

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met April 7, 2008, 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 Dan Lowrance. 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 April 3, 2008, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

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

Dan Lowrance, Chair  
Virginia Kidd, Vice Chair  
Matt Gard, Secretary  
Mike Rooker, Member  
George Stunkard, 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 Sharp, Information Technology Director  
Lisa Knauf, District Services Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician  
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician  
Eldon Merklin, Cost-share Program Coordinator  
Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator  
Chuck Nuttle, AML Inspector  
Charlotte Stieber, AML Administrative Officer  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy Director  
Regina Switzer, Assistant Attorney General  
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Steve Thompson, Associate Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry  
Dale Denwalt, The Journal Record  
Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition Executive Director  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

## **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2008, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **DISTRICT DIRECTOR RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS**

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, reported on the following resignation: T.E. Tippens Jr., Custer County. He then presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve district director appointments listed as First Recommendation in Exhibit #1 with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. 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. Stunkard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **SERVICE RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEES**

Chuck Nuttle, AML Inspector, was recognized for 15 years of service and Eldon Merklin, Cost-share Program Coordinator, for 10 years of service. They were presented a certificate and a service pin.

## **REPORT ON RECENT INCIDENT COMMAND TRAINING AND RECOGNITION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, stated that an Incident Command System team was formed after floods caused extensive damage to Sugar Creek Watershed site L-44 in August 2007. He then presented a power point presentation of the lessons learned during that emergency and the challenges of communication, collaboration and coordination amongst different entities involved.

Mr. Toole thanked NRCS State Conservationist Ron Hilliard for establishing this team. It is a proven management system designed to deal with emergencies.

Members of the team include the following NRCS employees: Bill Porter, Chris Stoner, Joey Freeland, Bob Tillman, Kevin Cook, and Dee Ann Littlefield. Commission employees serving on the team are: Tammy Sawatzky, Janet Stewart, George Moore, Johnny Pelley, Dennis Boney, Dwain Phillips, Karla Beatty, and Robert Toole. Nena Wells, Upper Washita Conservation District, serves on the team representing conservation districts. The Commission employees were recognized for their training and presented with certificates.

## **PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION AGREEMENTS**

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the amended agreements listed as (b) - (f). A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the agreements as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

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

Mr. Thralls presented out of state travel requests as listed in Exhibit #4. He recommended ratification of the request listed as (a). A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to ratify the request as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Thralls recommended approval of the remaining requests listed as (b) - (h). A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the requests as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **RATIFICATION OF DISTRICT DIRECTOR POSITION #1 ELECTION RESULTS**

Mr. Thralls presented District Director Position #1 election results as listed in Exhibit #5. He commended Ms. Tweed on her work with the election process. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Gard to ratify results as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **COMMISSION'S NEWLY ADOPTED EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK.**

Mr. Coffman presented the Commission's employee handbook for approval and recommended its approval. He stated these guidelines are consistent with the Merit Rules. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the employee handbook. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

All Commission members participated in Conservation Day at the Capitol and felt it was a very successful day.

Mr. Rooker reported on attending the Murray County Conservation District's 53<sup>rd</sup> annual banquet.

Mr. Gard served on the selection committee for the Ag Hall of Fame and stated that Paul Hitch was inducted posthumously. He reported on attending an eggs and issues meeting in Fairview, a biofuels meeting in Kingfisher, and Ag Day at the Capitol. He will be participating in several upcoming canola and wheat field days.

Mr. Stunkard commended the Commission staff serving on the Incident Command System team and commended the NRCS for putting this system in motion. He invited members to attend the Wagoner County Stewardship Breakfast on Friday, April 11.

Mr. Lowrance attended the dedication of the new bioenergy lab at Oklahoma State University. Also in attendance were Governor Brad Henry and former Governor Henry Bellmon. This was the first official business of newly appointed President Burns Hargis.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration:* Mike Thralls, Executive Director, expressed appreciation to all members for attending Conservation Day at the Capitol. He expressed his appreciation to the staff for working with the OACD on activities.

Mr. Thralls reported that Senate Bill 1696, which creates a fund for municipalities to access for flood control projects and water quality initiatives, will be heard in committee on April 8. Senate Bill 1766, re-write of the Conservation District Act, will be heard in the full House Natural Resources Committee today at 3:00 p.m. If it passes, it will then go to the House floor.

Mr. Thralls reported on meeting with Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Ken Miller, regarding the Commission's budget request. A bond issue is still being discussed and it is unclear whether the House will support it. If it does, conservation will be on the list.

Mr. Thralls attended the Woodward County Conservation District's bankers awards program where State Treasurer Scott Meacham was the speaker. Mr. Thralls confirmed with Mr. Meacham that budget negotiations were nearly complete.

Mr. Thralls expressed appreciation to Mr. Hilliard for his support of Incident Command System training.

Mr. Thralls stated that with the passage of SB 1766 the Commission will have numerous rules for revisions. The Commission will also be developing emergency rules and permanent rules for carbon sequestration. The water quality division will begin work on Water Quality Standard Implementation Plan rules.

Staff is preparing work on design of half of the third floor of the Agriculture Building to house all of the Commission staff. This area is expected to be vacated when the new lab construction is finalized, around July 2009.

Mr. Thralls congratulated Mr. Stunkard on being reappointed to another five year term.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf, Director, attended board meetings at Oklahoma County, Jefferson County, McClain County, Grady County and Pawnee County Conservation Districts. She also attended and facilitated a session at the National Association of State Conservation Agencies regional meeting in Austin, Texas, along with Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition Executive Director. Mr. Sebert's presentation included watershed operation and maintenance and Ms. Knauf's presentation was funding opportunities for conservation districts.

Ms. Knauf attended the NRCS State Leadership Team meeting. She has been working with districts on updating Cooperative Working Agreements. The agreements currently have the signatures of former NRCS State Conservationist Ron Clark and former Commission Executive Director Mason Mungle.

Ms. Knauf provided training for the new secretary in Marshall County and worked with Pontotoc County on tax issues. She contacted 2 districts regarding violations of the Open Meeting Act which nullified those specific meetings. Ms. Knauf is scheduled to hold a new director training session in Cheyenne. Staff is holding area district meetings to discuss numerous issues. One was held in Woodward County last week. The others are scheduled as follows: April 22 - Oklahoma City; April 23 - Lawton; April 29 - Tulsa; April 30 - McAlester.

*Water Quality Program:* Dan Butler, Director, stated that eastern Oklahoma suffered heavy rains and that the Illinois River had record flooding. The gauges recording levels of the river have been in place since before statehood. The program lost equipment due to the floods and will begin purchasing replacements.

Mr. Gard reported that Monsanto would like to assist with the North Canadian River watershed project.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director, gave the report stating that the 61<sup>st</sup> Street North NE project will be finished when the weather dries up. He reported on the 2007 Simplified Grant stating that the 61<sup>st</sup> Street North SW project will be opened for bids on April 8. The 2008 Simplified Grant was approved in February and the first project is the West Chelsea Phase 2.

Mr. Sharp stated that Henry Roye has been working on several emergencies as outlined in the written report.

Mr. Sharp then reported on Information Technology Division activities recognizing Shellie Willoughby for her work with GIS Day at the Capitol held on March 12.

The advertisement period for the Network Specialist closed on March 31. Six applicants will be interviewed within the next couple of weeks.

Staff has been working with the Office of Homeland Security regarding the Office of Geographic Information. Collaborations are focused on a design to implement Virtual Oklahoma.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Steve Coffman, Director, continued working with the State Auditor in conducting the audit of the Commission for the period of January 2006 through December 2007. Staff provided a questionnaire to conservation districts to gather and update information necessary for solicitation of bids for the renewal of the risk management policy. Mr. Coffman began preparation of the FY2009 budget work program and completed the budget model survey conducted by CORE to review and revise the budget.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, stated that the National Watershed Coalition's 2009 conference will be held in Wichita, Kansas. He will be attending a conference planning meeting in the near future. Mr. Toole reported that Mr. Lowrance prepared congressional testimony for the record regarding the watershed program.

Mr. Toole reported on the cost-share program stating districts were allocated between \$20,000 and \$50,000 and that a few districts are requesting additional funds. He then reported on education activities stating that the 2008 Oklahoma envirothon competition is scheduled this week.

Mr. Toole provided additional information regarding the new siphon that was designed and built and questioned about during the claims discussion. Staff delayed this purchase for over 2 years but expended the funds and now the siphon is being used extensively. There may be a need for an additional siphon in the near future.

Mr. Toole gave an Emergency Action Plan project status stating that EAP's are required on high hazard structures only and that 188 sites have been identified to have a plan. A total of 166 sites are in some phase of the process. The first step is to get the districts to review the EAP's and Ms. Sawatzky is presently working with districts.

Mr. Toole reported that the final inspection on Double Creek 2 was conducted and he thanked Mr. Hilliard for attending the inspection.

He then yielded time to Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition Executive Director. Mr. Sebert stated that the national conference will be held at the Wichita, Kansas Marriott Hotel on May 17-20, 2009. The OACD is playing a role in the meeting.

*Administration:* Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, recognized the work of Commission staff on GIS Day at the Capitol, Conservation Day at the Capitol and Ag Day at the Capitol activities. All of these events were well received and well attended.

Mr. Pollard attended the Kay County Conservation District's annual meeting where board member Rick Jeans was recognized for being inducted into the Conservation Hall of Fame and on being named Outstanding District Director.

Mr. Pollard reported on working with the American Red Cross to provide First Aid and CPR training for Commission and district staff. To date over 30 Commission staff have received training. Staff will be working with the districts to schedule training between now and the end of the calendar year. He invited members to participate.

The Oklahoma Envirothon kicks off today near Lawton and he invited members to participate. The National Land and Range Judging Contest is scheduled for May 5-7 with the banquet scheduled for Wednesday, May 7. The OACD Executive Board will meet on May 7 as well. Staff is scheduling awards ceremonies at the schools of the Outstanding Educator recipients and he invited members to attend those ceremonies in their areas.

Mr. Pollard stated that Public Employees Recognition Week is scheduled the week of May 5 and several events are being planned for staff by the Commission's Awards and Recognition Committee.

### **OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Clay Pope, Executive Director, also reported on SB 1696 and SB 1766. The title has been stricken on both measures.

Stewardship Week is scheduled for April 27-May 4 and he expressed appreciation to the following for their sponsorship: Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Chesapeake Energy, and Monsanto. Ads will be placed in newspapers and public service announcements will be developed.

Mr. Pope reported that a website is being developed for the carbon initiative. Staff is working with water quality personnel on verification issues. The Cherokee Nation has formally agreed to assist with this initiative.

An Employees Day at the Capitol was held on April 1 and 14 district employees attended and met with legislators. Employees will meet again on May 14. District Director days at the capitol are scheduled for April 16 and May 21.

Mr. Pope attended the NASCA meeting in Austin, Texas as previously reported. Discussions included addressing the watershed program in the four states, cross-border issues such as poultry, and coordinating efforts with congressional delegations.

Mr. Pope expressed appreciation to Commission staff for their work on GIS Day at the Capitol, Conservation Day at the Capitol, and Ag Day at the Capitol. May 12 has been scheduled as Fire Day at the Capitol by the Prescribed Fire Council.

Staff is working with the Corporation Commission on biofuels and natural resources issues as well as carbon sequestration and water availability in Oklahoma due to invasive species.

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

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, reported on attending meetings at Murray County and Grady County Conservation Districts. He will be traveling to Hugo to meet with the new District Conservationist. Mr. Hilliard attended the NASCA meeting in Austin and a farm show in Poteau. He stated that approximately 40 NRCS employees will be assisting with the National Range and Land Judging Contest.

Mr. Hilliard complimented members of the Incident Command System team and applauded Garfield County for being the first district to participate. The Sugar Creek incident exposed the

potential for lack of communication due to technology. He is checking on the possibility of obtaining satellite radios and/or telephones or getting On-Star technology in NRCS vehicles.

Mr. Hilliard provided a written report and mentioned that the Great Plains RC&D was named Outstanding Council at the Southwest States RC&D meeting. He also reported that a Tulsa Earth Team volunteer will be featured on the NRCS national website as a success story for this national campaign. He reported that volunteers have added 42 extra staff years to the state of Oklahoma.

Mr. Hilliard reported that the Agriculture Secretary announced a sign-up for the Conservation Security Program starting April 18 for 51 watersheds nationwide including the Upper Washita River Watershed in Oklahoma. He stated districts should be encouraged to get the message out about this sign-up. Due to drought and floods Category 4 lands can be accepted in this sign-up.

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

No representative present.

#### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS (CONTINUED)**

Mr. Gard asked for an update of the poultry lawsuit and was told that the Court has not made a final decision.

He also asked about the outcome of the incidence in Caddo County where a pickup truck fell into a collapsed road due to heavy rains. The West Caddo Conservation District has contacted the Commission for information. Mr. Thralls responded that the site was sponsored by the Master Conservancy District, the West Caddo Conservation District with the design performed by the NRCS. District staff is in the process of putting together information. The driver of the truck is making an open records request through his attorney.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Gard to change the location of the of the May 5, 2008, meeting to the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on May 5, 2008.

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CHAIR



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT OF CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORS

DISTRICT	FIRST RECOMMENDATION	SECOND RECOMMENDATION	# OF MTGS	SUCCEEDS	TERM EXPIRES
Osage County	Rick Rice	Eddie Fields		Ben Culver (term exp)	March 31, 2011
Tulsa County	John Beasley	Michael Henk		Pat Baker (res)	December 9, 2009
Central North Canadian River	Joe Funck		22	Self	May 6, 2010
Cotton County	Jack Hudman	Kenny Glenn	15/20	Self	May 5, 2010
Delaware County	Dusti Crace		23	Self	April 8, 2010
Garvin	Brent Mynhier	Robert Tolbert	22	Self	May 5, 2010
Grady County	John Paxton		24	Self	May 5, 2010
Grant County	Rodney Hern	Randy Lanie	20	Self	June 9, 2010
Marshall County	Kenneth Duncan	Douglas Schneider	23	Self	March 10, 2010
McIntosh County	Tom Shroyer		10/12	Self	March 10, 2010
Oklahoma County	Richard Godfrey Jr.	James Goyer	21	Self	May 5, 2010
Pontotoc County	C.T. Holland		20	Self	May 5, 2010