

# Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District

## Board of Supervisors March Meeting Minutes Approved

Approved date: April 8, 2026

Time: 1:00pm

Location: 200 NW 5<sup>th</sup> Street Conference Room

### Call to Order

Mariano Corona-Chairman- Present

Jared Figley-Supervisor- Present

Donald Sellers, Jr.-Supervisor- Present

Douglas Burnham-Supervisor-Absent

Glynn Rutledge-Treasurer-Present

- I. Motion to approve the December 10, 2026, Meeting Minutes (Sellers/Rutledge). Motion passed unanimously.
- II. Motion to approve the January-February Financial Report (Sellers/Figley). Motion passed unanimously.
- III. Staff Program Reports
  - I. District Conservationist, Carlos Torres gave the NRCS Report. He discussed the new virtual fence practice and how Florida has a stipulation on maintaining a hard-boundary fence. Also mentioned was the new CEMA 12 Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity available under the Regenerative Pilot Program ranking pool. There are many applicants that have not completely updated their FSA records and will be deemed ineligible for NRCS FY 26 EQIP and CSP. There is only enough funding for 40% of the state's applications.
  - II. Environmental Manager, Sheila Kitaif gave the FDACS Report. All field staff report under Lisa Jensen, Director for FDACS Fruit and Vegetable Division, but there still is an Office of Ag Water Policy. Cost share will return to ONLY offering 75% reimbursement, however a cap of \$75K will be enforced to help fund more applications. There have been conversations that in-house labor will not be accepted.
  - III. District Administrator, Audrey Kuipers gave the FSA Report. The Livestock Forage Program will start taking applications for drought in April. There is no specific "freeze" program other than the Tree Assistance Program (TAP)

which only covers trees, shrubs, and vines. Producer must apply within 90 days of loss notice.

- IV. Program Specialist, Vicki Wheeler and Audrey Kuipers gave the OSWCD Report. The soils trailer was utilized during the Indian River Lagoon Envirothon, Okeechobee Ag-Venture, and loaned to Collier SWCD for their Ag-Venture. Local poster contest deadline is March 24<sup>th</sup>. State deadline is April 8.

NRCS will not be able to award agreements directly to a District. Districts will have to bid on Notice of Opportunities. FDACS continues experimenting with direct-to-producer cost share. AFCD is planning an annual meeting in late August to include an invitation to the Commissioner of Agriculture candidates to speak. Waiting to hear if Sarasota SWCD will dissolve or not before reaching out to NACD about the remaining grant funds. A list of current SWCDs from the Florida Commerce website was shared. Twelve Districts have been dissolved since February 17. The Lake Okeechobee Dairies Water Quality Improvement and Nutrient Reduction Project updates were shared, and a factsheet regarding the Basinger Dairy Legacy Phosphorus Removal Project with SFWMD was discussed.

New hire, Matthew Dorriety will start March 25. FASD approached Audrey Kuipers regarding vacant Board seats. Ms. Kuipers shared the time and financial commitment. The Board gave their blessing if she is interested. Mariano Corona was awarded his 30-year Service Award.

#### IV. Unfinished Business

- I. Commission on Ethics 4 hours of training is due December 31, 2026. Ms. Kuipers was asked to give the Board the free resource options.

#### V. New Business

- I. Motion to accept the FY 25 audit presentation by Jenna Corbitt| Wicks, Brown, Williams & Co. (Sellers/Rutledge). Motion passed unanimously.
- II. Motion to approve the Travel Policy as presented (Figley/Sellers). Motion passed unanimously.
- III. Motion to revoke the Work Remote Policy adopted August 8, 2024, and replace with the language presented in the Employee Handbook (Sellers/Figley). Motion passed unanimously.
- IV. Motion to consider shipping and handling as part of the cost share calculation and include a penalty statement for participants that are awarded funds and do not follow through with their project in

the Feral Swine Management Program (Sellers/Figley). Motion passed unanimously.

- V. Motion to approve the Program Participation Policy for Board Supervisors and Staff as presented (Sellers/Figley). Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Supervisor and Public Comments

- I. Audrey Kuipers presented an email from Assistant Professor of Environmental Engineering at Florida Polytechnic University, Caleb Xu. The request is a support letter for a research project focused on modeling and evaluation of nutrient transport from onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems and its implications for Lake Okeechobee and downstream water quality. Motion to send a support letter stating interest in educational outreach of findings.

VII. Upcoming Events and Deadlines

- I. Board of Supervisors Meeting; April 8, 2026: 1:00pm
- II. SECDEA Mid-Year; April 13-15, 2026, North Carolina
- III. NACD Stewardship Week: April 25-May 6, 2026
- IV. FCDEA Mid-Year Meeting: April 27-28, 2026, Gainesville, FL

- VIII. Chairman Corona adjourned the meeting at 3:30pm