

UNION COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

24 September 2013

Present:

Mr. Delbert Smith, Chair
Mr. Pete Cameron, Deputy Chair, Secretary
Mr. Duke Emerson, Treasurer
Mr. Jon Croci (Board Member)]
Mr. Hugh Thomas (FDACS)
Mr. Scott Tucker (FDACS)
Mr. Basil Bactawar (IFAS)
Mr. Paul Still (Bradford County Soil and Water Conservation District member)

Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Chairman, Delbert Smith at 1850

Correspondence: September minutes read by Duke Emerson and approved by the board.

Old Business:

Point re-made about the necessity to address the County Commission on UCSWCD progress/activities.

Last month all members of the board attended a Cattleman's Dinner to hear the head of the Suwannee Water Management District, Anne Shortell, spoke about minimum flows and levels for area water bodies.

New Business:

Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) discussed the establishment of Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) for the Lower Santa Fe River

Conversation centered on the progress of the SRWMD's attempts to determine MFLs for the Lower Santa Fe River. Paul Still claimed that in a peer review of the SRWMD's MFLs, UF scientists claimed that the methods used to establish the MFLs were not valid and this sent the SRWMD back to the drawing board to work on their methods. One of the conclusions of the SRWMD was that their MFL work mandated that no new permits be issued to pump water from the aquifer and existing permits that came up for renewal would be re-evaluated and could be challenged.

Paul Still's opinion was that the consultants hired to establish the MFLs overestimated the baseline (original river conditions before any pumping from the aquifer was started) and this was the reason for the current conclusions.

Hugh Thomas pointed out that based on the current MFL conclusions; water recovery strategies by the SRWMD would restrict pumping permits to five years. He noted that one farmer that received his five year permit, didn't want to invest in an \$80K pivot if he could only get a five year guarantee that he could pump water to use it.

Hugh also said that the WMD will work with pumping permit holders to reduce their water use (i.e., select crops that require less water). Farms, he said, can act as recharge areas (recharge rain water to the aquifer) if they grow low water use plants like peanuts.

Paul Still's personal conclusion was that agriculture, faced with restrictions on pumping and restrictions on nutrient loading in the springs will move east towards Union and Bradford Counties. Hugh Thomas pointed to SRWMD predictions that there will be water shortages here. Paul said that we need strategies to hold the water here after major rain events.

Then the discussion turned to the subject of using weirs (chunks of concrete, etc) to slow the progress of water flowing out of the area after rain events. Paul Still suggested that there is a need for demonstration projects to show the worth of using weirs. Hugh Thomas said that we need monitoring wells as evidence that the use of weirs can hold water long enough to recharge the aquifer. Delbert Smith thought that our board might eventually find a place to test this strategy in Union County.

Water, Soil Conservation Activity Books for Union County Grade School Children

Delbert Smith reported that 240 booklets were published at a cost of \$331. The booklets, which feature conservation learning in a form that is fun for children, are based on models used in other counties. Next year, Delbert Smith discussed future modification of the booklets to give them a Union County flavor. He will speak to school principals to arrange for 240 students to get the books and impress upon principals the need for the teachers to teach the lessons in the booklets and check that the activities in the booklets were performed.

Reports: Purchase of Laptop Computer and Projector

Jon Croci reported on his efforts to find a quality laptop and projector for use by the board. He gave model numbers for the two items and cited costs that the board approved. The board will be approaching the County Commission to get approval to make the purchase.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 2000 hours.