

February 23, 2016 UCSWD Board Meeting

Present:

Laurel Schaafsma - Chair

Duke Emerson - Treasurer

Pete Cameron - Secretary

William Schretzmann - Member (prospective supervisor, awaiting paperwork) Monica Jones - NRCS Representative Jay Tucker - Forestry Representative Scott Tucker - FDACS/WMD Representative Barton Wilder - FDACS/WMD Representative

The meeting opened with an old business item brought up by Scott Tucker. His concern was that Buddy Finlay's membership might not have been cancelled (due to lack of attendance) before William Schretzmann had been recommended as a new member, thereby creating the situation of temporarily having more than five supervisors on the board (a violation of regulations). Pete Cameron explained that Buddy had never actually become a supervisor because he didn't finish his application process and thus there was no conflict with regulations.

Barton Wilder, replacement for Hugh Thomas (promoted), was welcomed. He will join Scott Tucker in ensuring BMP compliance of farmers in the area cost share program.

Laurel Schaafsma brought up the need for a Union County land use map, and Jay Tucker said that he would give her a copy his own marked-up version.

Laurel stated that while she is riding around the county, she may see areas of erosion or poor water usage and she wondered what the group could do about such. Scott Tucker said that she should notify DEP, WMD, or forestry for help.

The next item on the agenda was the proposed phosphate mining operation in Union and Bradford Counties. Pete Cameron started the discussion by pointing out that in the early formation of Florida, the land mass in south Florida was separated from Georgia by ocean and was gradually filled by soil washing down the Appalachian mountains. Phosphorus-rich water from the Atlantic deposited phosphorus on top of the Appalachian soil and that is how the phosphate deposits were formed. The proposed mining operation in Union and Bradford Counties would gouge off the overburden (topsoil, @ 30 feet, above the phosphate layer, @ 30 - 50 feet) in order to dig up the phosphate, which would be trucked to a fertilizer plant elsewhere. The overburden would then be pushed into the holes left by the mined phosphate as reclamation. Laurel pointed out that a well recently dug on her property went down about 70 feet to reach the ground water and that is as deep as the lower reaches of the phosphate mining. This raised some concern about the mining operation interfering with the hydrology of the area. It was pointed out that for the proposers to get a permit, they would be required to submit a reclamation plan with one-for-one replacement of wetlands. William Schretzmann said that not much should be done to voice support or protest against the mining proposal until a permit was issued.

Laurel then brought up the upcoming Bradford County Fair as an opportunity to advertise UCSWCD. Members suggested that we share the Bradford SWCD booth. Laurel will obtain

promotional materials from Monica Jones. A similar opportunity would be the July 4 Bradford fair. Members suggested delaying discussion of this for a later meeting.

The next item was the land judging contest that takes place yearly with participation by Union County students. Scott Tucker said that it would be difficult for us to get involved with that competition at this late date in the year while on the other hand, the speech and poster contests would definitely be something the group could sponsor and judge.

Jay Tucker pointed out that the envirothon competition in March could be another opportunity for UCSWCD sponsorship. UC schools are currently represented at this regional event in which student presentations on environmental topics are judged.

Several upcoming meetings of Florida conservation districts were mentioned for possible attendance: an April meeting in Green Cove Springs in which student speech winners would present their topics; and a two-day July meeting in Ocala that offers training for supervisors.

William Schretzmann suggested that a worthwhile use of budget would be to print UCSWCD business cards with a map of meeting location for handout.

Jay Tucker then presented an update on his activities as forester. He described a cost share program to counter southern pine beetle that would involve forest thinning and understory management. He stressed that applicants must submit a plan with their application. He mentioned that seedlings are now coming in for spring planting.

Scott Tucker concluded the meeting with a description of his activities: assessed 30 farms since December for BMP compliance. Of the 80% in compliance, 20% were judged to be excellent and 60% reasonable. He cited a few factors that make compliance difficult for farmers, one of which is switching crops from year to year.

Scott also evaluates water use permit expirations to make sure that amounts permitted are accurate for current use.

The meeting concluded about 8 PM.