

Indian River County Florida

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



Meeting Minutes – Final

Monday, February 12, 2024

1:30 PM

Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors

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

Dr. David L. Cox, Vice Chairman: District 2

Charles Kennon Hendrix, Member: District 3

Christine Kelly-Begazo, Secretary/Treasurer: District 4

George F. Hamner, Jr., Legislative Liaison: District 5

Linda Caggiano, District Staff Assistant II: IRSWCD

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Robert C. Adair, Jr. called meeting to order at 1:33 PM.

Supervisors in attendance: Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman
Dr. David L. Cox, Vice-Chairman
Charles Kennon Hendrix
Christine Kelly-Begazo, Secretary/Treasurer
George F. Hamner, Jr., Legislative Liaison

Staff in attendance: Linda Caggiano, Staff Assistant II
Eric Charest, IRC Interim Natural Resources Director
Melissa Meisenburg, IRC Senior Environmental Specialist
Andrea Lazzari, IRC Extension Director; UF/IFAS
Jennifer Abbey, District Conservationist, USDA/NRCS
Matt Cox, Environmental Specialist III- OAWP-FDACS
Stephen Wright, Environmental Specialist II-OAWP-FDACS

Public in attendance: Mike Johannsen, Indian River Neighborhood Association
Honey Minuse, Vero Beach Resident
Laura Moss, BOCC of IRC
Judy Orcutt, Clean Water Coalition of IRC
Sharon Seldner, Pegasus Design and Consulting, Pegasus Hemp Solutions

2. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA/EMERGENCY ITEMS:**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A. The Minutes for the Board Meeting of January 8, 2024 were approved as written.

Motion: A Motion to approve the January 8, 2024 Minutes was made by Dr. David L. Cox and Seconded by Christine Kelly-Begazo. Motion carried unanimously.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A. The Financial Report for January 2024 was available and read by Christine Kelly-Begazo.

Motion: A motion to accept the January 2024 financial report as presented was made by George F. Hamner, 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)**

❖ **News:** USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking public comment on proposed revisions to eight national conservation practice standards. Comments are due March 4, 2024.

❖ Proposed revisions to the national conservation practice standards include:

- Field Border (Code 386);
- Filter Strip (Code 393);
- Grazing Management (Code 528);
- Hedgerow Planting (Code 422);

- Mulching (Code 484);
- Seasonal Water Management for Wildlife (Code 646);
- Structure for Water Control (Code 587); and
- Wetland Restoration (Code 657).
- ❖ NRCS obligated \$44.6 million in financial assistance for Farm Bill programs during FY 2023. NRCS also completed restoration, repair, and stewardship of 28,899 acres of easements. Currently, NRCS conservation easements protect 288,131 acres in Florida. Flipbook: NRCS Florida Annual Report - FY 2023 by NRCS-Florida - Issuu
- ❖ **Farm Bill Programs:** 24 of 59 Active contracts totaling approximately \$1,190,000 over approximately 11,900 acres.
- ❖ **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** 15 Active Contracts
- ❖ **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** 9 Active Contracts
- ❖ **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP – WRE) :** 0 application
- ❖ **Conservation Applications: January – February**
 - None
- ❖ **Other:** Continue conservation implementation field inspections and FY 2024 EQIP application field visits. Attended virtual local Envirothon planning meeting. Developed conservation plans, assessment, and ranking for priority EQIP applications.
- ❖ **Next Month:** Continue FY 2024 EQIP and CSP application field visits. Completed ranking for EQIP Inflation Reduction Act/Climate Smart priority applications. Continued conservation implementation filed inspections as needed.

B. Andrea Lazzari, Indian River County (IRC) Agricultural Extension Director/ University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) Report:
(Andrea provided report but was not able to attend meeting.)

- ❖ UF/IFAS Extension IR Spring 2024 Programs:
 - Cool Season Forages Field Day – February 23, 2024 @ 9 AM to 2 PM. held at Silver Spurs Clubhouse, Kenansville. (Free)
 - Beekeeping Basics – February 24, 2024 @ 9 AM to 1 PM, IRC Extension Office. (\$20.00 Registration Fee)
 - Home Gardening Lecture Series – November through April 19, 2024 Brackett Library: 2nd Tuesday 12 PM to 4 PM; North County Library: 2nd Thursday 10 AM to 1 PM. (Free-Pre-Registration Required)
 - FL Master Naturalist Coastal Systems – Begins March 19, 2024, Various Dates/Times Brevard County Extension Office. (\$350.00 Registration Fee)
 - Raising Backyard Chickens – March 20, 2024 @ 6 PM to 8 PM; April 6, 2024 @ 10 AM to 12 PM IRC Extension Office. (\$15.00 Registration Fee)
 - Backyard Wildlife: Feathers Friends & Furry Neighbors – March 28, 2024 @ 10 AM to 11:30 AM Intergenerational Recreation Center. (\$10.00 Registration Fee)
 - Florida Gardener Certification – Begins April 10, 2024 IRC Extension Office. (\$250.00 Fee)
- ❖ Small & Beginning Farms Conference Planning: Need feedback from Supervisors. Finalize plans, set a date and location.

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

- ❖ By 2025, FDEP will be updating all their BMAPs (~33). The updates will incorporate requirements brought about by SB712 and HB1379, which include the following changes that impact our program:
 - In BMAPs where agriculture is 20% or more of the load (OR up to FDEP's discretion), the BMAP must have a cooperative agricultural water quality improvement element. DEP/FDACS/agriculture producers must provide a list of projects (which include cost estimates and estimated reductions) that will achieve the agricultural nonpoint source required reductions.

- Establishment of the Indian River Lagoon Protection Program requires stakeholders (including agriculture) to provide a comprehensive list of projects that will meet their required reductions.
- ❖ SB 712
 - The bill requires the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to perform onsite inspections at least every 2 years of agricultural producers enrolled in best management practices (BMPs). DACS must prioritize inspections for producers in the BMAPs for Lake Okeechobee, the Indian River Lagoon, the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary, and Silver Springs.
 - The bill creates a cooperative agricultural regional water quality improvement element as part of a BMAP in areas where agriculture is a significant source of pollution. Projects under the element could include conservation easements and dispersed water management. The bill authorizes legislative budget requests to fund these projects and requires DEP to allocate at least 20 percent of the funds it receives for projects in areas with the highest nutrient concentrations.
 - The bill requires DACS, in coordination with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) and other academic institutions, to annually develop research plans and legislative budget requests to address agricultural runoff.
- ❖ HB 1379
 - IRL
 - Establishes the IRL Protection Program, consisting of the Banana River Lagoon BMAP, the Central Indian River Lagoon BMAP, the North Indian River Lagoon BMAP, and the Mosquito Lagoon Reasonable Assurance Plan.
 - Sets forth requirements for the program, including evaluation of the BMAP, identification and prioritization of projects, and water quality monitoring.
 - BMAPs
 - Requires BMAPs to include five-year milestones for implementation and water quality improvement.
 - Requires entities that have a specific pollutant load reduction requirement to submit to DEP a list of projects that will be undertaken to meet the five-year milestones. Each project must include a planning-level cost estimate, an estimated date of completion, and expected nutrient reduction.
 - Requires FDEP to coordinate with FDACS and owners of agricultural operations in BMAPs to identify a list project that will reduce pollutant loads for agricultural nonpoint sources. Implemented through the use of cost-effective and technically and financially practical regional agricultural nutrient reduction cost-sharing projects and. The element must include a list of such projects submitted to FDEP by FDACS which, in combination with the best management practices, additional measures, and other management strategies, will achieve the needed pollutant load reductions established for agricultural nonpoint sources. Such cooperative regional agricultural nutrient reduction projects may include, but are not limited to, land acquisition in fee or conservation easements on the lands of willing sellers and site-specific water quality improvement or dispersed water management projects.
 - Requires local governments to include in their comprehensive plans a list of projects necessary to achieve pollutant load reductions attributable to the local government as part of a BMAP.
- ❖ The Water Policy Planning and Coordination (PPC) bureau within the Office of Ag Water Policy (OAWP) coordinates with Florida's five water management districts on regional water supply plans.
- ❖ The PPC regularly updates agricultural land use data and water supply demand estimates and provides it to the water management districts to ensure that enough water is allocated to agriculture to produce and sustain crop production as the state's population grows and more tourists come to visit.

- ❖ The PPC bureau also works closely with the FDEP to ensure that agriculture is properly represented in BMAPs which require the agricultural industry to meet certain nutrient reduction targets to achieve water quality goals.
- ❖ The PPC bureau has worked on a series of analyses to determine which BMAPs will likely have an ag cooperative improvement element, evaluate OAWP's current program efforts (enrollment/cost share/projects), and identify agriculture loads within the different BMAPs.
- ❖ PPC has been directed to work with Field Services staff to evaluate the results of their analyses and identify what are potential strategies or projects (beyond enrollment IVs, and cost share) that can be implemented to address the BMAP agriculture non-point source loads. More importantly, through these discussions we expect to establish potential projects that are feasible and appropriate within the different BMAPs.
- ❖ Field staff will be meeting with PPC staff throughout the year to try to formulate a list of potential projects within the affected BMAPs.
- ❖ PPC point of contact for IRL: Yesenia Escribano - (850) 617-1732 Office; (850) 755-8446 Cell; Yesenia.Escribano@fdacs.gov Physical Address: 315 South Calhoun Street; Tallahassee, Florida 32301-1843 Mailing Address: 407 South Calhoun Street, Mailstop AX2; Tallahassee, Florida 32399
- ❖ Specialty Livestock Update: We are currently updating all of our BMP manuals, and looking into a new manual that will include livestock that does not currently fit into one of our current manuals, such as cow/calf or equine. Our current option now is to ask the NRCS to create a conservation plan for them and we can enroll them under our program with a conservation plan drafted by NRCS.

D. Linda Caggiano, Staff Assistant II:

- ❖ **FDACS:** Contract 27690: \$315,041.26; Disbursed \$279,226.72 in funds. Balance \$35,814.54 for FY 2024 Cost-Share FY 2023-2024.
- ❖ **FCDEA:** Monday, February 20, 2024 Teleconference @ 2:00 P.M.
- ❖ **AFCD:** AFCD is hosting the 2024 NACD Southeast Regional Meeting being held in Gainesville, FL from Sunday - June 16, 2024 through Tuesday - June 18, 2024. Will need FCDEA to assist with Registration, etc. those days.
- ❖ **ENVIROTHON:** Envirothon Competition Wednesday, March 6, 2024 Environmental Learning Center
- ❖ **OFFICE:** Monthly Meetings Agenda, Minutes. FDACS Cost-Share funding; FCDEA Agenda and Minutes. Poster Contest Conservation theme for 2024 Poster Contest: "May The Forest Be With You Always." Public schools have been provided with the information. Posted on Facebook and website. OPPAGA Audit: Kickoff Zoom Meeting Thursday, February 29, 2024 @ 2:30 -3:30 P.M. FDACS required Audit with Kmetz Elwell, Graham & Associates, PLLC.: In progress. Respond to emails as submitted from CPA. Daily check on legislative Bills: HB-1075/SB-1772 and HB-7013/SB 1058. 01/11/2024 Submitted the 2023 Sales Tax Return to the State of Florida with confirmation. Updated Florida Commission on Ethics website to be in compliance of all Supervisors as of 01/01/2024. Completed and mailed 01/19/2024 the IRS Forms 1099-G to producers and IRS Form 1096 to IRS.

Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman would like to have a monthly report provided by Eric Charest, IRC Interim Natural Resources Director.

6. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS:

A. House and Senate Bills Filed (Status): *(No action required.)*

- i. House Bill 1075 filed 12/30/2023 Sponsor by House of Representative Keith Truenow *(Part of Lake)* Related Senate Bill 1772 filed by Senator Jay Collins

- ii. House Bill 7013 filed 12/13/2023, Sponsor Jena Persons-Mulicka (Part of Lee) Related Senate Bill 1058 filed 12/21/2023, Sponsor Travis Hutson (Putnam, St. John, Flagler, Part of Volusia)

B. OPPAGA Update (Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability):

- i. OPPAGA Audit: Kickoff Zoom Meeting Thursday, February 29, 2024 @ 2:30 -3:30 P.M Audit with State in process.

C. Florida Association of Special Districts will hold a 4-hour online Ethics training course for all SWCD Supervisors. \$79.00 for each district official.

D. Financial Audit for year ending 2023 (per FDACS contract):

- i. Kmetz, Elwell , Graham & Associates, PLLC. *(No action required.)*

7. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Indian River Lagoon STEM Advisory Committee Update:

- i. Next IRL Council Stem Advisory Committee Meeting February 6, 2024: FY 2025 Water Quality RFR: Fund the top proposals contingent and consistent with available funds and budgetary authority; and authorize staff to negotiate and enter into contracts with those applicants.

B. Poll Ranking of Board Priorities:

- ❖ Number One - goals chosen: Pursue grants and funding to promote the conservation (and reduce the use) of irrigation water for urban areas. *Need grant writing skills. Who is going to handle the writing, coordinate, oversee and do the work of the grant?*
- ❖ Initiate a program along with the County and municipalities to significantly reduce the amount of potable water that currently goes to MITIGATION. Instead of potable water, this would be a selectively great program to use Re-use water from the Water & Sewer Plants.
- ❖ Number Two – goals chosen: How to bring Urban Agricultural into participation with BMP's, especially water conservation.
- ❖ Number Three – goals chosen: Best approach for SWCD outreach: social media. How our board can function better to educate new landowners and to protect the lagoon. The problem is not the current agricultural owners, but the new small farm owners that we need to make aware of conservation and BMP's for their newly purchased agricultural land.
- ❖ How to bring Urban Agricultural into participation with BMP's, especially water conservation.

C. Pelican Island Audubon Society held Saturday, January 20, 2024 (Update)

- i. Indian River Neighborhood Association: Ranchette Brochures

8. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request to Speak: Sharon Webb Seldner, President Pegasus Design and Consulting, Pegasus Hemp Solutions:

- i. Hemp-for-fiber as a viable alternative crop for possible rotation into abandoned Florida citrus groves

2. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 3:17 PM.



Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman

March 11, 2024
Date



Christine Kelly-Begazo, Secretary/Treasurer

4.8.24
Date