

Indian River County Florida

*Indian River County Administration Complex
1800 27th Street, Building B
Room B1-501
Vero Beach, Florida*



Meeting Minutes – Approved

Monday, September 8, 2025

1:30 PM

Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors

Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman: Seat 1

Christine Kelly-Begazo, Vice Chairman: Seat 4

Dr. David L. Cox, Secretary/Treasurer: Seat 2

Adam W. Honour: Seat 3

George F. Hamner, Jr., Legislative Liaison: Seat 5

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Robert C. Adair, Jr. called meeting to order at 1:31 P.M

Supervisors in attendance: Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman – Seat 1
Dr. David L. Cox – Seat 2
Adam W. Honour – Seat 3
George F. Hamner, Jr. – Seat 5

Supervisors absent: Christine Kelly-Begazo – Seat 4

IRC Staff and**Partners in attendance:**

Jennifer Abbey, District Conservationist, USDA/NRCS
Eric Charest, IRC Natural Resources Assistant Director
Matthew Cox – FDACS-OAWP (left at 2:30 after update)
Andrea Lazzari, IRC Extension Director; UF/IFAS IRC Extension
Mickey Umphrey, Chief Deputy, IRC Property Appraisers
Matt Mosel, Agricultural Appraiser, IRC Property Appraisers

Public in attendance: Mike Johannsen, Indian River Neighborhood Association

2. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA/EMERGENCY ITEMS:

- A. Chairman Adair requested to add an item under the Supervisor Matters: Discussion from the Property Appraisers Office on Agricultural Classification.
- B. Supervisor Cox requested to add the Treasurers Report to the Agenda

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- A. The Minutes for the Board Meeting of August 11, 2025 were approved as written.

Motion: A Motion to approve the August 11, 2025 Minutes as presented was made by Supervisor Hamner and seconded by Supervisor Cox. Motion carried unanimously.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

- A. The Financial Report for August 2025 was submitted by the Treasurer for review by the Board. During discussion of Financial report, the Treasurer noted that the District's CD would be maturing on 9/11/2025 and presented options for renewal or cashing out. Interest rates were presented with the understanding that different CD terms resulted in different interest rates. Uncertainty on continuation of the District was also discussed, and may play a factor into the duration to tie up funds in a CD.

Motion: A Motion was made by Supervisor Honour to renew the CD for a 7 month term. That motion was seconded by Supervisor Hamner. Amendment to the Motion was made by Supervisor Hamner to authorize Supervisor Cox the ability to renew the CD with the terms he determines is best for the operation of the District. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: A Motion was made by Supervisor Hamner to pay the NACD Membership dues and also make \$2,000 donation to the UF/IFAS Small and Beginner Farmers 2026 conference. Motion seconded by Supervisor Honour and passed unanimously.

5. REPORTS:**A. Jennifer Abbey, United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS)**

- ❖ **NEWS: FY 2026 EQIP and CSP Program application deadline October 3, 2025.**
- ❖ **Farm Bill Programs: 28 of 67 Active contracts totaling approximately \$1,356,000 over approximately 10,400 acres**
- ❖ **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): 13 Active Contracts**
- ❖ **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): 15 Active Contracts**

County	EQIP	CSP	Total Contracts	Total Acres
Martin	4	9	13	10,175
St Lucie	11	15	26	26,465
Indian River	13	15	28	10,386

- ❖ **Conservation Application: August - September**
 - 6.8 ac – Bivalve Aquaculture Gear and Biofouling
 - 226.9 ac – Herbaceous Weed Treatment (smut grass)
 - 756 sq ft – High Tunnel
- ❖ **Other:** DC participation in internal workgroup to develop Livestock Watering Facility design templates. Presentation at UF IFAS Mini Conference.
- ❖ **Next Month:** Attend NRCS FL grazing training

B. Andrea Lazzari, Indian River County (IRC) Agricultural Extension Director/ University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) Report:

- ❖ Update on success of Small & Beginning Farmers Mini-Conference held on Friday, August 22nd at the IG Center from 9 AM – 4 PM. 43 attendees, 33 speakers and guests, 2 UF/IFAS Staff for a total participation of 78.

C. Matthew Cox, Environmental Specialist III, Office of Agricultural Water Policy- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (OAWP-FDACS) Report: (left at 2:30 due to conflicting schedule)

- ❖ Matthew provided reassurance to the District that should the District not accept the FDACS Grant to administer, Indian River County agricultural entities would still be eligible to accept FDACS Grant funding through another SWCD.

D. Stephen Wright, Environmental Specialist II, Office of Agricultural Water Policy- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (OAWP-FDACS) Report:

- ❖ (Not in attendance – No Report provided)

E. Eric Charest, Indian River County Natural Resources Assistant Director:

Discussion continued from previous District meeting with regards to the on-going level of support of the District by the County. Mr. Charest reiterated the County's commitment for as Staff II level of support to provide assistance to the District for on-going District Board meeting agendas and meeting minutes. This assistance would also include use of a County facility for hosting District Board meetings, such as Room B1-501. The County would not assume responsibility for managing the District's FDACS grants and would not be responsible for the District's audits nor maintaining the District's compliance schedules.

Supervisor Cox: Brought into the discussion the possibility of using Grant programs to lend financial support to the District so that District staff could be hired to perform grant management and bookkeeping functions.

Supervisor Hamner: Added to the discussion the possibility of pursuing an alternative set-up for the District such that the District's administrative functions could be handled through the Okeechobee SWCD office, with the possibility of the IRSWCD transferring

FDACS Grant administration, with the IRSWCD operating effectively as an Advisory Group here in Indian River County. Alternative to that approach, Supervisor Hamner proposed the possibility of the District going inactive and closing operations.

Supervisor Honour: Neither of the approaches discussed was supported by Supervisor Honour, with his desire to accept the FDACS Grant and have the District remain as an active District in the eyes of the Florida legislature.

Chairman Adair: Chairman Adair reiterated the stance of the District not being able to accept the responsibilities of accepting the FDACS Grant at this current time and therefore would recommend to FDACS that the Okeechobee SWCD receive the grant that was earmarked for IRSWCD. Chairman Adair announced that he would be participating in the 9/18/2025 National Association of Conservation District Grant workshop that will be held virtually, with the potential for the District to apply for grant funds to support the District's operations.

❖ NACD: Grant Workshop to be held virtually on 9/18/2025.

6. DISTRICT MATTERS:

A. IRSWCD Responsibilities as they relate to annual FDACS Grant requirements:

Chairman Adair: Following up on the discussion of the District not being staffed sufficiently to accept the FDACS Grant and responsibilities associated with managing the grant, Chairman Adair stated that he would contact FDACS about the District not participating in the FDACS Grant program this year and also inquire about what the District's responsibilities are with regards to the prior year's Grant the District managed (end of year audit requirements and such).

Motion: A Motion was made by Supervisor Hamner to have Chairman Adair act as the Temporary Executive Director for the IRSWCD with regards to discussions with FDACS about Grant related issues and act in the best interest of the District with regards to those conversations. Motion seconded by Supervisor Cox and passed unanimously.

B. Website Updates

Eric Charest informed the District that the District's Facebook page needed to be updated to reflect District contacts, as well as requirements for the District to update their webpage to incorporate regulatory compliance requirements into the Webpage. This is a requirement of the District and not something that would be provided by the County. Also, the District's webpage is not hosted on the County's servers. Discussion only, no Motion made by any Supervisors.

C. FDACS-OAWP Contract 32774: Discussed with Agenda Item 6.A. above

D. Point of Contact for District Moving Forward:

Ties in with Agenda Item 6.B. No motion made by Supervisors.

E. Future Meeting Frequency and Schedules:

Discussion on future District meeting frequency and format (virtually and/or in-person). Based on current issues the District is faced with, keeping current meeting schedule and format and may be discussed further at future District meetings. No Motion made by any Supervisors.

F. Added Item – Indian River County Property Appraisers Discussion:

Mickey Umphrey and Matt Mosel from the IRC Property Appraisers Office provided insight to the District on the process of issuing Agriculture Classifications to Bonafide Agricultural Operations in the County. Process includes aerial imagery review as well as a field visit to verify operations, or intent of operations, prior to issuing Agriculture Classification.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Consideration of the use of IRSWCD's cash funds

Supervisor Hamner proposed making a donation to the UF/IFAS Small and Beginning Famers 2026 conference. Supervisor Hamner proposed having the District pay the upcoming annual membership fees for the National Association of Conservation Districts so that the District would be in good standing with that organization and be able to potentially apply for a Technical Assistance grant.

Motion: A Motion was made by Supervisor Hamner make a \$2,000 donation to the UF/IFAS Small and Beginner Farmers 2026 conference. Motion seconded by Supervisor Honour and passed unanimously.

8. NEW BUSINESS:

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 15:30.