Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors Special Called Meeting

April 5, 2025 239 N Spring Street

1:00pm

District Supervisors in Attendance at Call to Order of Meeting

Ms. Carollyn Taylor, Chair; Mr.Travis Tharp, Vice Chair; Mr. Johnnie Odom; Treasurer; Mr. Chris Curb.

District Supervisors in Attendance at Call to Adjourn

Ms. Carollyn Taylor, Chair; Mr.TravisTharp, Vice Chair; Mr. Johnnie Odom, Treasurer; Mr. Chris Curb.

Ms. Carollyn Taylor called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m. Acknowledgement of Public Notice.

Quorum was established. Public notice was established.

**Discussion Items**

**House PilJ** 223

Discussion held regarding HB 973 which has been introduced. The Bill will allow for dependent Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Florida to remain, while independent Soil and Water Conservation Districts such as the ESWCD would be abolished by December 31, 2025.

The following statement was crafted to send to Representative Michelle Salzman via email. Dear Representative Salzman,

We are contacting you today to request your opposition to CS/HB 973 regarding Special Districts both in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee and at any other stage it may reach in its legislative journey.

This bill abolishes most Soil and Water Conservation Districts, including ours. It gives the remaining Districts the ability to engage in projects outside their local area. It also adds additional requirements for Supervisors of these Districts.

We oppose both this bill and similar bills that have been introduced in other legislative sessions.

* We believe that the historic duties and responsibilities of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are best handled at the most local level, that being within county boundaries.
* Local citizens understand the needs of their community and are therefore best suited to recommend and pursue local conservation policies. We are in the unique position of facilitating a wide variety of programs and attracting outside funding, with the conspicuous absence of partisanship.
* Other agencies and organizations such as the USDA NRCS offices, the Northwest Florida Water Management District, and the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program are supportive of our body and eager to collaborate with us on current and upcoming projects, to include the return of aquaculture to our bays and preserving agricultural and conservation lands.

\* These projects have been undertaken after ESWCD and many other Districts have reconstituted to comply with an array of recent legislative requirements.

We were grateful that you were able to send your aide to meet with us in the Fall to express similar concerns about past and proposed legislation.

We look forward to working with your office in the future for the benefit of the people and resources of Escambia County.

Kind RegardsJ

The Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District

Mr. Chris Curb made a motion to accept the crafted email and send to RepresentativeSalzman. Mr. Travis Tharp seconded the motion. With all in favor the motion passed.

Mr. Tharp made a motion to approve an ESWCD member to attend to the Committee Meeting being held on MondayJ April 7J 2025 in Tallahassee in order to deliver the statement personally.

Mr. Curb seconded the motion. With all in favor the motion carried.

Ms. Carollyn Taylor at this point timeJ will be available to travel to the Committee Meeting.

**Financial Reductions**

In light of Federal reductions in work force and fundingJ the ESWCD stand to be more beneficial to the local community along with agriculture participants in order to assist with grants and cost share opportunities.

**Adjournment**

With no further business coming before the BoardJ Mr. Johnnie Odom made a motion to adjourn Mr. Curb seconded the motion. With all in favorJ meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

\*\*Signed Minutes on File

Ms. Carollyn TaylorJ Chair