

June 23, 2015 Meeting of the Union County Soil and Water Conservation District

Present:

Delbert Smith -- Chairman

Pete Cameron -- Deputy Chair, Secretary

Duke Emerson -- Treasurer

Laurel Schaafsma -- Board Member. Feature Writer Buddy Finley -- Board Member Scott Tucker -- State Agriculture Representative

Wiley Feagle (representing Monica Jones) -- NRCS Representative Cedric Seawood -- NRCS Intern

Wiley Feagle handed out a required NRCS non-discrimination form for all to read and sign. He reported that October will be the start of a new fiscal year and EQIP applicant forms will be batched and evaluated.

Scott Tucker reported on a project at Hilltop Dairy in Gilchrist County where "scavenger" wells have been dug into the surficial aquifer and water with a high nitrogen content is being extracted for use as fertilizer. This is part of a movement that investigates the water below the ground under farms that have been in operation for many years and checks the nitrogen (N) level. If the N is above a certain threshold, scavenger wells may be used to bring the N water back to the surface and reuse it.

In another project, the amount of fertilizer is varied on contiguous plots of corn and a soil probe is used to determine how much nitrogen is absorbed by the plants and how much is leached down into the aquifer. The goal is to minimize guesswork in determining the amount of fertilizer (\$\$) to use on a crop.

In general, Scott reports, more accountability measures are being imposed on cost share projects by the legislature. While it has been very difficult in the past to police the cost share participants, the new requirements should not impose an unmanageable burden on the Ag dept representatives because accurate monitoring and reporting on the use of the cost share item(s) is now the responsibility of the farmer.

At the CARES dinner on May 7 at IFAS Live Oak, Delbert Smith was recognized for excellence in farming in Union County.

Lastly, Scott mentioned the move of Anne Shortelle from the Suwannee River WMD to the St Johns River WMD. (Carlos Herd is the interim head of SRWMD.) Scott said that many people feel that this move will be helpful to the SRWMD area because her decision making will reflect the needs of her former responsibility.

Scott has a new cell phone number: 352 317-6111.

The issue of the environmental coloring books issued by the board to Union County first graders was raised again, and Delbert had to admit that the project did not achieve the intended purpose. Delbert had volunteered to come to the classes and promote the books to the kids but, for whatever reason, the teachers didn't call him. He feels that maybe the next time we do an education project, we should attempt to involve older students (4th grade and up).

Buddy Finley raised the issue of our budget and the fact that we have to go to the county commission and ask for money from our budget every time we have a need, however small the request. He said that we should have a bank account that we may debit at our discretion. He was authorized by the board to approach the commission and request our own bank account.

There is also the issue of the key to the IFAS office where our meetings are held. The county commission, Delbert said, is not in favor of members having a key to a government office. However, this is a problem for us once a month when we need to get in and have our meeting. Buddy said that he would discuss this with the commission at the time he attempts to get a bank account for us.

Due to health problems, Delbert said that he is forced to resign as chairman and we should take this opportunity to have a new slate of officers. The new officers are as follows:

Pete Cameron: former Deputy Chair and secretary is now Chairman Buddy Finley is Deputy Chair Laurel Schaafsma is secretary Duke Emerson remains as Treasurer

Delbert Smith will remain a board member and we are happy to have his years of experience living and doing business in Union County.

The meeting closed at 8 PM.