

Indian River County Florida

*Indian River County Administration Complex
1800 27th Street, Building B
Room B1-501
Vero Beach, Florida*



Meeting Minutes – Final

Monday, October 2, 2023

1:30 PM

Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors

Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman: District 1

Dr. David L. Cox, Secretary/Treasurer: District 2

Charles Kennon Hendrix, Member: District 3

Vacant: District 4

Vacant: District 5

Linda Caggiano, District Staff Assistant II: IRSWCD

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Robert C. Adair, Jr. called meeting to order at 1:34 PM.

Supervisors in attendance: Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman
Dr. David L. Cox, Secretary/Treasurer

Staff in attendance: Linda Caggiano, Staff Assistant II, IRSWCD
Eric Charest, Interim Natural Resources Director
Jennifer Abbey, District Conservationist, USDA-NRCS
Christine Kelly-Begazo, UF/IFAS

Public in attendance: George F. Hamner, Jr Indian River Exchange Packers
Mike Johannsen, Indian River Neighborhood Association
Honey Minuse, Vero Beach Resident

2. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA/EMERGENCY ITEMS:

Added: Item 8.A. Indian River Land Trust - Management Maintenance of conservation lands (grants).

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. The Minutes for Board Meeting of August 14, 2023 were approved as written.

Motion: A Motion to approve the August 14, 2023 Minutes was made by Dr. David L. Cox and Seconded by Robert C. Adair, Jr. Motion carried unanimously.

B. The Minutes for Board Meeting of September 11, 2023 were approved as written.

Motion: A Motion to approve the September 11, 2023 Minutes was made by Dr. David L. Cox and Seconded by Robert C. Adair, Jr. Motion carried unanimously.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A. The Financial Report for August 2023 was available and read by Dr. David L. Cox.

Motion: A motion to accept the August 2023 financial report as presented was made by Robert C. Adair, Jr. and Seconded by Dr. David L. Cox. Motion carried unanimously.

B. The Financial Report for September 2023 was available and read by Dr. David L. Cox.

Motion: A motion to accept the September 2023 financial report as presented was made by Robert C. Adair, Jr. and Seconded by Dr. David L. Cox. Motion carried unanimously.

5. REPORTS:**A. Jennifer Abbey, United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) Report:**

- ❖ **News:** Biden-Harris Administration Makes Available Historic \$3 Billion for Climate-Smart Practices on Agricultural Lands Through Investing in America Agenda

Published: September 28, 2023

USDA is making more than \$3 billion in funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024 as part of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda.

Florida Agricultural Landowners Encouraged to Apply for Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and Regional Conservation Partnership Program

PUBLISHED: September 18, 2023

NRCS is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), climate-smart practices through EQIP and CSP funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Apply by November 17.

- ❖ **Farm Bill Programs:** 26 of 67 Active contracts totaling approximately \$1,230,000 over approximately 11,900 acres
- ❖ **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** 17 Active Contracts
- ❖ **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** 9 Active Contracts
- ❖ **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP – WRE) :** 1 application
- ❖ **Conservation Applications: September – October**
 - NONE
- ❖ **Other:** Completed EQIP contract obligations, Completed CSP contract obligations, Attended NRCS Program Roll Out Meeting.
- ❖ **Next Month:** Continue conservation implementation field inspections; Continue FY 2024 EQIP application field visits, Internal office Quality Assurance Review results, Existing contract management, CSP contract annual payments.

B. Andrea Lazzari, Indian River County (IRC) Agricultural Extension Director/ University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) Report:

- ❖ **County Reorganization:** Recreation & Conservation – Beth Powell, General Services Director is responsible for Agricultural Extension – Transition period. Meeting with County Administrator – John Titkanich, very productive, positive meeting providing him with information of what Agricultural Extension and the role they have in the County; Learn about the Department,/Divisions provide resources in education. Potential future positions including Sea Grant position
- ❖ **Joint County Pasture Management Class with Brevard & Indian River County,** learn how to take soil and tissue samples, read soil test results – One Day workshop.
- ❖ **Peanut Butter Challenge.**
- ❖ **National 4-H Week recognition at BOCC Meeting 10/03/2023.**

Robert C. Adair, Jr. mentioned that when SWCD was in the “Old Library” building, the staff consisted of: Kevin Sullivan, USGS; James Karl, Conservation Technician -MOU Agreement between USDA-NRCS and IRC BOCC; John Pomar, Technician; Elwood Holzworth, Technician USDA-NRCS; Clare Nichols, District Conservationist; Chris Noble, Soil Scientist ; Doreen Pinkerton, Administrative

Secretary; Nancy Hammons, Administrative Secretary, Brenda Davis, Staff Assistant. The County paid for two secretaries and a soil technician. SWCD is looking at urban agriculture and would like to re-activate, have a person that can go out to assist the small farms with BMP's and their land. NRCS was located in Indian River County. George Hamner, mentioned that we had a fairly robust agricultural base in the 70's-2000's. Base probably 80% gone. Hopefully re-build off of the small farmers.

C. Matthew Cox, Environmental Specialist III, Office of Agricultural Water Policy- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (OAWP-FDACS) Report:

- ❖ No Report

D. Linda Caggiano, Staff Assistant II:

- ❖ **County Reorganization:** Community Development does not exist any longer. Planning & Development Services, Community Services and Natural Resources. Currently still report to both Andy Sobczak and Eric Charest. Natural Resources Department consists of : Stormwater, Coastal Engineering, Soil & Water Conservation District, Indian River Lagoon, and Environmental Planning.
- ❖ **Office of Agricultural Water Policy – Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: (OAWP-FDACS):** Contract 27690: \$100,000.00 for 2023-2024; Paid Out \$32,504.98 from prior year. Have 2 Cost-. Balance of \$28,456.06 remaining for the Cost-Share FY 2024.
- ❖ **Florida Conservation District Employee Association (FCDEA):** Annual Meeting held, Monday September 25, 2023: By-Law Changes, Employee's Only as Members; Effective October 1, 2023 Audrey Kuipers, Okeechobee SWCD – President; Ashley Cook-Gregory, Gilchrist SWCD – Vice-President; Linda Caggiano, Indian River SWCD – Secretary; Joni Sapp, Suwannee SWCD – Treasurer
- ❖ **Association of Florida Conservation Districts (AFCD):** Annual Meeting held Tuesday, Wednesday, September 26 and 27, 2023; NACD – Marquita Hall Southeast Region Representative attended; FDACS was to have Bret Prater, Assistant Director and Clegg Hooks, Management & Operations Consultant attend, but NO FDACS Staff attended; USDA-NRCS was in full Attendance on Wednesday. The Local Working Group Meetings will be taken back from AFCD and USDA-NRCS will post and set up video meeting. To be held early Spring with final report due May 30, 2024. Have more attendees i.e. Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association; AFCD is having a 2-day Certified Conservation District Official Program that will be held Thursday-Friday, October 19-20, 2023 at Florida Farm Bureau Building in Gainesville, FL. The rumor going around again is that Florida State Legislators want to dismantle the Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Also, there is mention of consolidating Districts. Those SWCD's that have Supervisors attend the October training will get to stay. So hopefully, Indian River can have several Supervisors attend the meeting Thursday-Friday, October 19-20, 2023 at Florida Farm Bureau Building in Gainesville.
- ❖ **ENVIROTHON:** Kick-Off Meeting held Thursday, September 28, 2023; Heather Stapleton is leading the 2024 Envirothon Event. Need a Station Chair for Soil Station and Forestry Station; Provide update study guide information on One Lagoon Website, prepare test
- ❖ **OFFICE:** Monthly Meetings Agenda, Minutes; FDACS Cost-Shares; Need Supervisor for District 4 and District 5; Meeting with all five Supervisors before December 2023 or as of January 1, 2024 will be dissolved and all assets shall be transferred to FDACS; OPPAGA: Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability - October 1, 2023 they will start audit of each SWCD in the State of Florida. *Need to create a Strategic Plan to have available for OPPAGA;* Poster Contest information to get out to the schools: Conservation theme for 2024 Poster Contest: "May The Forest Be With You Always." SWCD Budget for 2024; Budget Amendments for 2023.

AFCD is holding a Certified Conservation District Official Program, Thursday and Friday, October 19th and 20th **Location:** Florida Farm Bureau Building Dr. David L. Cox will attend Thursday. George Hamner will attend Friday. Christine Kelly-Begazo will attend Friday. Robert C. Adair, Jr. (TBD), Ken Hendrix ?

6. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS:

A. Indian River SWCD – Need Supervisor for District 4:

Motion: Dr. David L. Cox made a motion to nominate Christine Kelly-Begazo as a Board of Supervisors for Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District – District Four and Seconded by Robert C. Adair, Jr. Motion carried unanimously.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Indian River Lagoon STEM Advisory Committee Update:

- i. Dr. David L. Cox reported: County has Lagoon protection plan. IRLNEP; Septic to Sewer Conversion.

Eric Charest mentioned that the Utilities Department has a nitrogen loading model used to estimate the predominate sources of nitrogen in the lagoon - ArcGIS based Nitrogen load estimation model

B. Discussion on September 11, 2023 FP&L presentation:

- i. How much property/land FP&L is absorbing to where they want to go. Whether it is good for agriculture or the agricultural owner; not sure if it is good for agriculture overall because taking agricultural land off of the tax roll at a fairly high price compared to what it would have sold for otherwise. Questions arose regarding what BMP’s were in place when FP&L bought the land? Also, what BMP’s would remain intact, which BMP’s would be abandoned and what would be the consequential environmental impact?

8. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Indian River Land Trust is seeking funding for the management and maintenance of their conservation lands (as grants from NRCS or other sources). Management of exotic species as well as irrigation and drainage devices/culverts are needed.

9. SUPERVISORS MATTERS:

10. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 3:04 PM.

Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman

Date

David L. Cox, Secretary/Treasurer

Date