

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met November 6, 2006, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman George Stunkard. He stated this was a regularly scheduled meeting in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Title 25, Sections 301 and following as amended. The agenda for this meeting was posted November 2, 2006, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, took roll call and the following members were in attendance:

George Stunkard, Chair  
Dan Lowrance, Vice Chair  
Virginia Kidd, Secretary  
Matt Gard, Member  
Rick Jeans, Member

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director  
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director  
Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director  
Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director  
Dan Butler, Water Quality Program Director  
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director  
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director  
Lisa Knauf, District Services Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician  
George Moore, Watershed Technician  
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician  
Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Administrative Officer  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Pat Leavenworth, Natural Resources Conservation Service Acting State Conservationist  
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist  
(Operations)  
Kevin Norton, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist  
(Programs)  
Becka Redding, Natural Resources Conservation Service Secretary  
Phoukham Vongkhandy, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State  
Conservationist (FO) Zone 4  
John Cagle, Murray County Conservation District Director  
Richard Day, Murray County Conservation District Director

Tammy Curry, Murray County Conservation District Secretary  
Lisa Grey, LeFlore County Conservation District Secretary  
Brandon Faulkenberry, LeFlore County Conservation District Manager  
Edward Abernathy, LeFlore County Conservation District Director  
Kenneth Risenhoover, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Poteau Field Office, District  
Conservationist  
Mike Bryan, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wilburton Field Office, District  
Conservationist  
Nicole Norris, Latimer County Conservation District Wister Lake Education Coordinator  
Donna Hanebrink, Latimer County Conservation District Secretary  
Kim Goff, Haskell County Conservation District Secretary  
Bill Wilson, Haskell County Conservation District Director  
Amber Theinert, Capitol Network News  
Darrel Dominick, Public  
Diane Jeans, Public  
Steve Winters, P&K Equipment  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

#### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Gard led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2006, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

#### **PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER AWARD**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, stated that George Moore, Watershed Technician, was named Employee of the Quarter. He was nominated by fellow employees for his work.

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, stated that Mr. Moore is a model employee who is loyal, committed, and dedicated. He's a "top hand that rides for the brand." Mr. Moore exemplifies the values and behaviors as stated in the Commission's strategic plan. Mr. Toole recognized Mr. Moore's work with county commissioners and obtaining funding for the purchase of skid steers.

Shellie Willoughby, Awards and Recognition Committee Chairperson, awarded Mr. Moore with a certificate of appreciation and a Bass Pro gift certificate.

#### **DISTRICT DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS**

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve district director appointments listed as 1<sup>st</sup> Recommendation in Exhibit #1 with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

#### **MURRAY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT REQUEST FOR A WATERSHED AIDE**

John Cagle, Murray County Conservation District board chairman, appeared before the

Commission to request a watershed aide for the district. He introduced Richard Day, board member, and Tammy Curry, district secretary.

The board has 60 watershed sites in the district that were built between 1950 and 1970 and most every site is in need of maintenance. The district has one employee therefore relies on assistance from Bobby Cline, NRCS District Conservationist, and Dennis Boney, OCC Watershed Technician. The board has requested an additional employee in its Statement of Needs and Justification of funds and understands that the Commission has included this item in its FY2008 budget request.

Mr. Cagle has approached the Murray County Cattlemen's Association regarding a partnership on equipment to conduct operation and maintenance work and they are very receptive.

Mr. Toole stated that the district is in need of an employee for operation and maintenance. Mr. Boney stated that a full time employee could stay busy for the next five years just with current needs.

Mr. Jeans urged the district to discuss this funding request with Senator Johnny Crutchfield. Mr. Lowrance questioned staff if current funds were available at this time and Mr. Thralls responded that funds from the water REAP funds were set aside for watershed rehabilitation, not operation and maintenance. Mr. Lowrance questioned if funds could be reorganized stating that this request is warranted. Mr. Gard recommended the district contact the RC&D in their area about the possibility of cost-share assistance.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance directing staff to explore funding for this request and place this item on the December meeting agenda; seconded by Ms. Kidd. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

#### **CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

#### **PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION AGREEMENTS**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented agreements as listed in Exhibit #3. Mr. Pollard recommended ratification of approved of agreements listed as (a) through (b). A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Jeans to ratify approval. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Pollard recommend approval of new agreements listed as (c) through (f). A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve the new agreements. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of amended agreements listed as (g) through (k). A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the amended agreements. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion

carried.

### **OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Mr. Thralls presented out for state travel requests as listed in Exhibit #4. He stated that the Commission needs to approve the number attending the NACD Annual Meeting. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve out of state travel requests as listed and to approve all commission members and four staff members to attend the NACD annual meeting. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **RECOGNITION OF THE POTEAU RIVER WATERSHED TEAM**

Mr. Pollard welcomed the opportunity to recognize members of the Poteau River Watershed Team consisting of conservation district employees and directors and NRCS employees. He stated that the Conservation Security Program was established in the 2002 Farm Bill. When the Poteau River Watershed was selected for the program a team was put together to get as many eligible landowners signed up. The team signed a total of 412 CSP contracts which was the largest amount nationwide.

Mr. Pollard recognized former state conservationist Darrell Dominick for his work in establishing this team. He also commended Mr. Dominick for hiring Phoukham Vongkhandy.

Mr. Pollard then introduced Phoukham Vongkhandy for remarks. Phoukham Vongkhandy introduced members of the team: Mike Bryan, Latimer County DC, Ed Abernathy, LeFlore County Conservation District Director, Kenneth Risenhoover, NRCS Poteau Field Office, Tom Neumeyer, NRCS Stigler Field office, Lisa Gray, LeFlore County Conservation District secretary, Brandon Faulkenberry, LeFlore County Conservation District Manager; Donna Hanebrink, Latimer County Conservation District secretary; Kim Goff, Haskell County Conservation District secretary; Nicole Norris, Latimer County Conservation District Wister Lake Education Coordinator; Bill Wilson, Haskell County Conservation District director.

Jeannette Nance, Office of the Governor, presented commendations to each member of the team and to the three conservation districts involved.

### **RECOGNITION OF DARREL DOMINICK**

Mr. Pollard welcomed the opportunity to recognize former state conservationist Darrell Dominick for his incredible work with the Oklahoma conservation partnership for the past six years.

Ms. Nance presented a commendation to Mr. Dominick on behalf of Governor Henry. The Commission also presented a commendation to Mr Dominick.

Mr. Dominick thanked the Commission members and staff for their work over the past six years. He thanked the conservation districts, the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, and the NRCS for their tireless efforts. Accomplishments achieved over the past few years will set the stage for generations to come.

Commission members expressed their personal appreciation to Mr. Dominick for his work with the conservation partnership and wished him well.

### **27TH ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S WATER CONFERENCE**

The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Governor's Water Conference will be held on November 13-14, 2006 at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City. After discussion it was noted that no members will be attending this year.

#### **REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2007**

Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, presented proposed date for the regularly scheduled Conservation Commission meetings for calendar year 2007 as listed in Exhibit #5. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the schedule. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

#### **PRESENTATION OF NRCS PROCEDURES FOR SECURITY BACKGROUND CHECKS ON DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ACCESSING THE USDA COMPUTER NETWORK**

Mr. Pollard reported that the NRCS Chief has stated that all employees, contractors and volunteers working on NRCS computers will be required to undergo background checks.

Gary O'Neill, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, will be making presentations at the OACD Area meetings to address this issue. He stated that since September 11, 2001, changes are being made to heighten security issues and that this requirement is a government-wide directive. The background checks will ensure that people are who they say they are. Letters were sent to all conservation districts regarding this requirement stating too that any costs associated will be covered by the NRCS, working with the Commission. As of this date, the directive is for computer access only; however, Mr. O'Neill stated that it could soon be required of all persons working in the NRCS offices.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

#### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Stunkard commended the watershed team along with Phoukham Vongkhandy. He had the opportunity to work with Phoukham Vongkhandy during OACD strategic planning meetings.

Mr. Lowrance stated that he serves on a panel searching for the new head of the newly created Department of Natural Resources and Ecology at Oklahoma State University.

Ms. Kidd reported on attending the Pittsburg County Banker's Awards program. She has also been working on the Women in Agriculture conference scheduled for next year.

Mr. Gard reported on attending the Garfield County Conservation District's Cooperator Appreciation Day. The district also has a legislative quail hunt scheduled for December 8. He commended the district for their work with the local legislators. Mr. Gard participated in the OACD Area 1 meeting and the Governor's Biofuels Conference.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration:* Mike Thralls, Executive Director, commended Mr. Dominick for his work at the NRCS. When the Commission was facing budget shortfalls of up to 20%, Mr. Dominick offered assistance to keep employees in place through agreements. Mr. Thralls stated that the Tar Creek reclamation project was completed with the guidance from Mr. Dominick. Mr. Thralls expressed his appreciation to Pat Leavenworth, Acting State Conservationist, during this uncomfortable time.

Mr. Thralls stated that the Attorney General's lawsuit against the poultry integrators is ongoing and the Commission is now involved with the deposition process. Staff is gathering information pertaining to not only the Illinois River but the Beatty Creek watershed as well. The deposition date is January 9, 2007.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf, Director, provided copies of District Director's Responsibilities: A 10 Minute Guide Series. She reported that this is one in a continuing series of information/discussion topics designed to help directors become more knowledgeable about their responsibilities. These will be sent to board chairmen at home and to the district offices asking that they place this on their monthly meeting agendas for discussion.

*Water Quality Program:* Dan Butler, Director, also reported on the poultry lawsuit stating that 2 full time employees have been assigned to the task of compiling the requested information. Mr. Butler thanked Mr. Dominick for his management of the NRCS while serving as state conservationist.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, stated that 3 sites are active; 2 in Rogers County and 1 in Sequoyah County. The AML Inspectors's Workshop was held in Tulsa recently and it was successful.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Steve Coffman, Director, recognized Mr. Dominick for his friendship and working relationship.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, also thanked Mr. Dominick for his leadership, especially with work on Tar Creek.

Mr. Sharp reported on the two active projects in Tar Creek as listed in his written report. He reported that \$1.5 million has been spent to date on the West Commerce project and that 450 acres are ready for vegetation.

Mr. Sharp stated that internet service is being installed in district offices that house Commission employees.

Mr. Sharp reported that the Geographic Information Council's GIS Needs Assessment

Survey was conducted with over 70% response. Two focus groups met to define the needs of the GIS community.

Mr. Stunkard congratulated Mr. Sharp on his recent award received during the National Abandoned Mine Land Conference.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, stated that staff will be coming forth to the Commission at the December meeting to make a recommendation regarding FY2008 allocations for cost-share. They will be recommending performance-based allocations to districts.

*Administration:* Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, introduced Becka Redding, NRCS State Office. He then commended Kenneth Risenhoover for his work in LeFlore County as well as when he was stationed in Latimer County.

Mr. Pollard recognized Mark Harrison, Information Officer, for his work in upgrading the Commission's new web page and the many hours of work that has gone into that project. He then recognized Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, for heading up the Commission's State Charitable Campaign. Employees contributed over \$3000.

## **OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Clay Pope, Executive Director, congratulated the Poteau Watershed Team for their work. He also commended Mr. Dominick for all of his work.

The Area 1 meeting was held last week with over 200 participants. The Western Farmers Electric sponsored the youth awards. County Commissioners have been invited to attend the area meetings to discuss cooperative issues.

Mr. Pope serves on the Natural Resources Subcommittee of the State Chamber of Commerce. The Committee met recently and passed two resolutions. The chamber supports lifting the cap on REAP funds and locally led methods of addressing environmental concerns.

Mr. Pope reported on attending the steering committee meeting of the Coalition for Conservation. This group consists of wildlife organization throughout the state. The group is looking at the 2002 Farm Bill Conservation Title. The next meeting of the coalition is scheduled for December 7.

Mr. Pope stated that after the elections tomorrow OACD needs to provide information to new legislators about conservation issues.

Mr. Pope stated that he met with the Tulsa Municipal Utility Authority regarding Eucha/Spavinaw Watershed.

The state meeting will be held in February and OACD is in need of program ideas. OACD will be hosting the NACD south central meeting next summer.

## **USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Pat Leavenworth, Acting State Conservationist, stated it was a pleasure to be at the meeting

and that the people in Oklahoma have been warm and welcoming since here arrival. She provided copies of a written report and commended Becka Redding for putting it together.

Ms. Leavenworth stated that the NRCS is operating under a continuing resolution until November 17. She reported that the Upper Washita River watershed was selected for the Conservation Security Program.

Ms. Leavenworth reported that Johnny Green has left the agency for a position in Fort Worth and that Larry Caldwell has been named acting engineer. She also reported that Ron Hilliard has been named the new State Conservationist for Oklahoma.

Ms. Leavenworth stated that this has been a marvelous year for accomplishments in conservation with the Conservation Security Program's selection of the Poteau River watershed being a shining example. The CSP allocated \$3.12 million in the watershed. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program received 1,972 contracts and allocated \$23.4 million.

#### **USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY**

No representative present.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on December 4, 2006, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

---

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on December 4, 2006.

---

CHAIR