



**NORTH CAROLINA
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS SESSION MEETING MINUTES
November 15, 2023**

Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Division of Soil & Water Conservation
Watauga County Commission's Chamber
814 West King Street
Boone, NC 28607

Commission Members	Guests	Guests - Online
Chris Hughes	Tom Hill	Christie Watkins
Billy Kilpatrick	John Beck	Paula Day
James Lamb	Denny Norris	Fredrick Cox
John Langdon	Rick McSwain	Payton Lane
Brian Parker	Eileen Langdon	Charles Bass III
Derek Potter	Rachel Smith	Chris Love
George Teague	Michelle Kasey	Melanie Harris
Commission Counsel	Jennie Hanifan	Patrick Mitchell
Phillip Reynolds	Makayla Norman	Angie Quinn
Guests	Bryan Wallace	Annette Adams
David Williams	Lorien Deaton	Jennifer Roach
Julie Henshaw	Mikey Woodie	Rob Baldwin
Matt Safford	Regina Kilpatrick	Dianne Farrer
Josh Vetter	Elise McLaughlin	Jason Byrd
Cayle Aldridge	Ann Coleman	Kori Higgs
Bryan Evans	Mark Forbes	Cameron Knudsen
Michael Shepherd	Guests - Online	Lea Ann Branch
Scott Melvin	Cole Smith	Mitchell Womack
Kristina Fischer	Spencer Stock	Heather Reichert
Helen Wiklund	Anne Coan	Rodney Wright
Lisa Fine	Cole Smith	Shaquar Moses
Ken Parks	Mark Walton	
Eric Pare	Jason Turner	

Chairman Langdon called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Chairman Langdon inquired whether any Commission members need 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. Chairman Langdon will recuse himself from Item 8. Chairman Langdon stated the meeting guidelines, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and congratulated Ms. Henshaw on becoming Deputy Director.

1. **Approval of Agenda:** Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Hughes moved to approve the agenda and Commissioner Parker seconded. Motion carried.
2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the minutes. Commissioner Hughes moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Parker seconded. Motion carried.

2A. September 18, 2023, Work Session Meeting Minutes

2B. September 19, 2023, Business Session Meeting Minutes

3. **Division Report:** Chairman Langdon recognized Director David Williams to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Director Williams stated the following:

- Personnel Update
- FY 24 and FY 25 Budget
 - StRAP ('24) \$20M (non-recurring)
 - ACSP ('24) \$3.5M BMP (non-recurring)
 - ACSP ('24) \$2M (Upper French Broad (non-recurring)
 - CCAP (24) \$333K (non-recurring) and ('25) \$500K (non-recurring)
 - \$4M for Foundation – Fertilizer from Swine Waste
- Technical Assistance and Engineering
 - Division has lost three of its most experienced engineers and engineering techs
 - Newer staff requires extensive training
 - Help local staff obtain Job Approval Authority (JAA) (Commission and NRCS) will be key
- Future Commission Meeting Dates

Chairman Langdon stated a leaders retreat needs to be scheduled in the first quarter of 2024 with the partnership, i.e., DEA, Commission, NRCS, Division, and Association to discuss and address these training issues so projects get on the ground.

Commissioner Potter stated projects need to be expedited. Mr. Vetter stated 32 training events have been held across the state and some practices take time to learn; JAA can take 2-3 years to complete and master.

4. **Association Report:** Chairman Langdon recognized President Teague to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. President Teague stated the following:

- Thanked Commissioner Hughes, Watauga SWCD, and Director Williams and his wife for their hospitality
- 2024 Annual Meeting will be held at the Sheraton Imperial RTP on January 7-9, 2024
- 2023 Association Committee Chairs Meeting will be held on December 6
 - Topics for discussion: policies, procedures, action items, and review resolutions brought forward by the Areas
- 2023 Fall Meetings
 - Last Area Fall meeting is tomorrow in Area IV
 - Offered several Supervisor Training Credits (STCs)

- Establishing an Education/Outreach Position
- 2023 State Conservation Farm Family will honor 4 S Farms of Rowan County

Chairman Langdon called a break at 9:44 a.m. The meeting resumed at 9:59 a.m.

5. Executive Director's Report: Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Bryan Evans to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Evans stated the following:

- 2023 Legislative Items include Senate Bill 27 (SWCD Partisanship)
- NACD TA Grants received another round of funding for Technical Assistance grants for the states and districts
- Successful 2023 NC State Fair
- 2024 proposed Basic Training topics for Soil and Water Conservation Supervisors are as follows:
 - Understanding the Conservation Partnership
 - Open Meetings
 - Keys to Cost Share
 - Possibilities and Pitfalls for Districts
 - Meet Conservation Leaders
 - Group Exercise

Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the six training topics. Commissioner Hughes moved to approve the topics and Commissioner Teague seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Evans stated NACD has been growing over the last few years. Mr. Franklin Williams is the representative for the Southeast Region on the Executive Board. Mr. Myles Payne is the State representative, Ms. Nancy Carter is the State alternate, Ms. Candice Abinanti is the Communications representative, and Ms. Marquita Hall is the Southeast Region representative. NACD has a lot of funding opportunities from Climate Smart money and the goal is to get the funding to the soil & water districts. The national NACD meeting will be held in San Diego in February. There are 43 executive director positions across the U. S. The Association is an affiliate of NACD.

6. NRCS Report: Chairman Langdon called upon Ms. Odessa Armstrong to present, but Ms. Armstrong was not present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.

7. Consent Agenda: Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the consent agenda. Commissioner Potter moved to approve the consent agenda and Commissioner Parker seconded. Motion carried.

7A. Supervisor Appointments:

- Landon Swisher, Davie SWCD, filling the unexpired elected term of Justin Miller for 2022-2026 with an attached resignation letter from Mr. Miller
- Jack Cunningham, Greene SWCD, filling the unexpired elected term of Steven Porter for 2020-2024 with an attached resignation letter from Mr. Porter

- Stephen David Porter, Lenoir SWCD, filling the unexpired elected term of Blaire Deaver King for 2022-2026 with an attached resignation letter from Ms. King
- Glenn Pruitt, Surry SWCD, filling the unexpired appointed term of Earl Sheppard for 2020-2024 with an attached resignation letter from Mr. Sheppard and missing a resignation letter from Mr. Pruitt from his elected term; appointment is subject to approval upon receiving a resignation letter

7B. Supervisor Contracts: 6 contracts; totaling \$50,869

7C. StRAP Supervisor Contracts: 4 contracts; contract #: 22-080-4119, 22-080-4144, 22-080-2042, and 22-080-4054

Copies of the reports are included as an official part of the minutes.

Chairman Langdon recused himself and passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Potter.

- 8. Commission Member Contract:** Vice Chairman Potter recognized Mr. John Beck to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Beck stated the contract is for a trough tank/livestock pipeline and the requirements have been verified. The staff recommends the contract for approval.

Vice Chairman Potter asked for approval of the contract. Commissioner Hughes moved to approve the contract and Commissioner Lamb seconded. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Potter returned the gavel to Chairman Langdon.

- 9. Job Approval Authority Applications:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Josh Vetter to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Vetter stated there are two applications for approval. Both applicants submitted comparable Job Approval Authority and the applications have been reviewed and verified.

Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the applications. Commissioner Potter moved to approve the applications and Commissioner Lamb seconded. Motion carried.

- 10. StRAP Progress Update:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Matt Safford to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Safford stated the following:

- As of November 1, 2023
 - Division has paid out \$16.6M in reimbursements to grantees
 - Statewide average is \$19.1 per linear foot
- Completed work
 - 2,311,860.86 linear feet of stream debris removal
 - 29 PL-566 watershed structures repaired
- 20 contracts closed out
 - Two contracts pending close-out

10A. Consideration of StRAP Priorities: Mr. Safford stated the following:

- Proposed Timeline for second round of applications
 - Accept applications from November 27 – February 9 and review at the March Commission meeting
- Total Funding Allocation: \$20M
 - Ninety-five percent allocated to grantees
 - Five percent will be retained by the Division for administrative and contingency costs
- Funding Requests in Round 1
 - Vegetative Debris received 51% of the requested funds
- Project Priorities
 - Division recommends awarding a portion of funds to all project types by StRAP
- Assessing Project Benefits
 - Division will consider project benefits while determining allocations
- Additional Topics for Consideration
 - Eligibility of current and former StRAP grantees are eligible to apply for additional funds in the second round and former receipt of StRAP funds would not affect application status.
 - Applicants with remaining funds from previous Division programs would include both round 1 of StRAP and Disaster Recovery Program
 - Grantees with remaining funds from previous projects would be eligible to receive future StRAP funding, but their project ranking may be reduced based on the amount of unspent vegetative debris removal funds at the time of the application.
 - Award Caps
 - Vegetative debris removal projects: Reduce cap (previously \$500,000)
 - Other stream projects (sediment removal, restoration, etc.): Cap of \$500,000
 - PL-566 projects: Cap of \$2,000,000 per grantee
 - Total cap for each grantee: \$2,000,000

Chairman Langdon asked for approval. Commissioner Teague moved to approve and Commissioner Parker seconded. There was discussion about assessing the projects, encumbering funds, getting the funding on the ground, and the application deadline. Motion carried.

11. Community Conservation Assistance Program Advisory Committee Recommendations:

Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Tom Hill to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.

11A. Detailed Implementation Plan Revisions: Mr. Hill stated that the CCAP Program received a one-time, non-recurring funding of \$333,000 and is asking for action to revise the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) as shown on page 3 at the bottom in the attachment which states, *“The maximum CCAP cost share allocation per project will be limited to \$50,000 and the district allocation will be limited to \$100,000.”*

Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the revisions to the DIP. Commissioner Potter moved to approve the revisions and Commissioner Hughes seconded. Motion carried.

11B. Regional Application Recommendations: Mr. Hill stated the CCAP Advisory Committee is recommending the below allocations for FY 2024. The Division received 52 applications this year and as a reminder, we received \$333,000 one-time, non-recurring funds for FY 2024, and we did receive \$500,000 for FY 2025.

West Region: 18 applications; fund four projects totaling \$159,726 with a balance of \$29,187
 Central Region: 9 applications: fund five projects totaling \$280,000 with a balance of \$12,461
 East Region: 25 applications: fund six projects totaling \$143,500 with a balance of \$28,687

If a region does not utilize all the funds, the remaining fund balance which totals \$70,335 is to fund projects in Craven County for \$50,000 and another project in Dare County leaving \$20,335.

Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the recommendations. Commissioner Teague moved to approve the recommendations and Commissioner Potter seconded. Motion carried.

12. Agriculture Cost Share Program District Financial Assistance Allocation: Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. John Beck to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.

12A. ACSP Non-Recurring Allocation: Mr. Beck stated there are a few updates based upon last night’s recommendations. The Division received \$3.5M in addition to a non-recurring allocation for the Agriculture Cost Share Program, those funds came out of the State’s Fiscal Recovery Reserve plus we are holding 15% in reserve. There is \$856,884 in Cost Share (CS) supplemental funds which totals \$3,831,884. The Division can allocate the full \$3.8M to 60 districts for an average of \$66,000. Forty-nine of the sixty districts received their full requested amount.

SOURCE	AMOUNT
ACSP – FY 24 SFR (NR)	\$3,500,000
15% of ACSP – FY 24 SFR (NR) held in reserve	\$ -525,000
ACSP (CS) – Supplemental funds (previous year contracts returns & cancellations)	\$ 856,884
Total Allocation	\$3,831,884

Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the allocation. Commissioner Teague moved to approve the allocation and Commissioner Potter seconded. Motion carried.

12B. Upper French Broad River Financial Assistance Allocation (Non-recurring): Mr. Beck stated we received an additional \$2M to assist farmers in the Upper French Broad River area with livestock exclusion and related practices. The counties include Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania. The Division staff met with the districts and discussed the projects and reviewed how these special funds will be received. The \$1.125M that is remaining would be available for a Just-in-Time allocation as additional projects are requested. The districts can submit a request to the Division to allocate funds.

Chairman Langdon asked for approval of the allocation. Commissioner Hughes moved to approve the allocation and Commissioner Lamb seconded. Motion carried.

13. Update on Conditional Supervisor Reappointments from November 2022 Meeting: Chairman Langdon recognized Ms. Kristina Fischer to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Ms. Fischer stated four reappointments were made for nominees who had not attended two-thirds of the district’s regularly scheduled board meetings during the previous term. These appointments were made with the condition that the Commission monitor their attendance for the next 12 months and the Division provide a report in November 2023. Below is a table with an updated progress report:

District	Supervisor	Meetings Scheduled	Meetings Attended	Percentage
Clay	Salvador Moreno	8	6	75%
Gates	Stuart Askew	6	5	83%
Moore	John “Billy” Carter, III	5	4	80%
Polk	David Slater	<i>Retired from Polk SWCD</i>		

Chairman Langdon recused himself and passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Potter.

14. District Special Requests: Mr. Beck stated a grassed waterway needs to be installed at the Central Crops Research Station in Clayton. A letter was submitted to request assistance for this project. Mr. Keith Starke, superintendent of the Research Station, will present the request.

14A. Johnston – ACSP on Government-Owned Property: Mr. Starke stated that they have limited budget funds, and the research station has aged. They have a project, which is typical of many sites in the county. The issue needs to be corrected and they have reached out to Mr. Greg Walker in Johnston SWCD to work on the project to gain funding for the drainage and erosion issues. Mr. Dewitt Hardee supports the request, who represents Johnston SWCD. Mr. Beck stated that the Research Station is being maintained.

Commissioner Potter asked for approval for financial assistance. Commissioner Hughes moved to approve the request and Commissioner Parker seconded. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Potter returned the gavel to Chairman Langdon.

IV. Public Comments: Chairman Langdon asked for public comments. Chairman Langdon thanked Watauga SWCD for their hospitality, enjoyed dinner at the Williams’s, the tours provided by Commissioner Hughes, and the meal at the Dan’l Boone Inn. Chairman Langdon thanked everyone for their presentations and reports and looks forward to seeing everyone again in January and reminded everyone to make their hotel reservation.

V. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

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

Helen Wiklund, Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved by the North Carolina Soil & Water Conservation Commission on January 7, 2024.