

PUBLIC HEARING ON FORMATION OF THE INDIAN RIVER SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT.

Meeting was called to order by Acting Chairman Boudet at 2: 40 P.M., Friday, November 24, 1944.

The following were present: J.A. Martell, E. E. Carter, Earle G. Thatcher, A. M. Hill, Hubert Graves, W. H. Blackmon, W. F. Cox and Kenneth McMullen, Extension Conservationist, and H. B. Helms and A. J. Peacock from the State Soil Conservation office.

M r. Boudet reviewed and brought up to date all work done in Indian River County toward securing a soil conservation district.

M r. M cMullen briefly outlined the Soil Conservation Act and the procedure to follow to set up districts. He also stated that twenty-five districts were already formed in the State of Florida and that several more were in the process of being formed.

Mr. Helms explained how a district operated, the service that the SCS people render, and read the important sections of the memorandum of understanding between the district and the SCS.

Hubert Graves moved that a referendum be held for the purpose of establishing the wishes of the community as to the setting up of a soil conservation district. W. F. Cox seconded the motion and it was carried.

The County Agent's office was designated as the polling place. The poll to be open from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on December 16, 1944.

Hubert Graves and W.F. Cox were designated to help at the polling place and to count the votes.

A.J. Peacock mentioned the fact that this was a long-time program and that results might not be seen for some time.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:25 P.M.

MINUTES OF INDIAN RIVER COUNTY SOIL
CONSERVATION DISTRICT - June 6, 1945

The meeting was opened by Mr. McMullen who outlined the procedure to be used in organizing the district. He then stated that Gilbert Barkoskie and Paul Robertson had received the most votes and therefore would automatically be three year members on the board. The other three members had an equal number of votes. He went on to state that it was necessary through some method for the Board to decide which of the three members would be one year, two year and three year members.

At this time Paul Robertson was chosen to act as temporary chairman. Election of chairman and secretary-treasurer took place. E. E. Carter was elected Chairman and County Agent M. A. Boudet elected Secretary-Treasurer. Of the three men having equal number of votes E. E. Carter was elected as a three year member and Dale Talbert as two year member and Milton Strickland as a one year member.

The annual election date was set for the second Tuesday of July and in view of the fact that it is so close to that date now it was decided not to hold an election this July but that the first election of the district would take place the second Tuesday of July, 1946.

Mr. Robertson then asked Colin Gunn to explain the assistance that can be given to local district set-up. Mr. Gunn began by showing the covering of districts in United States and Florida. 47 states of the 48 have soil conservation districts. He also stated that whenever a district is formed it is then in line to write the state SCS requesting assistance in formulating program work plans. The request for a work unit technician is based on these plans. Mr. Gunn also explained that a grower needing and wanting assistance from the district should make his request in writing to the Board of Supervisors. If the Board approves the request, available assistance is given. It was also made clear that the Board is the governing body and the scope of its work embraces many varied projects which may prove beneficial to agriculture within the district. The technician furnished by the State Office works under the Supervision of the Board of Directors.

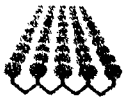
Mr. A. J. Peacock also said a few words, mentioning the fact that in some instances available equipment can either be borrowed by the district or given by the State to the district on a definite grant basis.

Dale Talbert moved that assistance to work up program work plans be requested from the State Office. M. L. Strickland seconded the motion. It unanimously passed. Discussion as to the time to be taken and the date in working up this work plan. Kenneth McMullen urged that at least one full day be given to this operation. It was decided to take the day of June 26th, 1945. All members are to meet at the court house at 8:00 A.M. with Mr. McMullen and Mr. Peacock.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 P.M.

M. A. Boudet

M. A. BOUDET, SEC.-Treas.



SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AND USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE IN FLORIDA

revised September 2000

There are over 3,000 soil & water conservation districts in the United States. It is mainly through these local districts that the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assists individuals, groups, and units of government with natural resources conservation.

Soon after the NRCS was established by Congress in 1935 (it was called Soil Erosion Service then later, the Soil Conservation Service) the Secretary of Agriculture made known the need for local divisions of government to handle the responsibility of conducting a conservation program. Two years later the President recommended that all states form conservation districts, which Florida instituted in 1937.

The 5 locally elected supervisors for each of Florida's 63 soil and water conservation district (SWCD) boards serve four year terms. The NRCS staff provides technical assistance for various conservation projects and programs agreed upon. Participation with the Indian River SWCD is voluntary - there is no charge for NRCS services, and no taxes are levied on county residents. All 63 Florida SWCDs belong to both the Florida Association of Conservation Districts (FACD) and the National Association of Conservation Districts. The two associations are non-profit groups that provide leadership and coordination for the local SWCDs in natural resource conservation endeavors.

Under the guidance of the SWCDs, the NRCS concentrates on the following programs/projects: technical assistance, soil surveys, PL-566 watershed projects, 1996 Farm Bill programs as, the Environmental Quality Incentive, Wildlife Habitat Incentive, and Wetland Reserve Programs, Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), Resource Conservation Act (RCA), Food Security Act (FSA), Cooperative River Basin studies, Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP), Plant Materials Center, Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA).

State Conservationist, T. Niles Glasgow, directs NRCS operations in Florida.

The Indian River SWCD and the local NRCS staff are presently working with the following programs.

- Conservation practice planning and application
- Soil survey information distribution
- Mobile Irrigation Lab
- Water table observation wells
- Conservation education programs

The USDA NRCS and SWCD prohibit discrimination in their programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at (202) 720-5881 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA & SWCD are equal employment opportunity employers.



HISTORY AND OPERATION OF THE SWCD (revised September 2000)

The Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was organized in 1945 by the residents of Indian River County under the provision of Florida "Soil and Water Conservation Law" Chapter 582, enacted by the State Legislature in 1937. The district was organized for the purpose of developing a program of management and conservation of the soil, water and related natural resources of Indian River County and promoting and encouraging the voluntary implementation of those conservation practices.

The SWCD works in cooperation with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assist land users in the implementing best management practices that will bring about the wisest use of land within its boundaries. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) is able to assist individuals, groups and units of government within Indian River County through the SWCD. The USDA-NRCS staff consists of 3 federal employees in Indian River County. They are: a District Conservationist, a Resource Soil Scientist, and one Mobile Irrigation Lab Soil Conservation Technician. NRCS also provides 4 vehicles, telephone system (1 line and 7 desk sets plus modem and Fax lines) and computers (including one internet telephone line), printers and equipment for technical assistance to the SWCD in planning, designing, and implementation of best management practices and methods. They primarily concentrate on the agricultural community, including citrus grove farmers and cattle ranchers. This enables landowners/users to implement the most wise use of their soil, water and other natural resources.

The SWCD adopts a long-range (5 year) plan outlining the general natural resources conservation objectives, which it implements through the use of services, facilities and funds that federal, state, county and private sources may provide. The Board of County Commissioners of Indian River County provides office space and furniture for the 3 federal (NRCS), 2 County (SWCD) employees, and 1 Green Thumb/Earth Team Volunteer. Other services provided to the elected SWCD Board of Supervisors include: utilities, building/grounds maintenance, janitorial service, 2 phone lines, some equipment and supplies and salary + benefits for the 2 county employees (a Conservation Technician and an Administrative Assistant). This support enables the district to insure the continuation and quality of its program.

The SWCD is governed by a board of five locally elected supervisors. Supervisors are non-salaried public officials with an interest in the proper use and conservation of soil, water and other natural resources in order to benefit the people of the district and the state.

-more-

The SWCD's highest priorities are to promote natural resource conservation with special emphasis on maintaining a high standard of water quality in Indian River County. These goals are met by assisting landowners in developing Conservation Plans for their individual property or properties. The SWCD encourages landowners to use Best Management Practices, such as: microirrigation systems and irrigation water management, which helps conserve water resources, improves agricultural runoff, and helps to maintain water quality.

Locating and encouraging landowners to sign up for cost-sharing to have abandoned or free-flowing artesian wells decommissioned is another part of this effort. January 1991, the SWCD began a water table observation well project, which has been a very successful tool in irrigation water management. Other continuing efforts include the use and distribution of the Indian River County Soil Survey and other individualized soils information as requested, a solar pumping demonstration, and several ditch bank and beach erosion control demonstration projects using several synthetic products and plant materials provided by the NRCS Plant Materials Center.

The USDA-NRCS funded Mobile Irrigation Lab has been another highly regarded program. Local agricultural and urban irrigation systems are evaluated at no cost to provide the irrigator up to date information on how the system functions. An irrigation water management plan is provided as well. This program not only saves a tremendous amount of water, it also saves the owners/operators money and enables them to produce a better product whether it be a healthier citrus tree or a lush and disease free golf green.

The SWCD staff have devoted one day a month to water quality testing at 7 Sebastian area sites in the north Indian River County since 1993. It is a cooperative effort with the Indian River County Environmental Health Department.

Conservation education is also an important part of the SWCD program. Youth are given the opportunity to learn about the conservation of natural resources through annual public speaking, limerick and conservation poster contests, and the Future Farmers of America/4-H land judging contest. Outdoor classrooms have been established at a few local schools, videos are available on loan, and publications are distributed as a part of displays staffed for school science and career days throughout the county. The conservation education coordinator (the SWCD's administrative assistant) also initiated, in 1994, the area's first Envirothon competition for high school students inviting 3 other counties to join in the effort, which produced the 4-county Indian River Lagoon Envirothon. It is a very valuable way in which to network with the many conservation partners that are in the Treasure Coast area of Florida. The Indian River Lagoon Envirothon now includes Okeechobee along with the 4 original Treasure Coast counties and is an annual event reaping benefits in the lives of teenagers who are made aware of environmental concerns and given experience in a team effort to come up with practical solutions to the natural resource problems facing every person on the planet.

All programs and services of the IR Soil and Water Conservation District and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.