

Indian River County Florida

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



Indian River Soil and Water
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Meeting Minutes – Final

Monday, April 14, 2025

1:30 PM

Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors

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

Christine Kelly-Begazo, Vice Chairman: Seat 4

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

Pending State Approval: Seat 3

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

Linda Caggiano, Support Staff Assistant II: IRSWCD

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Robert C. Adair, Jr. called meeting to order at 1:31 P.M

Supervisors in attendance: Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman – Seat 1
Dr. David L. Cox – Seat 2
Christine Kelly-Begazo – Seat 4
George F. Hamner, Jr. – Seat 5

Staff in attendance: Linda Caggiano, Staff Support Assistant II

**IRC Staff and
Partners in attendance:** Eric Charest, IRC Natural Resources Assistant Director
Matt Cox, Environmental Specialist III- OAWP-FDACS
Micah Dettweiler, Conservationist, USDA/NRCS
John Santiago, Soil Conservationist, USDA/NRCS
Stephen Wright, Environmental Specialist II- FDACS-OAWP

Public in attendance: Adam Honour – Aerex Global Solutions
Honey Minuse, Vero Beach Resident
Laura Moss, BOCC of IRC

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

A. The Minutes for the Board Meeting of March 10, 2025 were approved as written.

Motion: A Motion to approve the March 10, 2025 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 March 2025 was available and reviewed by the Board.

Motion: A Motion to accept the March 2025 Financial Report as presented was made by George F. Hamner, Jr. and Seconded by Christine Kelly-Begazo. Motion carried unanimously.

5. REPORTS:

- A. **Jennifer Abbey, United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS)**(*Jennifer not in attendance, but other NRCS Staff attended and provided report.*)
Micah Dettweiler, Conservationist, USDA/NRCS
John Santiago, Soil Conservationist, USDA/NRCS
- ❖ **Farm Bill Programs: 29 of 61 Active contracts totaling approximately \$1,316,000 over approximately 12,300 acres**
 - ❖ **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): 17 Active Contracts | 18 2025 Applications |**
 - ❖ **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): 13 Active Contracts | 15 2025 Applications | 1 Preapproval**
 - ❖ **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP – WRE):**

- ❖ **Conservation Application: March – April**
 - 1 – Pumping Plant
- ❖ **Other:** Completed application ranking for CSP applications. Continued application site visits, assessment and ranking for EQIP applications. Began contract creation for 5 preapproved CSP applications.
- ❖ **Next Month:** Continue conservation implementation field inspections as needed. Complete application processing for EQIP applications. Local Working Group

B. Andrea Lazzari, Indian River County (IRC) Agricultural Extension Director/ University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) Report:
(Andrea not in attendance – Report Provided.)

- ❖ This year's Small & Beginning Farmers Mini-Conference will be held on Friday, August 22nd at the IG Center from 9 AM – 4 PM. We will be inviting some of the same speakers as last year (property appraiser, FDACS, USDA-NRCS, etc.) but will also be inviting some new speakers to present this year including the USDA Farm Service Agency and some more Extension Agents. There is a team of central FL Extension Agents assisting with planning this year's event, and this will allow us to have an expanded agenda and more presentation sessions. We also have plans to duplicate the event in Marion County later this year.

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

- ❖ GIS Data up and running. But essentially what we're trying to do is get very specific data out and that's the way that we're going with it. I'm assuming they're going to start implementing some of these more layers and talking with, you know, the water management, about the type of layers they have and what we can integrate in all fifty. But as far as reporting, we do have a little bit of money left over in the northern Everglades. I've personally reached out to somebody and I'm trying to get some cost share going with them right now. We just have a little bit of money leftover in that and specifically for that area.

D. Stephen Wright, Environmental Specialist II, Office of Agricultural Water Policy- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (OAWP-FDACS) Report:

- ❖ Implementation and Verification of BMP's and Enrollments. Small Farm and Specialty Live Stock Manuals provided from Brevard County South to St. Lucie County. Artesian Well Capping.

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

- ❖ Eric Charest: The County is looking at utilizing our resources as efficiently as we can. To what level of support does the District need from the County for the Staff Support that the County is supplying? County is wanting to know from the District, "what the expectations are?" I've already placed additional tasks onto Linda. Well Capping that is going to be something else that is heading your way. Previously under Planning and Development Services. But there is a cost share that we do with SJRWMD "The Abandoned Artesian Well Plugging Program" and Natural Resources is looking to tap into your experience with cost shares to have you spearhead that for the Natural Resources Department. The wants of the District, such as potentially going to less frequent meetings or something else. This is a conversation that we need. I do have a concern that there are things/projects that I see from my standpoint, like Strategic Planning, Mission Statements, and so forth may not fall on Support Staff Assistant that's supporting a district to come up with as opposed to it being formulated from a District. Is there a flexibility in going to less frequent meetings? The CEO's preparations for these meetings on a monthly basis?

Robert C. Adair, Jr.: Some of the work is unpredictable, OPPAGA audit was very time consuming. The volume and content of the information that they were asking for, and the ineffectiveness, the redundancy where they'd ask the same thing again and again. The Districts wants and needs have not changed. We need the Full-Time Staff Assistant. The Board will need to discuss any changes to Board Meeting schedule.

George F. Hamner, Jr.: Could possibly cut out a lot of emails that we do receive. If she's truly going to be busy with Natural Resources, we can give up some time - Monthly versus quarterly probably is easy. We just need time to go through the work. We need to either give her stuff individually or we need a workshop among ourselves. We're in the public where we can just discuss that one item, period.

Christine Kelly-Begazo: We've had a couple of people that have taken a lot of Linda's time because of their inability to understand English, and that has been upsetting for myself and as well as other people I am sure. But without we're, as you well know, "unpaid volunteers". This is something that there's a particular person who doesn't seem to understand either. You know, we may look like retirees, but most of us are all still working, you know, at least thirty hours a week, if not more than that. So yes, Linda has kept this alive for our producers and for the people that want the cost-shares. I just wanted to go on record as saying that, you know, I understand believing me. I've been through these cuts so many times with UF and with the County. So, I understand your position, but I think it just needs to be said that we are here servicing our clientele. The producers in the County and without Linda's support, we would not be able to do it. We can pick up small things and send a few more inane emails. That yes. So just so that's on the record that without Linda, we would not be able to continue to do the work in assisting our producers.

Dr. David L. Cox: I totally support what George was proposing that there are ways that we could increase our efficiency independently of Linda's time. We can, you know, go to a different meeting schedule. We can do more of our own online research. And still meet our obligations to the producers.

Christine Kelly-Begazo: Would it benefit the board for Linda to list things in a chart that the Board could handle? Take up your time, but that we could do. And then also another column of things that take up your time, but that we would absolutely have to have you to do. I mean with that be useful. We do get a weekly report of what you do on a weekly basis. Maybe it would be helpful to see the things that you feel are time consuming but something.

George F. Hamner, Jr.: The little stuff we can clean up, I think having less meetings would help her and I think shortening up the time being more concerned.

Robert C. Adair, Jr.: But I think Christine's idea is good that we hear from Linda how we could cut back and how we can help you. So, at our next meeting, we'll discuss it in more detail after we've heard back from Linda. Thank you.

F. Linda Caggiano, Staff Support Assistant II:

- ❖ **FDACS:** Contract 27690: \$250,000.00 Contract to expire 06/30/2025. Two (2) Cost-Share Agreements pending RFR \$90,343.58. Paid (3) Cost-Share Agreements \$102,589.12. Balance of funds available \$69,567.30. FDACS Amended Contract # 27690 originally dated 04/16/2021 with Indian River SWCD signed and dated 07/10/2024 and 01/27/2025 for three years to expire June 30, 2027. FDACS send an email dated April 10, 2025 that they will be terminating the Contract effective June 30, 2025 due to an internal budgeting error that occurred in 2024 during the renewal process. FDACS is exercising the option to terminate this contract for convenience, pursuant to

Article 7. Termination, section 7.1 Termination for Convenience of Contract Number 27690 (Contract). The FDACS Office of Agricultural Water Policy is diligently working on drafting the new Cost-Share contracts and anticipates having the new contracts routing for approval and execution within by June 30, 2025, for the term to begin July 1, 2025.”

- ❖ **FCDEA:** Next Teleconference April 15, 2025.
- ❖ **AFCD:** No updates or response from AFCD Board..
- ❖ **OFFICE:** Monthly Meetings Agenda, Minutes. FCDEA Agenda and Minutes. Monthly updates to IRC Webmaster for website. Preparing Budget. Reviewing Legislation for updates on Bills. Audit in process, weekly requested to auditor.

6. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS:

A. Financial Audit FY 2024.

- i. Wicks, Brown, Williams & Co., CPA's LLP has required documents. *(No action required.)*

B. Legislative Update:

- i. SB 986, Related HB 973: Referred to Community Affairs Committee; Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government; and Fiscal Policy. Has not been heard by any Senate committees.
HB 973: Referred to Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee; Agriculture & Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee; and State Affairs Committee. Reported favorably out of the Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee and Agriculture & Natural Resources committees. Not on the State Affairs Committee agenda as of 04/15/2025.
- ii. Legislature being back logged with the snow week, the number of bills filed, the state budget and immigration priorities etc. The only way the Bill would make the Senate floor is if Senate President Albritton calls for it to be heard on the floor. Gather farmer testimonies about your District.

C. Supervisor for Seat 3 Vacant:

- i. **Motion: Dr. David L. Cox made a motion to nominate Adam Honour as a Board of Supervisors for Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District – Seat Three and Seconded by George F. Hamner, Jr. Motion carried unanimously.**

7. OLD BUSINESS:

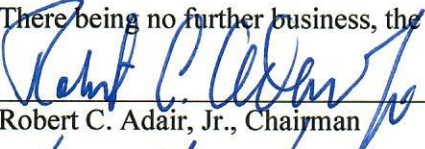
- A. Indian River Lagoon STEM Advisory Committee Update:** *(Supervisor Dr. David L. Cox - No update.)*
- B. Short discussion on consideration of issuing grants to small farmers in the County with SWCD funds.** *(Tabled until next meeting.)*

8. PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

- i. Commissioner Laura Moss: You are elected right by Indian River County voters? You answer to them. Not to anybody else. The voters. Interestingly, the County conducted a series of workshops. This was within the last few weeks on Oslo Road, the new exchange that will be coming in off I-95. I personally attended five out of six of the workshops. There were a lot of green dots under preserved farmland. So, people who live here care. They don't want to become like Counties South of Indian River. Water and soil. Those are the single greatest resources.

2. NEW BUSINESS:**10. ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:50 PM.



Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman

5-12-2025

Date



David L. Cox, Secretary/Treasurer

5/12/2025

Date