

# **Indian River County Florida**

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



## **Meeting Minutes – Final**

**Monday, January 13, 2025**

**1:30 PM**

### **Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors**

*Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman: Seat 1*

*Dr. David L. Cox, Vice Chairman: Seat 2*

*Vacant: Seat 3*

*Christine Kelly-Begazo, Secretary/Treasurer: Seat 4*

*George F. Hamner, Jr., Legislative Liaison: Seat 5*

**Linda Caggiano, District Staff Assistant II: IRSWCD**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Robert C. Adair, Jr. called meeting to order at 1:29 P.M

**Supervisors in attendance:** Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman – Seat 1  
Dr. David L. Cox – Seat 2  
George F. Hamner, Jr. – Seat 5

**Staff in attendance:** Linda Caggiano, Staff Assistant II

**IRC Staff and**

**Partners in attendance:** Jennifer Abbey, District Conservationist, USDA/NRCS  
Eric Charest, IRC Assistant Natural Resources Director  
Matt Cox, Environmental Specialist III- OAWP-FDACs

**Public in attendance:** Adam Honour, Aerex Global Solutions  
Honey Minuse, Vero Beach Resident

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

A. The Minutes for the Board Meeting of December 9, 2024 were approved as written.

**Motion: A Motion to approve the December 9, 2024 Minutes as presented was made by George F. Hamner, Jr. and Seconded by Dr. David L. Cox. Motion carried unanimously.**

**4. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

A. The Financial Report for December 2024 was available and reviewed by the Board.

**Motion: A Motion to accept the December 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 Announces Grants and Technical Assistance Funding for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production** January 08, 2025 USDA is making available up to \$2.5 million for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production grants with an application deadline of March 10. NRCS is also providing \$11.9 million in technical assistance funding through an interagency agreement with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Apply at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Previous project award info: [usda.gov/urban](https://www.usda.gov/urban)

❖ **USDA Invests More than \$7.5 Million in Composting and Food Waste Reduction Projects** December 19, 2024 USDA is investing more than \$7.5 million in 26 Composting and Food Waste Reduction cooperative agreements that support innovative, scalable plans to reduce and divert food waste from landfills. The selected projects will be implemented between now and 2027.

❖ **USDA NRCS Hosts Florida's State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting January 14, 2025** USDA NRCS will host a State Technical Committee meeting on January 14, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (EST) to provide a report for Florida natural resource and

program priorities and USDA decisions and to seek recommendations from Florida agricultural leaders.

- ❖ **Farm Bill Programs: 27 of 60 Active contracts totaling approximately \$1,300,000 over approximately 12,300 acres**
- ❖ **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** 15 Active Contracts | 18 - 2025 Applications | 2 - 2025 Emergency Application
- ❖ **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** 13 Active Contracts | 15 - 2025 Applications
- ❖ **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP – WRE) :**
- ❖ **Conservation Applications: November – December**
  - None
- ❖ **Other:** CSP annual Payments. Obligated CSP renewal applications (3 total). DC attended NRCS State Conservationist Advisory meeting in Gainesville.
- ❖ **Next Month:** Continue conservation implementation field inspections as needed. Continue site visits to EQIP and CSP applicants. Attend annual Environmental compliance training. Attend Working Effectively with Livestock Producer Training (John and Micah). Attend site visit for EWP applicant in St. Lucie County.

**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.)*

- ❖ Agricultural Extension is planning to host this year's small and beginning farmers conference in August 2025. Working to finalize the date and location.
- ❖ Andrea is Chair of Soil Stations preparing test. Envirothon Competition Wednesday, February 19, 2025.

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

- ❖ **Cost Share Applications:** FDACS-OAWP is currently pausing the acceptance of new cost share applications. This temporary measure is necessary to ensure timely processing of existing applications while we stay within our current budget.
- ❖ **BMP Manual Update:** New BMP manuals are still being released as they become available. Our newest edition is the 2024 Cattle Manual, available on our FDACS-OAWP website.
- ❖ **Program Enrollment:**
  - Morning Star Fields has been successfully enrolled in the Cattle BMP program.
  - Upon the release of the new Poultry Manual, Morning Star Fields will be enrolled accordingly. There are now approximately 9,000 chickens on-site.
- ❖ **Ongoing Activities:**
  - Implementation Verification (IVs) and new program enrollments continue to be conducted within our designated area.

**D. Stephen Wright, Environmental Specialist II, Office of Agricultural Water Policy- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (OAWP-FDACS) Report:**  
*(Stephen not in attendance.)*

- ❖ Report provided by Matthew Cox.

**E. Eric Charest, Indian River County Assistant Natural Resources Director:**

- ❖ Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Environmental Assessment and Restoration emailed Eric on Friday, January 10, 2025 the Updated Spatial Watershed Iterative Loading (SWIL) Model memo. Any questions or comments are due by Friday, January 24, 2025.

**F. Linda Caggiano, Staff Assistant II:**

- ❖ **FDACS:** Contract 27690: Amended 07/10/2024 \$250,000.00 Annually for next three (3) years plus \$15,000.00 annually for two audits. Received two (2) Cost-Share Agreements and paid out \$63,768.05. Balance of funds available - \$198,731.95. *Waiting for FDACS to reply to email to clarify Amendment of Cost-Share Contract.* Amendment 03 for Contract 27690 which pertains to the annual audit and FDACS-OAWP funding of the Audit, Indian River SWCD has a few questions for clarification prior to signing the amendment. 1.) Per the Amendment 03: FDACS-OAWP going forward is wanting a change of FY months to Fiscal Year July 1 – June 30? July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, or as Indian River SWCD has always filed: October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024? 2.) Indian River would still need to file an audit from Audit for FY 2024: October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024, and then another audit for FDACS-OAWP FY 2024: July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024? 3.) The FDACS-OAWP Budget for the annual audit is \$15,000.00 annually. Indian River SWCD will be required to pay for the annual audit for the final year of Contract 27690 which is executed through June 30, 2027. Which means the annual audit for FY 2028: October 1, 2027 – September 30, 2028, and/or FDACS-OAWP FY 2028: July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028 is to be paid by Indian River SWCD? Assistant Director John Paul Fraites has taken a position with FDACS Rural and Family Lands.
- ❖ **FCDEA:** Legislators have been provided the “Options for Reorganization in 2025 Legislative Session” and the creation of none (9) District Regions from FCDEA. There will be a change, but not sure what option. Depends on Senator Truenow.
- ❖ **AFCD:** No updates from AFCD. Currently no staff. Current AFCD President, Buck Carpenter, Madison SWCD planning to resign due to his involvement with Florida Farm Bureau. Possibility of Districts getting assistance from Florida Association of Special Districts (FASD ).
- ❖ **OFFICE:** Monthly Meetings Agenda, Minutes. FCDEA Agenda and Minutes. Working with Webmaster to post updates with Webmaster for New website. FL Commission on Ethics: Updated online the annual list of public officials (Board Supervisors) as of December 31, 2024 for the financial disclosure form that the State requires to be completed by July 1, 2025. Certified Public Accountant - Cheryl Williams with Wicks, Brown, Williams & Co., CPA’s LLP submitted Engagement letter for 2024 audit. QuickBooks program. Prepare the IRS Forms (1099-G) for Cost-Share Recipients. Poster Contest: Deadline Friday March 7, 2025.

**6. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS:****A. Election of Board Supervisors of Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District:**

- i. Tabled until next month when all Supervisors are present.

**B. Financial Audit for year ending 2024.**

- i. Wicks, Brown, Williams & Co., CPA’s LLP provided an Engagement letter to the Board to prepare the 2024 Fiscal Year Audit. Preliminary estimate fee for the 2024 audit will be \$8,250.00.

**Motion: A Motion to approve Wicks, Brown, Williams & Co., CPA’s LLP to prepare the 2024 Fiscal Year Audit. Board to approve and sign the Engagement letter as presented and the expense of the \$8,250.00 audit was made by George F. Hamner, Jr. and Seconded by Dr. David L. Cox. Motion carried unanimously.**

**C. QuickBooks Renewal – Update:**

- i. December 9, 2024, Board approved a motion to spend \$534.60 for QuickBooks Online. The program does not provide all the tools required: vendors, account codes to track Cost-Share payments. After further research, the Staff Assistant determined the Desktop Pro Plus with monthly updates for \$999.00 is a better fit for the District. Other Intuit QuickBooks range \$1,040.00 - \$2,468.00. Thursday, January 9, 2025 Staff Assistant Renewed the Desktop for \$999.00 before Intuit QuickBooks removed from account. Need Board to approve the expense of \$999.00 Renewal of Desktop Pro Plus with monthly updates.

**Motion: A Motion to approve the expense of \$999.00 one-year renewal of Desktop Pro Plus with monthly updates was made by George F. Hamner, Jr. and Seconded by Dr. David L. Cox. Motion carried unanimously.**

**D. Future Legislation:**

- i. Supervisor, Legislative Liaison – George F. Hamner, Jr. had left a message for Senator Grall over the holidays. Senator Grall returned Mr. Hamner’s call on Monday morning, January 6, 2024. Mr. Hamner and Senator Grall discussed the possibility of a bill to be filed during the 2025 Legislative Session. Senator Grall is going to support whatever is best for Indian River County without question. The SWCD’s that were a part of the workshop in Gainesville asked for three (3) options. IRSWCD prefers option “A” of the Reorganization. IRSWCD has the full support of Senator Grall. Senator Ben Albritton President of the Florida Senate support Agriculture, SWCD’s not high on his list. Senator Ben Albritton has been in meetings with Florida Conservation District and lobbyist. There will be changes to SWCD, but no one knows which option. Will also depend on Senator Keith Truenow.
- ii. The BrainStorm Workshop held on Wednesday, November 13, 2024 and hosted by the Florida Conservation District Employees Association (FCDEA). Clegg Hooks former FDACS-OAWP Director mentioned during the meeting that during his time with FDACS-OAWP he could not speak on the Supervisor requirements per F.S. 582.15-(4): “After the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has determined that operation of a proposed district is administratively practicable and feasible and that the district boundaries are wholly located in one county, the district must be subdivided into five numbered subdivisions that match, as practicable, the boundaries of either the five county commission districts or five school board districts within the county. When neither the county commission nor the school board is subdivided into five districts, or when the district is comprised of multiple counties, the department shall subdivide the district into five numbered subdivisions as nearly equal in area as practicable to ensure geographical representation within that soil and water conservation district’s governing body.” Per Clegg Hooks on 11/13/2024 this is not true. As long as the Supervisor lives in the County he is a Supervisor of. The term District is for the Soil and Water Conservation District.

**E. Supervisor for Seat 3 Vacant:**

- i. Due to the Supervisors requirement of living in the County and not required to live in one of the five (5) Districts like Board of County Commissioners and/or the School Board; the Board will have a better chance to fill the vacant seat.

**F. Chapter 189 F.S. Special District Accountability Act:**

**Motion: A Motion to approve the Strategic Plan as presented was made by George F. Hamner, Jr. and Seconded by Dr. David L. Cox. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Z. OLD BUSINESS:****A. Indian River Lagoon STEM Advisory Committee Update: (Supervisor Dr. David L. Cox)**

- i. STEM Advisory Committee Update. Dr. Cox has been reviewing Grant Proposals for projects. Next meeting scheduled for February 11, 2025.

**B. Update on Morning Star Fields:**

- i. Indian River County Board of County Commissioners - Susan Adams invited Chairman Robert C. Adair, Judy Orcutt, Dan Lamson, and Jake Fojtik to attend a site visit of Morning Star Fields (MSF) on Tuesday, December 10, 2024. The owner, Bruno Ramos and staff gave an in-depth tour of the facilities which featured state of the art watering, lighting and feeding systems for poultry, featuring concrete floors (not dirt) and scrapers to remove chicken waste. The egg wash station is designed to contain to contain, treat, and reuse water for crop irrigation.

Agricultural operations are required to obtain Soil and Water Conservation District approved plans for activities such as land clearing (IRC Code 927.06(4)) and wastewater treatment for Commercial Egg Production Facilities as stated in Florida Administrative Code 62-670.600: Wastewater Treatment for Commercial Egg Production Facilities. FDEP has made a Request for Additional Information for MSF's Water permit application including the following:

- ❖ Include the distances from the land application site to any Drinking Water Supply Wells, Natural Watercourses and/or Drainage Ditches. [62-670.600 (3)(b) (6.a), F.A.C.].
- ❖ Provide the location of all proposed monitoring wells and their depth. All major egg production facilities are required to perform ground water monitoring and submit ground water monitoring plans pursuant to Rule 62-528.700, F.A.C. [62-670.700 (5), F.A.C]
- ❖ Submit a site plan with all the proposed wastewater infrastructure represented, including a process flow diagram, and a location map that shows where the project and all infrastructure will be located. [62-620.510, F.A.C]
- ❖ Include a narrative section detailing the type of proposed wastewater treatment system to be on site. Please include all elements of the wastewater infrastructure. [62-620.510, F.A.C]

(40 CFR 122.42)

- ❖ Requirement of a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) – Per 40 CFR 122.42 (e), any permit issued to a CAFO must include a requirement to implement a nutrient management plan that, at a minimum, contains best management practices (BMPs) necessary to meet the requirements of this paragraph and all applicable effluent limitations and standards, including those specified in 40 CFR part 412. FDEP issued CAFO permits shall include requirements to develop and implement the NMP as established in 40 CFR 122.42 (e) and adopted in 62-620.100 (3) (w), F.A.C.D to comply with all conditions referenced therein.

Consideration of requirements for agricultural operations to obtain Soil and Water Conservation District approved plans for activities: such as land clearing (IRC Code 927.06(4)) and wastewater treatment for Commercial Egg Production Facilities (FDEP 62-670.600).

- DEP to approve Drainage plan .
- As long as the Owner provides and implements everything that DEP requires Owner to do and no manure touches the ground, then IRSWCD can “accept” the plan.
- Drainage for cattle to be approved by FDACS-OAWP.
- Dr. David L. Cox it is not our role as Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District Board to “Approve”, but to “Accept” the plan. Regulatory agencies can “Approve”. IRSWCD is not a regulatory agency.
- The Board anticipates increased agricultural land use changes west of I-95.
- Disconnect with conservation plans. Chairman, Robert C. Adair, Jr. went through the IRSWCD history. 2008 Statement of Function and a Mission Statement. List of services that IRSWCD provide: #1 on the list was Conservation Planning. Plans include environmental evaluation planning maps, soils information, record of landowner’s decisions, nutrient management and technical information. #4 on the list: Drainage design and sizing part of conservation planning irrigation, soil surveys and water table observation wells.
- Jennifer Abbey: USDA-NRCS still does the conservation planning, but does not show the producer nor require signatures
- George: What is our scope and purpose? Over the years has changed for the SWCD’s. That is why legislature is wanting change due to the SWCD’s scope and function has changed, Supervisors use to review the conservation plans and say it was good or “accepted”. Water Management Districts took over what SWCD’s did. SWCD’s use to be a taxing authority – no longer. There is a disconnect throughout the State of Florida legislature as to what the SWCD’s function is? We used to approve the Cost-Share Agreements but no longer approve them. They are now approved through our cooperating agencies: FDACS-OAWP and USDA-NRCS.
- Dr. David L. Cox says we are a conduit for information. We connect people with funding and information.

### **C. Update Nature Farms, Inc. Mark Dellerman:**

- i. Multi-agencies involved: DOT, FDACS-OAWP, and DEP. Owner needs a permit to open up canals/clean out ditches. It will take two days to fill out an application together for a Maintenance Dredge permit from the State of Florida DEP, which can take 6-9 months to obtain approval to remove the mangroves. Need approximately \$8,000. and could be cleaned up within 3 days after permit. He possibly could look into grant assistance to assist him to keep his farm productive.

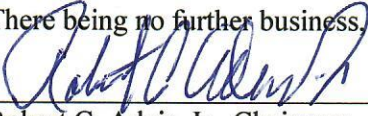
## **8. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. Short discussion on consideration of issuing grants to small farmers in the County with SWCD funds.**

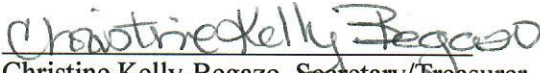
- i. Board considered what to do with the available funds. Have a plan ready and approved. Keep funds local. Options suggested were to provide grants, scholarships, or sponsorships for future small and beginning farmers conferences, 4-H Club, State Envirothon.

**2. ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 3:14 PM.

  
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Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman

2-10-25  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Christine Kelly-Begazo, Secretary/Treasurer

2-10-25  
Date