. Details are available at [www.southeastee.org/landscape](http://www.southeastee.org/landscape).

- **Midlands Local Food Collaborative (MLFC):** RSWCD coordinated the quarterly MLFC meeting at Senate's End; 11 people participated in the event.
- **SC Forage and Grazing Lands Coalition (SCFGLC):** RSWCD sponsored and supported the SCFGLC annual meeting, which was attended by 60 participants.
- **Pollinator Coalition Initiative:** RSWCD staff participated in two meetings/consultations hosted by SCDNR staff to discuss the development of a new statewide pollinator conservation coalition.
- **SC Project Learning Tree (SCPLT):** RSWCD provided staff support for the SCPLT Marketing and Steering Committees. Staff participated in a quarterly steering committee meeting.
- **Gills Creek Watershed Association (GCWA):** RSWCD representatives participated in the GCWA annual meeting.
- **Adopt-A-Stream (AAS):** RSWCD's AAS kit continues to be used by two community volunteers each month.
- **Wood Magic Forest Fair (WMFF):** Two RSWCD representatives volunteered at the WMFF and helped educate approximately 635 4<sup>th</sup> grade students about the importance of trees and forests.
- **Classroom Presentations:** Jennifer Mancke led classroom presentations for ~178 students at Columbia Montessori School, Dutch Fork Elementary, Green Charter School, and Cutler Jewish Day School on topics including Gardening, Plant Propagation, Landfills/Recycling, and Watershed Explorer.
- **School Mentorship:** Mancke also facilitated Green Step School mentor meetings at Columbia City Homeschool, Conder Elementary, Cutler Jewish Day School, and East Point Academy. She led a staff development session for 60 participants at Dutch Fork Elementary.

**Upcoming Events:** RSWCD will host an exhibit at Soda City Market this Saturday, 11/18/23, from 9am-1pm. The Conservation Holiday Drop-In will be held at the Administration Building on Tuesday, 12/12/23, from 4:30-6pm

**County Council Report:** Weber reported he spoke with Councilman Pugh during an event at Harbison State Forest.

**Advocacy:** Mullis gave an overview of the beef checkoff program and its benefits. He conveyed that Nancy Mace, US Representative, is opposing the beef checkoff program. Mullis encouraged the group to engage with Ms. Mace to reconsider her stance. Councilman Livingston will present the Arbor Day Proclamation at Watkins-Nance Elementary School on 12/1/23.

**Old Business:** None reported

**New Business:** Nine RSWCD representatives are interested in attending the SC Conservation Partnership Conference in Myrtle Beach. Cooper recommended to the group to increase the travel budget to the SCACD Conference from \$3500 to \$3700 and not reimburse for mileage or per diem for non-staff travelers. Mullis recommended Kip Dillihay as an associate commissioner. Dillihay provided a brief introduction for himself, mentioning he started out his career in the legal field but swiftly changed career paths to his passion, conservation.

- **Rhodes made a motion to accept the recommendations given by Cooper which was seconded by T. McSwain. The motion passed unanimously.**

- **T. McSwain motioned to accept Dillihay as an associate commissioner, which was seconded by Rhodes. The motioned passed unanimously.**

**Executive Session:** N/A

**Public Input:** Mullis reported to be on the lookout, the SC Association of Conservation Districts is soon to be seeking an Executive Director.

**Next Meeting:** The next board meeting is scheduled for Monday, 1/8/23 at 6pm at Lizard's Thicket, 7938 Garners Ferry Rd, Columbia, SC 29209.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Kenny Mullis, Chair

Val Morris, Conservation Administrative Assistant