

July 28 Union County Soil and Water Conservation District

Present:

Laurel Schaffsma -- Chairman

Pete Cameron -- Secretary

Duke Emerson -- Treasurer

Barton Wilder -- FDACS/WMD Representative

Dave Nistler -- Union County IFAS Agent

The meeting opened with approval of the June minutes.

It was voted to hold the November meeting on the 29th and cancel the December meeting as in conflict with the holidays.

Pete Cameron discussed the role of FDACS-OAWP/WMD in supporting the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) as described in the governing statute and the SWCD Supervisor's Handbook.

The essence of his point was that there was a conflict between the many claims of the documents and the actual support provided by the state agents. Pete pointed out that given the many responsibilities of the FDACS/WMD agent, it would not be possible for him to provide all the support that was listed in the documents. While the Supervisor's Handbook made the claim that many of the SWCD functions itemized in the statute from its inception in the '30s were now being performed by other state agencies, there were still more claims of FDACS support for the SWCDs in the handbook than time could permit the busy agent to perform. Clearly, Pete said, the Supervisor's Handbook needs a rewrite with more realistic goals and state support for the SWCDs.

Since the handbook claimed that SWCDs should be involved in the BMP program, the group talked about ways to get involved. In collaboration with Barton Wilder, Duke Emerson volunteered to enroll his farm in the BMP program. In this case, Barton would perform his introductory visit to Duke's property and sign him up to the BMP program. Subsequently, Barton would make a presentation to our group on

the process. Later, he would guide us around Duke's property while discussing the BMPs as relevant.

The handbook stated that the role of SWCDs was to be an intermediary between state agencies and local needs. In line with this, the group discussed using state agency support to brief the UC commission on mining issues and risks, if the commission agreed that such help was needed. It was decided that Laurel or Pete would try to contact the chairman of the commission and ask if the SWCD could intercede on behalf of the commission with state agencies, asking them to make presentations to the commission on mining issues and risks.

Next Laurel discussed the cleanup project she had proposed last meeting and closed the issue by noting that the Lake Butler shore looked pretty good the way it was (not in need of cleanup).

Pete reported on a presentation in High Springs given by two lawyers experienced in water legalities. In a nutshell, the point was that, as with gay rights, woman's rights, African American rights, not much can be done in the courts until a certain right is given legal standing. Nature has no legal standing. Right now, the only options for the defense in a litigation to defend the environment is to find a way that an existing law is being violated, such as a protected species is being harmed. That is why lawyers attempting to limit logging in the state of Washington cited the danger it posed to the spotted owl.

Laurel cited the need for water samples in the New and Santa Fe rivers before and after the start of the phosphate mining (should it become a reality) and members of the group assured her that this would be a basic requirement of the state.

Barton reported that manuals on commercial poultry operations were being written. Cost share contracts were being issued in mid-August.

The annual SWCD conference for this area of the state will be in Ocala at the end of July. Laurel and Barton will be attending and reporting back.