

Tupelo Soil and Water Conservation District

Minutes from the January 18, 2024

Members present: Jerry Gaskin, Joe Danford, Gil Shealy, and Sammy Bailey

Members not present: Dave Davis

Other present: Scott Williams and Cathy Davis

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jerry Gaskin. The minutes from the October 19, 2023, meeting was reviewed, and a motion was made by Sammy Bailey to approve the minutes. Gil Shealy second the motion. Motion carried.

The treasurer's report was given, the balance in the checking account is \$20.49 and the savings account is \$2,142.59. A motion was made by Joe Danford to approve the report, and Gil Shealy seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Scott Williams District Conservationist gave an overview of the activity from the Blountstown Field Office. We have a total of 63 and are expecting preapprovals on applications that weren't approved last year in February along with the High Tunnel Houses. 21 of the applications are Conservation Reserve Program (CSP). CSP is different from the regular Environmental Qualities Incentives Program (EQIP). CSP is a 5 year management program on forestry practices.

The new Soil Conservationist position in the office has been filled by Ethan Sapp from Jackson County. Ethan was employed with National Wild Turkey Federation in Jackson County. His report date hasn't been determined at this time.

A copy of the House Bill 1075 and Senate Bill 1772 was given to the Chairman. After reviewing the bills, it's not looking good for the soil and water districts. The bills are talking about disbanding districts and combining several districts to make 7 districts through out Florida. Gulf County would be in the Emerald Coast district. Emerald Coast would cover from Escambia County over to the Apalachicola River. There is a lot of questions, with no answers at this point, but it's not looking good for the smaller districts in Florida. Florida is the only state that is trying to disband the districts in our Nation.

The Chairman challenged the remaining board to come up with projects the district can possibly do to get our names out there. Gil Shealy said he could dig up Sawtooth Oak around his house and offer those. That was done back several years ago for the Tupelo Festival. They were a big hit with the hunters.

Sammy Bailey is also, the Chairman of the Gulf County Cattleman's Association requested EQIP practices that are generally cost shared in Florida. He would present to the Cattleman's meeting the following week.

Our next meeting is scheduled for April 18th.

A motion was made by Joe Danford to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Gil Shealy. Motion carried.