

HIGHLANDS SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT - BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: 4/21/2026

Meeting Location: HSWCD Conf. Rm.– Bert J. Harris Jr. Ag. Center
4505 George Blvd., Sebring, FL 33875

FINAL – APPROVED MAY 19, 2026

Recorded by: Kayla Nickerson

MEETING SCHEDULED START: 3:00 P.M. CALL TO ORDER: 3:01 P.M.

PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT READ BY CHAIRMAN

I. Welcome & Introductions

List of Attendees			
Name	Title	Organization	Present
Dr. John Causey	Chairman	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Steve Smith	Vice-Chairman	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Doug Deen	Secretary/Treasurer	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Sara Sebring	Supervisor	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
T.J. Wohl	Supervisor	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Scott Kirouac	Liaison	Highlands County BCC	Y
Kayla Nickerson	Executive Director	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Chad Harmon	MIL Manager	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Wade Smith	MIL Technician	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Lauren Ahrens	Environmental Specialist III	FDACS-OAWP	Y
Michael Lebron	District Conservationist	USDA-NRCS	Y
Don Buchanon	Rangeland Specialist	USDA-NRCS	N
Kiko Vazquez	VP, Commercial Banker II	Seacoast Bank	Y
Andrew Bible	President	Seacoast Bank	Y
Robert Barfield	EVP, Regional Market President	Seacoast Bank	Y

- II. Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve agenda as presented (Sebring/Smith). Unanimous approval.
- III. Seacoast Bank – Investment Opportunities** – K. Vazquez offered apologies for prior branch service and shared the company’s care and concern for the relationship they have with HSWCD. Team offered competitive investment options for the Board to consider. Discussion and gratitude from the board to Seacoast team for reaching out.
- IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes**
- a. Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes – March 17, 2026:** Motion to approve minutes as presented (Wohl/Smith). Unanimous approval.

V. Financial Activity

- a. Overview & Approval of Financial Reports – March 2026:** Review of financial reports. Motion to approve financial reports as presented (Smith/Deen). Unanimous approval.

VI. Agency Partner Updates

- a. FDACS –** Kasey Deuberry, FDACS-OAWP environmental manager, joined by phone and shared staff is working on abundance of overdue IV audits. Southwest Florida team has largest workload in the state and recently lost staff to retirement. The coming fiscal year cost share program process should remain the same as years past. No action.
- b. MIL –** C. Harmon reported team performed an evaluation with new MIL Manager and was given updates on future of program/bringing program in house. Discussion. Harmon reported team is meeting current contract requirements. No action.
- c. NRCS –** M. Lebron reported more than half of Highlands applications are ineligible for current year programs due to failure to complete FSA documentation by the deadline. Approximately 30 applications are eligible and being ranked for competitiveness. Currently 81 active contracts, many of which are reaching maturity. CSP applications will be selected by May 22nd, EQIP by June 19th. Local Working Group priority selection will take place next board meeting. No Action.
- d. HCBCC –** S. Kirouac reported IMWIM hybrid taxing district authority passed at last Commission meeting. 2 more public hearings must be completed by end of May. Agricultural lands will pay a milage rate, non-agricultural lands will be assessed a per acre amount. Combined total is estimated to generate \$160,000 per year which will satisfy current maintenance needs, but does not address repairs, incidentals or emergencies. K. Nickerson expressed an interest in meeting with District members to discuss grant opportunities moving forward. No action.

VII. New Business

- a. Office Staffing and Future Grant Opportunities –** C. Harmon presented on exploration of grant revenue to fund a new water quality program for the district. Discussion. Board direction to pursue grant opportunities and present findings at next meeting. Discussion returned to investment opportunities and maturing CD. Motion to move balance of the 3 recently cashed out CDs into Seacoast CD for 6 months and balance of CD maturing this month plus excess from the general fund into Seacoast Money Market Account. (Smith/Sebring). Unanimous approval.

VIII. Executive Director's Report - Nickerson presented request for UF/IFAS Range Cattle Research & Education Center Youth Field Day Sponsorship. Consensus not met to provide sponsorship. Reference to important upcoming dates found on agenda. No action.

IX. Citizens Not on the Agenda – None

X. Supervisors Comments

- Smith – None
Deen – None
Sebring – None
Wohl – None
Causey – None

Meeting Adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Next Board Meeting: May 19th, 2026 – 3:00 p.m.

John Causey, DVM Chairman

Doug Deen, Secretary

POST MEETING ACTION ITEMS

Action	Assigned To	Deadline
<i>Monitor, review and discuss FDACS-OAWP operations, revised procedures, policies, contract language, scopes of work.</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>AFCD Committee Work</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Florida DEP Earth Day Festival Event Tabling</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>April 25, 2026</i>
<i>FCDEA Mid-Year Meeting Planning</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>April 27, 2026</i>
<i>2026 Landowner Expo Planning and Execution</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>May 6, 2026</i>
<i>Cooperation on Annual Financial Audit</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>June 30, 2026</i>
<i>HSWCD Water Quality Program Development</i>	<i>K. Nickerson, C. Harmon, W. Smith</i>	<i>June 30, 2026</i>
<i>REPI grant outreach and meeting facilitation</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>Until Complete</i>
<i>Develop HSWCD Public Records and Purchasing Policies</i>	<i>K. Nickerson</i>	<i>Until Complete</i>