**MEETING MINUTES**

**Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission**

**Monday, November 20, 2023**

**9:00 AM**

**Zoom Conference ID: 845 5362 3580 Password: SWCC**

**In Attendance for SWCC**: Mr. Danny Shipley, SWCC Chair; Ms. Denise Hoffman; Mr. Aaron Lewis; Mr. Keith Tingle; Mr. Bill Harned; Mr. Jason Kilmer; Mr. Jeff Rice; and Mr. Lenville Martin.

**Others Present:** Ms. Johnna McHugh, Division of Conservation; Ms. Bridget Abernathy, Division of Forestry; Mr. Jay Nelson, Division of Conservation; Mr. Allan Bryant, Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts; Mr. Tim Hughes, Department of Agriculture; Mr. Steve Coleman, Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts; Mr. Tony Nott, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Ms. Marsha Butterworth, Kentucky Association of Conservation District Employees; Ms. Sarah Bryant, Kentucky Office of Ag Policy; Mr. Gordon Slone, Department for Natural Resources; Ms. Crystal Renfro, Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts; Mr. John Lyons, Energy and Environment Cabinet; Ms. Dawn Baase, Department for Natural Resources; Ms. Kathleen Saunier, Energy and Environment Cabinet; and Mr. Jeff Gravitt, Division of Conservation.

Quorum was met.

**Meeting Called to Order** – 9:04 AM by SWCC Chair Mr. Shipley.

**Oath of Office** – Ms. McHugh read the oath of office for the office of Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and Mr. Kilmer and Mr. Harned signed their oaths.

**SWCC Minutes from the September 18, 2023 Meeting** - Motion to approve minutes was made by Mr. Martin and was seconded by Mr. Tingle. **Motion carried.**

**Agency Reports**

**Division of Conservation Report** – Ms. McHugh discussed the following with the Commission-

* Equipment loan regulations are currently out for comment from stakeholders.
* State cost share applications and environmental grants were due on November 15. They will be ready for approvals at the next meeting.
* Envirothon locations for training and state competition are set. DOC is still working on the locations for the regional contests.
* Art and Writing Contest is wrapping up.
* Governor Andy Beshear was reelected, which should start the process of naming people to the non-merit positions. The SWCC has to approve the choice for DOC Director. Ms. McHugh will facilitate that meeting when the Cabinet is ready to move forward.

**Division of Forestry** – Ms. Abernathy discussed the following with the Commission.

* Update on fire season. There have been 264 fires this month, and KDF has been assisted by firefighters and crew from other states. There are burn bans in 37 counties.
* KDF will be launching a grant program in late January aimed at local educational and nonprofit organizations for green infrastructure.
* KDF has hired Clay Turner as their new Stewardship Coordinator.
* Seedling sales are underway and will be ready in early 2024.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service** – Mr. Nott discussed the following with the Commission.

* Mr. Nott is currently the acting State Conservationist.
* The federal government is still under a continuing resolution, which limits NRCS with which positions they can fill.
* NRCS is finishing up CSP renewals.
* EQIP ranking is ongoing.
* EWP efforts in Eastern Kentucky are ongoing.
* The new State Conservationist will be Eric Allness, who will be starting in Kentucky in early January.

**Farm Service Agency** – No report given.

**Department for Natural Resources** – Mr. Slone discussed the following with the Commission.

* Phase I of the abandoned oil well plugging grant is complete. 635 abandoned wells were plugged. Requirements for plugging abandoned wells will be more stringent with the next round of funding. Orphan wells can be reported through [OrphanWells@ky.gov](mailto:OrphanWells@ky.gov).
* DNR is working on surety reclamation agreements to reclaim permits from coal companies which have gone bankrupt.

**Kentucky Department of Agriculture** – Mr. Hughes and Ms. Bryant presented the report jointly.

Mr. Hughes discussed the following with the Commission.

* Jonathan Shell will become the new Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture on January 1.
* Kentucky will receive $8 million in resilient foods infrastructure funding. This funding will be available for “middle of the food system investments” which can be used for infrastructure or equipment.
* Bluegrass AgTech Development Corp. was created to provide venture capital investments in the ag tech space.
* 6 county fair grant awards were given to Bath, Cumberland, Gallatin, Henry, Hopkins and Letcher Counties for infrastructure projects.
* Ag Athlete of the Year scholarships are due on December 31.
* North American International Livestock Show was held in Louisville recently.
* Commissioner Quarles recently visited Kenya with USDA and NASDA to view emerging markets.

Ms. Bryant discussed the following with the Commission.

* Joint Ag Development Board and Ag Finance Board meeting held recently.
* Program changes were made to CAIP, including implementing a tiered system for cost share percentages. Changes will be posted to their website by December 1.

**University of Kentucky, CAFE** – No report given.

**KACD** – Ms. Renfro discussed the following with the Commission.

* 2024 annual meeting will be July 14-16 at the Crowne Plaza in Louisville. This will be the 80th annual meeting.
* Legislative reception will be January 16 at The Elizabeth.
* KACD’s legislative priorities will be direct aid (increase to $1.5 million), state cost share (keep the funding the same), audit limits (change limit to $750,000 for special audits), watershed rehab funding (additional $5 million) and elections (keeping district elections nonpartisan). A fact sheet will be released soon.
* There will be a Zoom call for all supervisors and staff for an update on the legislative session.
* KACDE auxiliary is working on updating their scholarship applications.
* There are currently 31 75/25 employees.
* Next KACD meeting will be the joint meeting with the SWCC on January 17th. Location to be determined.

**KACDE** –Ms. Butterworth discussed the following with the Commission.

* Members just returned from attending the SCDEA conference in Pigeon Forge. Kayleigh Evans has completed her term as President.
* November KACDE meeting is upcoming.
* KACDE continues to have items to sell: art and writing t-shirts, Master Conservationist signs, nametags and soil stewardship materials.

**Correspondence** – Ms. McHugh discussed the following correspondence with the Commission:

* Marshall County would like to move funds from its Environmental Grant from dead animal removal to assisting their local middle school with their existing green house. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Harned and was seconded by Ms. Hoffman. **Motion carried**.
* Spencer County requested $20,000 from the state cost share contingency funds to assist a producer with their NOV. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Harned and seconded by Ms. Hoffman. **Motion carried**.

**Equipment Report** – Ms. McHugh presented the report and requests.

* Statement of Operation - A motion to approve was made by Mr. Harned and seconded by Mr. Tingle. **Motion carried**.
* Approval of Equipment Loan Requests –
  + Butler County requested a loan of $25,533.34 to purchase a no till drill. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Mr. Harned.  **Motion carried.**
  + Washington County requested a loan of $17,371.28 to purchase a 2D control laser system to be leased to Raymond Johnson. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Mr. Tingle.  **Motion carried.**

**Conservation District Supervisors** – Ms. McHugh presented these petitions.

* Approval of vacancy petitions
  + BATH COUNTY - Michael Staton to fill the unexpired term of Glenn Spencer (2024) (1 petition received)
  + ELLIOTT COUNTY - Courtney Rice to fill the unexpired term of James K. Rice (2026) (1 petition received)
  + FAYETTE COUNTY - Lynn Roche Phillips to fill the unexpired term of Angie Quigley (2024) (1 petition received)
  + MCCRACKEN COUNTY - Robbie Scheer to fill the unexpired term of Daniel Phelps (2024) (1 petition received)
  + OWSLEY COUNTY - Eugene Reed, Jr. to fill the unexpired term of Kenny Shouse (2024) (1 petition received)

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Harned and was seconded by Ms. Hoffman. **Motion carried**.

* Incentive pay for Supervisors-
  + MORGAN COUNTY

Travis Stacy – Area 8 Meeting, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

Kenneth Scarberry – Area 8 Meeting, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

Henry Ronald Cole – Area 8 Meeting, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

* ROCKCASTLE COUNTY

Roy Reynolds – KACD Annual Convention, Area 7 Meeting, at least 8 ten-minute trainings, NACD Annual Meeting, NACD SE Regional Meeting

Mark Dyehouse – KACD Annual Convention, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

Jerry Hasty – KACD Annual Convention, Area 7 Meeting, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

Barry Hurst – KACD Annual Convention, at least 8 ten-minute trainings, NACD SE Regional Meeting

Tim Mink – KACD Annual Convention, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

* TAYLOR COUNTY

Nevin Price – KACD Annual Convention, Area 7 Meeting, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

Marsha Woodrum – KACD Annual Convention, Area 7 Meeting, at least 8 ten-minute trainings

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Hoffman and was seconded by Mr. Martin. **Motion carried**.

**Agriculture District Program** - Ms. McHugh presented the report with copies distributed.

* Five new petitions were presented to the Commission for consideration for a total of 1,188.26 acres.
* Boyle County (Petition No. 011-19(A1)) for 161.79 acres. Motion to approve was made by Mr. Tingle and was seconded by Mr. Harned. **Motion carried.**
* Mason County (Petition No. 081-05(A3)) for 35.76 acres. Motion to approve was made by Mr. Martin and was seconded by Ms. Hoffman. **Motion carried.**
* Taylor County (Petition No. 109-02(A3)) for 258.95 acres. Motion to approve was made by Mr. Harned and was seconded by Mr. Kilmer. **Motion carried.**
* Taylor County (Petition No. 109-04(A2)) for 456.03 acres. Motion to approve was made by Ms. Hoffman and was seconded by Mr. Martin. **Motion carried.**
* Taylor County (Petition No. 109-20) for 275.73 acres. Motion to approve, subject to no comments from local planning and zoning, was made by Mr. Tingle and was seconded by Mr. Harned. **Motion carried.**
* Fourteen agricultural districts have been submitted to the commission for five-year recertification for a total of 10,015.27 acres.

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| **COUNTY** | **PETITION NO.** | **ACRES** |
| Boyle | 011-13 | 713.80 |
| Boyle | 011-14 | 234.76 |
| Boyle | 011-19 | 1,081.70 |
| Boyle | 011-20 | 537.26 |
| Franklin | 037-01 | 1,204.51 |
| Franklin | 037-05 | 1,253.03 |
| Franklin | 037-07 | 95.00 |
| Hart | 050-02 | 304.30 |
| Lincoln | 069-01 | 410.42 |
| Mason | 081-05 | 2,854.86 |
| Mercer | 084-05 | 155.67 |
| Montgomery | 087-03 | 392.00 |
| Taylor | 109-01 | 458.82 |
| Taylor | 109-17 | 319.14 |

Mr. Martin made a motion to approve the above recertifications. Mr. Harned seconded the motion. **Motion carried**.

**Old Business** –

Ms. McHugh gave an overview of each portion of the new and updated equipment loan and state cost share regulations. Mr. Lewis asked for clarification about the requirement for using the equipment on lands owned by the person applying jointly with a district. Mr. Bryant expressed concerns about the insurance requirements. Ms. McHugh explained the timeline for the remainder of the process to get the regulations approved.

Ms. McHugh read the oath of office for the office of Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and Mr. Rice agreed.

**New Business** –

Ms. McHugh went over the scheduled meeting dates for 2024.

* January 17 (joint meeting)
* April 15
* July 15 (at KACD convention)
* September 16
* November 18

**Next Board Meeting** – January 17, 2024 at 9 am. Location to be determined.

**Adjourn** – A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Harned and was seconded by Mr. Tingle. **Motion carried**.