

**NORTH CAROLINA  
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION  
WORK SESSION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024**

Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services  
Division of Soil & Water Conservation  
N.C. State Fairgrounds  
Gov. James G. Martin Building  
Trinity Road – Gate 9  
Raleigh, NC 27607

Commission Members	Guests	Guests Online
John Langdon, Chair	Shelby Kaplan	Anne Coan
Billy Kilpatrick	Jennifer Roach	Heather Reichert
James Lamb	Lisa Fine	Paula Day
Brian Parker	Michael Shepherd	Levi Preston
George Teague	Elise McLaughlin	Adam Lockey
Barbara Bleiweis	Chris Love	Jonathan Wallin
Patrick Baker	Ken Parks	Charlie Sanders
<b>Commission Counsel</b>	Allie Dinwiddie	Nancy McCormick
Phillip Reynolds	Brandy Myers	Gary Cox
<b>Guests</b>	Lorien Deaton	Billy Ivey
David Williams	Dianne Farrer	
Julie Henshaw	Ralston James	
Matt Safford	Rachel Smith	
Kristina Fischer	Rob Baldwin	
Rick McSwain	Helen Wiklund	
Josh Vetter	John Beck	
Bryan Evans		
Tom Hill		

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman John Langdon called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

**II. PRELIMINARY:** Chairman Langdon charged Commission members to declare any conflict of interest, or appearance of conflict of interest, that may exist for agenda items under consideration, as mandated by the State Ethics Act.

- Commissioner Patrick Baker stated that tomorrow he will need to recuse himself from consideration and voting on item 14B on the agenda. Pamlico Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD or District) is making the request.
- Chairman Langdon stated that tomorrow he will need to pass the gavel to Vice Chairman James Lamb and recuse himself from consideration and voting on item 14C on the agenda. Johnston District is making the request. Vice Chairman Lamb will oversee the discussion and vote on item 14C tomorrow.

- Commissioners James Lamb and Brian Parker stated that tomorrow they will have a conflict of interest on item 15B on the agenda. Respectively, Sampson and Wilkes District are requesting contract extensions.
- Commissioner George Teague stated that tomorrow he will have a conflict of interest on item 15C on the agenda. Guilford District is requesting contract extensions.
- Counsel Phillip Reynolds stated that contracts which pose potential conflicts of interest for Commission members will be separated out within respective agenda items tomorrow. Staff will ask for separate discussion and votes to be conducted so Commissioners who need to recuse themselves from consideration and voting on certain items can do so while still participating in the majority of the discussion and decision-making for agenda items under 14 and 15.

### III. BUSINESS:

1. **Approval of Agenda:** Chairman Langdon asked if Commissioners had any concerns or comments on the agenda as presented. No concerns were stated. Chairman Langdon then asked all Commissioners, staff, and meeting guests to silence cell phones.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Chairman Langdon asked for comments on the minutes for the previous meetings (May and June). No comments were posed.

At 4:09 pm the meeting was temporarily paused to fix a technical issue to enable the online audience to hear the meeting. The meeting resumed at 4:13 pm.

### INFORMATION ITEMS

3. **Division Report:** A copy of the prepared presentation is included as an official part of the minutes. Chairman Langdon recognized Director David Williams to present. Mr. Williams stated most of his report will be presented at the business meeting tomorrow, but tonight he will cover the StRAP update included, which starts on slide three. Mr. Williams shared the following:
  - Almost all 2022 StRAP funding grantees have submitted at least one Request for Payment (RFP). Forty-two contracts have been completed to date.
  - 2024 StRAP funding was allocated at the special-called meeting in June and DSWC staff are currently working with award recipients. All award recipients accepted their funding awards. Awardees are required to send in a revised scope of work to the DSWC by mid-August and the DSWC anticipates holding conferences with each awardee on draft contracts prior to full contract execution.
  - A pie chart was included to answer Commissioner questions in the previous meeting about funding award splits between applicant types. Most applicants that received 2024 StRAP funding awards were Districts (46%) or Counties for which Districts will serve as project managers (10%). The next highest applicant groupings were Cities and Towns (24%) and Drainage Districts (8%). In addition to these applicants, StRAP funding was also awarded to Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&Ds), other Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Counties in which Districts are not serving as project managers.
  - The NC Farm Act, signed by the Governor in early July, adds the French Broad River Basin to a list of Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) priority river basins and gave DEQ the authority to fund stream debris removal projects

through StRAP. The barrier to working with DEQ on stream debris removal projects is now removed and the DSWC is currently working on a cross-agency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Approximately 18 stream debris removal projects, worth over \$4.1 million, will be run through the StRAP program. Some of these funds will replace money the DSWC has previously allocated to projects. The DSWC anticipates that \$2 million in StRAP funding will be brought to the Commission for re-allocation decisions in September.

Chairman Langdon asked Commissioners for questions. No questions were posed, and Chairman Langdon thanked Mr. Williams for his report.

4. **Association Report:** A copy of the written report is included as an official part of the minutes. Chairman Langdon recognized President Kilpatrick to present. President Kilpatrick stated the report will be presented at the business meeting tomorrow.

Chairman Langdon thanked President Kilpatrick for hosting the May Commission meeting in Duplin County. President Kilpatrick expressed Duplin County was glad the Commission was able to visit and would be pleased to host again.

5. **Executive Director's Report:** A copy of the written report is included as an official part of the minutes. Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Bryan Evans to present. Mr. Evans stated the report will be presented at the business meeting tomorrow.
6. **NRCS Report:** A copy of the written report is an official part of the minutes. Chairman Langdon asked if a representative from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was in attendance to present the report to the Commission. Director David Williams shared that State Conservationist Tim Beard, who typically presents, is currently in Washington DC, but a representative from NRCS would attend the meeting tomorrow and present.

## ACTION ITEMS

7. **Consent Agenda:** Copies of delivered presentations and reports are included as an official part of the minutes.
  - A. **Supervisor Appointments:** Chairman Langdon recognized Ms. Kristina Fischer to present. Ms. Fischer shared that she is presenting one request for appointment for Mr. William Lee Dalton, Jr. with the Surry District. Mr. Dalton is seeking to fill the 2020 – 2024 elected board member seat for the unexpired term of Mr. Glenn Pruitt. Mr. Glenn Pruitt moved from his elected seat to an appointed seat on the Surry District Board. Mr. Dalton is a young farmer who comes from a section of Surry County not currently represented on the board and has filed for the election this November. Chairman Langdon asked Ms. Fischer if the DSWC recommends approval of this request and Ms. Fischer answered affirmatively. Chairman Langdon thanked Ms. Fischer for the report.
  - B. **Supervisor Contracts:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. John Beck to present. Mr. Beck summarized the eight contracts included in the table below for the Commission's consideration. Mr. Beck shared that the multiple Lee County contracts for Mr. Tony Ragan is one project for sod-based rotation. It is all one farm, but there are different landowners, so staff split up the contracts by landowners. Chairman Langdon asked Mr. Beck if the DSWC recommends approval of these contracts. Mr. Beck answered affirmatively.

Chairman Langdon asked whether or not livestock could be involved in the sod-based rotation-17-month practice. Mr. Beck shared that sod-based rotation is typically implemented with a high tillage row crop operation. Grass is established for a long period after tobacco, sweet potatoes or similar high tillage row crops. According to practice policy, grass can be hayed or grazed after establishment. Chairman Langdon shared that he attended a training in Florida years previously where no-till cotton, peanuts and Bahama grass were planted in rotation and cattle were used to graze the planted grass. The trainer relayed that cattle use on the land provided a better return for the cropping system than mowing. Mr. Beck confirmed grass could be grazed after establishment for the sod-based rotation practice, but that mowing is also allowed since setting up fencing for livestock access on cropland can be prohibitive for some cooperators, especially for shorter term tiers of the practice. Chairman Langdon stated that sod-based rotation is an excellent practice and more of it is needed in North Carolina.

Chairman Langdon asked for any comments or questions for Mr. Beck. No further comments or questions were posed, and Mr. Langdon thanked Mr. Beck for his report.

District	Contract No.	Supervisor Name	Practice(s)	Contract Amount
Beaufort	07-2024-020	Archie Griffin	Cover Crop	\$6,562
Harnett	43-2024-018	Kent Revels	Cover Crop	\$17,320
Lee	53-2024-005	Tony Ragan	Sod-Based Rotation - 17 month	\$1,500
Lee	53-2024-006	Tony Ragan	Sod-Based Rotation - 17 month	\$765
Lee	53-2024-007	Tony Ragan	Sod-Based Rotation - 17 month	\$1,640
Lee	53-2024-802	John Dalrymple	Conservation Irrigation Conversion	\$35,000
Martin	58-2024-009	Richard Cannon	Grassed Waterway	\$13,959
Mecklenburg	60-2024-004	Daniel Austin	Water Well & Pump	\$10,973
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$87,719</b>

**8. Job Approval Authority (JAA):** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Josh Vetter to present. A copy of the written report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Vetter stated eight applications for JAA were submitted to the DSWC. The table in his written report describes the JAA requested and the applicants. Mr. Vetter shared that all eight applicants were requesting new JAA. Designs and certifications were included in application packets. Mr. Vetter shared that practice designs and staff competencies were reviewed and verified, and that the Division staff and the JAA Committee recommend granting JAA as outlined in his report to the eight applicants. Chairman Langdon asked for any comments or questions. No comments or questions were posed, and Chairman Langdon thanked Mr. Vetter for his report.

9. **Agriculture Cost Share Program (ACSP):** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. John Beck to present. Mr. Beck stated there are four items he will be seeking Commission approval actions on tomorrow.

A. **Consideration of ACSP Policy Revisions for Strip Cropping, Lagoon Biosolids Removal, and Waste Impoundment Closure):** Mr. Beck presented proposed policy revisions for three ACSP practices. A copy of the full presentation Mr. Beck delivered and associated materials are included as an official part of the minutes. Main items from Mr. Beck’s presentation and Commission discussion for each practice revision are summarized as follows.

- **Strip Cropping Modifications:** Modifications are minor and came out of a DSWC led training last Fall. Districts asked for clarity on maintenance requirements for the practice. A statement was added to the Best Management Practice (BMP) policy that clarifies strips must be maintained for five years. Practice reference names included in the policy were also updated.
- **Lagoon Biosolids Removal:** Modifications came out of the Waste Management BMP workgroup, which includes representatives from NC State, Division of Water Resources, the Commission, and other conservation partners. The Waste Management BMP workgroup is reviewing all ACSP Waste Management practices to update in the next year. Revisions to the lagoon biosolids removal practice include:
  - a. Adding Division waste plan approval requirements, preconstruction conference requirements, reminder to send removal plan to DWR regional and state offices.
  - b. Updating nomenclature, expansion of approved accompanying practices (closure and manure transport), and removal of annual spot check requirements.
  - c. Increasing practice lifetime cap from \$25,000 to \$50,000 and clarified cap is per operation.

Chairman Langdon asked whether the lifetime cap per operation is the same for all operations regardless of how many lagoons are present. Mr. Beck answered affirmatively. For lagoon biosolids removal, an operator can request up to \$50,000 in funding support cumulatively in their lifetime for removal of lagoon biosolids.

Commissioner Baker asked for clarification on the definition of the term “operation” and Commissioner Kilpatrick asked if the definition is based on permit numbers. Commissioner Lamb suggested, if the definition is not clear, that applying the cap by permit numbers may make the process clearer as there can be multiple lagoons included on the same permit. However, there are situations, usually based on liability concerns, where operators will choose to have individual permits for each lagoon. Mr. Beck answered that the term “Applicant” which serves as a substitute term for “operation” is already defined in administrative code (02 NCAC 59D .0102). In administrative code, applicant is defined as all entities with which the applicant is associated, including those in other counties. Director David Williams shared that there has been significant dialogue on this topic and the

term “Applicant” was defined in cost share program rules to prevent use of partnerships to manipulate the system and circumvent set program caps. Chairman Langdon asked if there were any other questions or comments on this item. No additional statements or questions were posed.

- **Waste Impoundment Closure:** Modifications came out of the Waste Management BMP workgroup and resulted from lessons learned from the Swine and Dairy Assistance Program (SDAP). Practice is only for those farms closing operations. Revisions include:
  - a. Adding policies for conversion to freshwater pond from SDAP, reminder to send closure plan to DWR regional and state offices, reference to the retrofit BMP for closures on farms that will remain active.
  - b. Updating nomenclature, contract upload requirements, waste planning and application policies, JAA formatting, and maintenance period requirements. Maintenance period requirements will be based on closure method (breach, backfill, or pond conversion). Breach and backfill closures will now only have a one-year site maintenance period. Pond conversion closures will continue to have a ten-year maintenance period.

Chairman Langdon asked Commissioners if any additional clarification was needed. No comments or questions were posed. Chairman Langdon asked Commissioner Lamb if he had any concerns. Commissioner Lamb stated that he is serving on the Waste Management BMP workgroup, contributed to the revisions presented today, is thoroughly acquainted with material, and is satisfied with the revisions as presented. Discussion was held as to whether these three policy revisions should be voted on separately or together. Counsel Reynolds instructed that one vote on all policy revisions would be appropriate.

- B. **Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP):** Mr. Beck presented the ACSP DIP. A copy of the DIP is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Beck shared the DIP was thoroughly reviewed and updated last year so no major changes are suggested for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Revisions this year include minor grammatical and formatting changes. The Division is seeking continuation of the policy included in the DIP last year that all stream restoration practices will require designs be completed by third party engineers. This is due to ongoing Division engineer staffing difficulties and labor shortages. Chairman Langdon asked if there were any questions or comments. No questions or comments were posed.
- C. **Average Cost List:** Mr. Beck presented the Average Cost List. Mr. Beck shared that some component names were changed, and practice caps were increased to correspond with BMP policy updates. Average costs were also increased for several pump components. Districts requested increases and Ms. Lorien Deaton completed significant research on pump costs to identify suggested increases for pump components by region. Recommended pump component increases were brought to the AgWRAP Review Committee and the ACSP Technical Review Committee, which both approved the recommended increases. Mr. Beck shared that the triennial review and update of the ACSP average cost list is due this fiscal year. Work will begin in August and continue all

year. Mr. Beck is seeking a Commission member volunteer to serve on the workgroup that will be completing the triennial review and updating the ACSP average cost list.

Commissioner Baker pointed out a typo in the presentation for the regional cost increases suggested for component, "STREAM PROTECTION WELL-construction/head protection." Mr. Beck clarified regional costs and indicated this typo would be corrected in tomorrow's presentation. Chairman Langdon asked for comments or questions. No questions or comments were posed.

- D. **District Financial Assistance Allocation:** Mr. Beck presented the DSWC's recommended allocation amounts as shown in attachments 9D1 and 9D2, which have been included as an official part of the minutes. All 100 counties requested regular cost share funds (code CS or SFR) and 41 counties requested impaired and impacted funds (code II). Additionally, five counties (now including Haywood County) requested allocations of the non-recurring legislative appropriation of cost share funds for use in the Upper French Broad watershed (code UFB). The Division reserved 5% of annually appropriated and rollover funds for contingencies and \$65,000 for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) funding requests for the upcoming state fiscal year. Approximately \$495,000 of UFB funds will remain available for just-in-time allocations in FY2025. Recommended allocation values based on the allocation formula specified in 02 NCAC 59D .0103 are listed along with the District funding requests for regular cost share funds (code CS or SFR), impaired and impacted funds (code II), and Upper French Broad funds (UFB). Data used in the allocation formula is routinely updated as new information is published. Mr. Beck shared that new data was included in the allocation formula calculations this year and technical process improvements to reduce subjectivity in generating allocation values were completed as well.

Chairman Langdon asked why Mr. Beck did not split out CS and SFR fund allocations by county. Mr. Beck answered that SFR and CS funds are regular cost share funds and thus are treated the same by Districts. Unlike II or UFB funds, there are not location requirements as to where CS and SFR funds should be spent. The DSWC only codes these funds differently for internal tracking so reporting can be appropriately completed. Regular cost share funds coded as CS come from annual appropriations and regular cost share funds coded as SFR come from the one-time non-recurring appropriation the DSWC received last fall.

Chairman Langdon asked if Commissioners had any comments or questions. Discussion occurred as to the separate actions needed for items 9A through 9D tomorrow. Mr. Beck stated that he will need the Commission to take one action each for 9A, 9B, 9C, and 9D. Separate actions on items under 9A and under 9D are not needed. Chairman Langdon thanked Mr. Beck for his report.

- 10. Technical Assistance (TA) Allocation:** Chairman Langdon recognized Deputy Director Julie Henshaw to present. A copy of the written report is included as an official part of the minutes. Ms. Henshaw stated there are no proposed changes to the TA allocation amounts from the previous fiscal year and 99 out of 100 counties are recommended to receive an allocation. Ms. Henshaw shared that the performance parameter included in the TA allocation formula is due to be run this year, which may change TA allocation amounts to Districts next fiscal year. To provide sufficient advance notice to Districts about TA funding allocation changes next fiscal

year for budget planning, recommended TA funding allocation amounts for FY2026 will be brought to Commission in September. Chairman Langdon asked for any questions and comments. No questions or comments were posed. Chairman Langdon thanked Ms. Henshaw for her report.

**11. Agricultural Water Resources Assistance Program:** Chairman Langdon recognized Ms. Lorien Deaton to present. A copy of the presentation and associated materials are included as an official part of the minutes. Ms. Deaton stated she is seeking the Commission's approval on four items.

- A. **Consideration of AgWRAP Policy Revisions for Agricultural Water Storage and/or Collection System and Livestock Water Storage:** Ms. Deaton stated similar revisions are proposed for both AgWRAP BMPs. The policy updates recommended would allow an individual with appropriate JAA to certify a water storage reservoir/tank or pumping plant as an addition to an existing system.
- B. **Detailed Implementation Plan:** Ms. Deaton presented the DIP. The DIP did not have any significant revisions except for a proposed change to the District supplemental allocation process. Currently, the supplemental allocation process does not differently prioritize funding supplemental, repair or new contracts. Ms. Deaton recommends sorting supplemental allocation requests to prioritize funding supplemental and repair contracts first and then new contracts.

Commissioner Baker asked if Districts could use allocated AgWRAP funds to provide supplemental funding to existing contracts. Ms. Deaton answered affirmatively.

- C. **Average Cost List:** Ms. Deaton presented the AgWRAP Average Cost List. Ms. Deaton shared that some component names were changed and average costs were increased for a few pump components, same as for the ACSP Average Cost List. Districts requested increases and Ms. Lorien Deaton completed significant research on pump costs to identify suggested increases for pump components by region. Recommended pump component increases were brought to the AgWRAP Review Committee and the ACSP Technical Review Committee, which both approved the recommended increases.
- D. **District Financial Assistance Allocation:** Ms. Deaton presented the DSWC's recommended AgWRAP allocation amounts. In total, 92 counties requested over five million in AgWRAP funds. Little over one million was available to allocate. The DSWC recommends allocating 90% of available AgWRAP funds to District allocations and retaining the remaining 10% for regional funding allocations. Attachment 11D lists the recommended District allocation values and the funding total retained for regional funding allocations. The minimum allocation amount is \$10,500 unless a District requested less.

Chairman Langdon asked if Commissioners had any questions for Ms. Deaton. Discussion occurred as to the separate actions needed for items 11A through 11D tomorrow. Ms. Deaton stated that she will need the Commission to take one action each for 11A, 11B, 11C, and 11D. Separate actions on BMP policy revisions under 11A are not needed. Chairman Langdon thanked Ms. Deaton for her report.



**12. Community Conservation Program:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Tom Hill to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Hill stated there are two items for approval.

- A. **Detailed Implementation Plan:** Mr. Hill presented the FY2025 DIP. Revisions include modifications to change dates, increase clarity, and improve formatting. A statement acknowledging the one-time non-recurring funding allocation of \$500,000 was added. The cap for funding allocated to repair contracts was also increased from \$15,000 to \$25,000. Language was added to clarify the pet waste receptacles practice. Mr. Hill thanked the CCAP Advisory Committee, and Ms. Betsy Gerwig with the Henderson District, for their work in reviewing the CCAP DIP for FY2025. Mr. Hill reminded the Commission of details surrounding the CCAP regional application and allocation process and that the application period closes September 6<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman Langdon asked if Commissioners had any questions or comments. Chairman Langdon asked if the Commission would need to take action on items 12A and 12B separately tomorrow. Mr. Hill answered affirmatively. Chairman Langdon noted that there are a significant number of actions required at tomorrow's meeting and encouraged fellow Commissioners to be ready and prepared to make motions and seconds to move the meeting along at a steady pace.

- B. **Average Cost List:** Mr. Hill presented the Average Cost List. Component costs associated with the install of backyard raingardens, cisterns, marsh sills/living shorelines, permeable pavers, and pet waste receptacles were reviewed. Rate adjustments were only determined to be needed for the marsh sills/living shorelines practice. Mr. Hill thanked Todd Kelly from Carteret District, Kent Vaughan with Coastal Management, and Charlie Sanders with Dare District for their work in providing marsh sill/living shorelines cost data to the DSWC. Mr. Hill also shared that he and Ms. Lorien Deaton recently developed a CCAP storymap which provides a compelling educational resource about the program and work to date.

Chairman Langdon asked for any questions or comments. Chairman Langdon thanked Mr. Hill and Ms. Deaton for their work in developing the CCAP storymap and thanked Mr. Hill for his report.

**13. Consideration of Policy Revisions for Mileage, Subsistence, and Per Diem Reimbursement from State-Appropriated District Supervisor Travel Funds:** Chairman Langdon recognized Ms. Kristina Fischer to present. A marked copy of the policy outlining proposed revisions is included as an official part of the minutes. Ms. Fischer stated the following substantive revisions are proposed:

- Reimbursement eligibility for Supervisor attendance at Advanced Supervisor Training, the inaugural training of which will be held in Raleigh at the Troxler Agricultural Sciences Center on August 13<sup>th</sup>. Reimbursement will be prioritized first to those Supervisors who have not yet obtained required Supervisor Training Credits in their current term with next priority to those Supervisors who have not had the training within the past five years.
- Flexibility to pay for travel related expenses for Supervisor participation in spot check field reviews and Local Work Groups.

- Flexibility for the Division Director to annually set the approved reimbursement rate for Area Meeting registration costs. Previously rate was set at \$30, but rising costs make it difficult for Districts to find venues and caterers to meet that price.
- Allow lodging expense reimbursement for Supervisors who must appear before the Commission, if, due to distance, the Supervisor must depart before 6am to attend the scheduled Commission meeting.
- Only allows lodging reimbursement for Annual Meeting attendance for actual overnight stays, except in cases of emergency approved by the Division Director.

In addition to the substantive changes described, Ms. Fischer stated that minor revisions and updates were made to the policy to update grammar and website links.

Ms. Fischer also explained tables included at the end of her report. The tables display analysis of actual Supervisor attendance and reimbursement requests, projects funding needs based on annual averages, and shows the budget shortfall (over \$120,000) based on currently appropriated funds (\$320,000). Ms. Fischer welcomed Director David Williams to share a few comments.

Mr. Williams shared that in the last couple years, the Division has been able to make up shortfalls in Supervisor reimbursement requests due to lapsed salaries from position vacancies. He anticipates with the Division's current staffing challenges, that the expected shortfall in FY2025 can be covered as well. However, the shortfall will not be able to be covered every year and the Commission needs to be aware that while the policy now allows for reimbursement for all the aforementioned activities, annual expenditures are already exceeding the actual amount budgeted for Supervisor Travel. Mr. Williams also apologized for the Department's delay in sending out reimbursements last year for Supervisor travel.

Commissioner Parker asked Mr. Williams to confirm the mileage reimbursement rate for Supervisors is \$0.25/miles and the per diem rate is \$15/day. Mr. Williams answered affirmatively. Commissioner Parker asked who needs to be contacted in the legislature to make a change. Commissioner Parker expressed he finds it difficult to ask Supervisors to be more involved and attend different activities if their minimal expenses cannot be paid and they are expending personal funds to participate. Mr. Williams stated the mileage reimbursement has not changed in at least twenty-six years. He shared the Association for Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors passed a resolution a couple years ago and advocated for rate increases. There have been bills proposed to increase rates, but all stalled in part due to optics. Mr. Williams shared he agrees that a rate increase is overdue, but until the law changes there is not anything the Division can do.

Chairman Langdon thanked Mr. Williams and staff for recognizing the situation and addressing the service compensation gap as possible given the limitations. Chairman Langdon asked for confirmation from Ms. Fisher that one action would be needed on item 13 tomorrow. Ms. Fischer answered affirmatively. The policy changes for travel reimbursement marked in red need to be approved.

Chairman Langdon asked about the definition of Advanced Supervisor Training. Ms. Fischer stated that Advanced Supervisor Training is new, 2024 is the first year it is being offered, and the

training came about because many Supervisors have already attended Basic Training for Supervisors multiple times. The Advanced Supervisor Training course is meant to be the next level of professional development for Supervisors after Basic Training and is being designed to provide more in-depth material on a variety of governance and managerial topics. Mr. Bryan Evans shared that a significant portion of Basic Training covers the history of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and is delivered by conservation partnership staff. Advanced Supervisor Training will feature outside speakers covering a variety of other relevant management topics for Supervisors that cannot be covered during Basic Training. Ms. Fischer clarified that Advanced Supervisor Training is not a required course, but six credit hours will be awarded to Supervisors who participate and the cost of attendance is \$60. Chairman Langdon thanked Ms. Fischer for her report and Mr. Williams and Mr. Evans for their comments.

**14. Special Requests:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. John Beck to introduce presenters. Mr. Beck called on Ms. Jennifer Roach to present the first item.

- A. **Post-Approval for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Contract 84-2024-201:** Ms. Roach presented background on the post-approval request for contract 84-2024-201. The contract was for cropland conversion to trees. The cooperator worked with Stanly County FSA staff to enroll in the CREP and with the Division CREP staff to enter a thirty-year easement. The Division failed to inform the Stanly District of the project. At this time, site preparation, tree planting, and at least one maintenance activity to ensure success of short leaf pine trees has been completed. The conservation plan was followed and work completed meets standards. This issue resulted entirely due to CREP staff oversight; no fault can be attributed to Stanly District. This oversight was found during a detailed review of pending conservation easements and steps have been taken to improve CREP processes to avoid this issue in the future. Commissioner Langdon asked for questions and comments. Chairman Langdon asked for confirmation that action would need to be taken on 14A tomorrow. Ms. Roach answered affirmatively.
- B. **Post-Approval for Contract 69-2023-006:** Mr. Beck repeated, as shared at the start of the meeting, that Commissioner Baker will need to be recused from consideration and voting on this item 14B tomorrow. Mr. Beck provided background about the project. Contract 69-2023-006 was a grassed waterway repair and new District staff were in place at the time. Division engineers provided the design, there was a failure, and a repair was needed. A new design was provided, but repair work was completed prior to Division approval of the repair contract. The work was completed appropriately and the District would like to see the cooperator compensated for work completed. Chairman Langdon asked if there were any comments or questions. No comments or questions were posed.
- C. **Government Property Contract 51-2024-021, Central Crops Research Station:** Chairman Langdon recused himself and passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Lamb. Mr. Beck explained this contract is on government property for the Central Crops Research Station in Clayton for a rooftop runoff management system, a grassed waterway and two rock lined outlets. The Johnston District has worked with Central Crops Research Station before and are continuing the relationship. The District will have a representative available as well as the Research Station management team to answer questions tomorrow. Vice Chairman Lamb asked for any questions or comments. No questions or comments were posed. Vice Chairman Lamb passed the gavel back to Chairman Langdon.

At 5:55pm the meeting was temporarily paused to break for dinner and a public hearing on a separate issue. The meeting resumed at 7:37pm.

**15. Consideration of Contract Extensions:** Chairman Langdon recognized Ms. Lisa Fine to present. A copy of Ms. Fine's presentation and associated materials are included as an official part of the minutes. Ms. Fine shared an update that five Requests for Payment were submitted since the mail-date of the Commission packet, which negates the need for five contract extensions. As of now, a total of 32 districts are requesting extensions for 51 contracts. The DSWC has seen decreases in contract extension requests in the last six fiscal years. Ms. Fine shared that process improvements including increased reminders and online cancellation, and extension forms have helped to lower the number of contract extensions coming before the Commission. Ms. Fine relayed the Cost Share Committee will be meeting to discuss additional policy revisions to further improve the contract extension process.

- A. **Extension requests for contracts that received a design less than 12 months ago or are in pended status:** Ms. Fine stated there are 18 districts requesting extensions for 25 contracts in this category. The Division recommends extending all of these contracts. Ms. Fine reminded the Commission that it had previously waived the requirement for a Supervisor to appear in person or online for Districts requesting an extension for contracts falling in this category. No Supervisors from Districts with extension requests falling solely within this category will be online or in attendance tomorrow. Commissioner Langdon asked Ms. Fine to confirm if the Division recommended approval of these contracts. Ms. Fine answered affirmatively.
- B. **FY2022 Contracts (No extensions to date and not in pended status):** Ms. Fine stated that Districts were required to submit an extension request for each contract falling into this category. Uncompleted FY2022 contracts expired June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Ms. Fine reminded the Commission that its policy is for a Supervisor to attend the July meeting virtually to be available to answer Commissioner questions. In total, 18 Districts are requesting extensions for 21 contracts in this category, which includes Districts of two Commission Members (Wilkes and Sampson). Ms. Fine stated that tomorrow three actions will need to be taken under item 15B. All non-Commission member district contract extensions will need to be approved. Then contract extensions for Wilkes and Sampson will need to be approved separately after Commissioners Parker and Lamb have respectively recused themselves from consideration and voting. Ms. Fine stated the Division recommends approval of all extensions under item 15B.
- C. **FY2021 and Older Contracts (Previously extended and not in pended status):** Ms. Fine stated that Districts were required to submit an extension request for each contract falling into this category. In this category there are three districts requesting another extension for five contracts. Ms. Fine reminded the Commission that its policy is for a Supervisor to attend the July meeting virtually to be available to answer Commissioner questions. Ms. Fine stated that tomorrow two actions will need to be taken under item 15C. All non-Commission member district contract extensions will need to be approved, and then a separate action to approve contract extensions for the Commission member District (Guilford) is needed. Ms. Fine reminded the Commission that Commissioner Teague will need to be recused from consideration and voting on the contract extensions request for Guilford District tomorrow. Ms. Fine shared that these contracts are mostly extended because of trouble with well practices (drilling services and county inspection).

Commissioner Teague thanked Ms. Fine for the report and commented that it appears that Districts and the Division are headed in the right direction for reducing contract extension requests annually. Chairman Langdon asked Ms. Fine to confirm the actions to be taken. Ms. Fine restated that one action is required for item 15A, three separate actions are needed for item 15B, and two separate actions are needed for item 15C. Commissioner Langdon asked when the Cost Share Committee would next be meeting. Deputy Director Henshaw and Commissioner Langdon briefly discussed and set a tentative plan to schedule a Cost Share Committee meeting either in September or October.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Chairman Langdon asked for any public comments. No public comments from Commissioners, staff, or other attendees were given. Chairman Langdon shared he had public comments that he wished to relay. Chairman Langdon asked Counsel Phillip Reynolds to investigate the feasibility, practicality, and legality of the Cherokee Nation becoming a Soil and Water Conservation District. Chairman Langdon is looking for Counsel Reynolds to complete due diligence on the topic and draft a report that outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the potential undertaking and the steps that would need to be taken for fruition. Counsel Reynolds accepted the charge and stated he would investigate the matter thoroughly. Chairman Langdon asked again for public comments. Hearing none, Chairman Langdon sought to recognize Ms. Helen Wiklund in the audience for the service and hard work ethic she brought to assisting the Commission in the many years prior to her June promotion to the Marketing Division. Ms. Wiklund expressed her thanks and shared her pleasure in seeing good friends and colleagues again. Commissioner Langdon commended Division staff for covering the duties previously executed by Ms. Wiklund and for ensuring the meeting ran smoothly. Thanks, and appreciation for other Commissioners' and Counsel's service was also shared.

With no further public comments brought forward, Commissioner Barbara Bleiweis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Parker seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

**V. ADJURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 7:58pm.

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David B. Williams, Director  
Division of Soil & Water Conservation, Raleigh, N.C.

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Allie Dinwiddie, Recording Secretary

***These minutes were approved by the North Carolina Soil & Water Conservation Commission on September 16, 2024.***