

# HIGHLANDS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT MINUTES

## August 3, 2010

The regular meeting of the Supervisors of the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District was called to order by Chairman, Jimmy Wohl at 3:05p.m., Tuesday, August 3, 2010 at the Bert J. Harris, Jr. Agricultural Center, Conference Room 3, 4509 George Blvd., Sebring, FL.

**Supervisors present:** John Causey, Gregg Hartt, Ida Jackson, and Jimmy Wohl

**Supervisors absent:** Wayne Zahn

**Staff present:** Carlos Torres, District Conservationist  
Jennifer Abbey, Soil Conservationist  
Jackie Bailey, Office Manager  
Corine Burgess, Natural Resources Specialist  
Erin McCarta, Lakes Management Assistant

**Guests:** Mark Cox and Corey DeHayes (WBW), Pam Fentress, Gary Gossett, Bo Griffin (FDACS), Lynn Topel (FHREDI) and Audrey Vickers

Today's agenda was approved with the deletion of the Regional Envirothon. Minutes of July 6, 2010 were approved with the correction of the local match for the Lake Clay Project changed from \$125,000.00 to \$120,000.00. Financial Report and the Contract Report were both approved as presented. A suggested Budget for 2010-11 was presented as well as the Close out Report for the 14811 BMP contract.

### **Action Items:**

Wauchula stated their interest rates for 1 year CDs is 1.01%. Board discussed putting the money in several locally owed banks. Mark Cox informed the board their money was insured under the Public Depositors Qualified criteria set by the state. John Causey suggested keeping 1-1/2 normal expenditures for a month in the general fund account.

Lynn Topel, FHREDI Executive Director, gave a presentation on, "What is FHREDI"? Florida's Heartland encompasses six South Central Florida Counties and the townships of Immokalee and Belle Glades, has a land area of 5,000 square miles with a population of 250,000 living in 24 communities. Although each community is unique, broad-based support for economic progress is a constant, unifying theme. Florida's Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI) provides regional economic development coordination to businesses interested in expanding or relocating to the area. Working with local partners within the region, as well as Enterprise Florida, Workforce Florida, Inc. and the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, Florida's Heartland will provide site selection, incentives and workforce training assistance. The Heartland is a great location for business; the area is close to seaports, rail travel and roads.

Mark Cox from Wicks, Brown and Williams (WBW) presented the 2008-09 Audit. Due to limited staff the material weakness for segregation of duties was again sited. WBW recommended; hiring a bookkeeping firm to write checks and reconcile bank statements monthly; blank checks stored with no access for employee; reviewed the signatures on cleared checks and Supervisors initial and date all invoices presented for payment. Financial reporting was also sited as a weakness. Mark Cox stated that this is a new procedure being reported and a

CPA would need to be hired to avoid this weakness. Mark stated he would work with Jackie to refine reports.

Jimmy Wohl said he knows that our office has been in turmoil for the past year and it has affected all of the employees. He knows the employees have been loyal to the District by planning and participating in events, project, functions and meetings; many times on the weekends. HSWCD was formed by the partnerships with NRCS and HCBCC. It is the day to day work by employees that accomplish the goals of the district. Jimmy thanked all employees for their hard work and a Certificate of Appreciation was given to each employee. Jennifer will soon be leaving the office; she has accepted the position as DC in Plant City. She will be sorely missed.

The final revised Long Range Plan was presented to the Board. Ida Jackson made a motion with gratitude to Gregg Hartt to approve the 2009-14 Long Range Plan. John Causey seconded. Motion passed.

It was asked of the Board if they had ideas for community grants from SWFWMD. Suggestions were instant hot water taps rebate, kitchen sink aerators, another showerhead exchange or another Day at the Lake. It was decided that applications for showerheads and Day at the Lake would be submitted.

### **Old Business**

The Hairy Vetch is not a good match for caladiums and may become invasive. Clell has investigated a plot near a sod farm for planting.

Northern Everglades/Estuaries Protection Act (NEEPA) – Bo stated it will be a slim year for FDACS. He gave a short version of the FDACS' TMDL projects in the Lake Okeechobee area.

The Lake Clay Project has been put back into the HCBCC F/Y2011 budget using infrastructure money for the project and the County is looking to HSWCD for \$40,000.00. SWFWMD has funded \$360,000.00 looking for a local match of \$120,000.00. This is a high priority project for SWFWMD and has been on the books for ten years. This project will be on the PRBB agenda this Friday. The owner of the strip mall will be responsible for the maintenance. HSWCD needs more information about the project including all other entities that intend to be involved. John Causey inquired shouldn't project HSWCD fund be agricultural? Criteria needs to be set up for projects or the board will be inundated with all sorts of projects and the money will be spent in no time. HSWCD should be partnering in project which support conservation in Highlands County. The Board would like to see a presentation on the Lake Clay Project.

### **New Business**

#### **Updates**

All 35 evaluations for the MIL have been performed. In six months follow up evaluations will be performed to check and see if improvements have been made.

Jackie reported on the AFCD meeting July 29 – Aug 1, 2010. Jackie was informed of new Supervisor Handbooks that will be printed soon. The topic for the Speech Contest for this year is, "What is the Economic Impact of Florida Forest"? The Area VI Speech Contestant came in second at state, he did an awesome job. AFCD has changed SWCDs areas from 6 to 4 to coincide with NRCS areas. Jackie presented a PowerPoint on HSWCD's educational outreach

efforts. The District Employee's auction netted \$408.00. Jackie is now the Treasurer for the District Employees Association.

Jeff Eisenberg, President of NACD had an informal meeting with the AFCD Board. He reminded them that NACD is there to support SWCDs. He is your lobbyist in Washington, DC. He can get federal dollars to the state. He is at the table when the Farm Bill is being hammered out. He stated payments for environmental services will be in the next bill. He wants to help the Florida SWCDs strengthen. He would like to communicate with the 20 active Districts in Florida. He is willing to set up a webinar.

Carlos asked if the date August 11, 2010 in Conference Room 3 from 9:30 until 10:30 was a good time for the Local Working Group (LWG) meeting. The group will consist of HSWCD/FDACS/Extension/FWC/and a landowner. Jackie will check to see if August 11 will work and contact all the Supervisors.

**Announcement**

Ag Venture will be on October 26, 27 and 28, 2010.

The next board meeting was set for Tuesday, September 7, 2010 at 3pm.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Recording Secretary

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Chairman