

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met May 5, 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 May 1, 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 Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director
Lisa Knauf, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Nick Huber, Network Management Specialist
Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist
George Moore, Watershed Technician
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician
Tashina Mitchell, Watershed Project Coordinator
Joe Schneider, Eucha Project Coordinator
Marti Mefford, Honey Creek Project Coordinator
Regina Switzer, Assistant Attorney General
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Program Chief
Jeanette Nance, Office of the Governor
Steve Thompson, Associate Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Candice Adson, Capitol News
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Kidd led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the minutes of the April 7, 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 district director resignation: Pat Baker, Tulsa County. He then presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard 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 Mr. Rooker to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION AGREEMENTS

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the amended agreement listed as C. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve 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 new agreement listed as D. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the new agreement as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

Mr. Thralls presented out of state travel requests for approval as listed in Exhibit #4. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the requests as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

UPCOMING NATIONAL MEETINGS DURING FY2009

Mr. Thralls reported on the following upcoming meetings and made recommendations as to attendance. This item will be placed on the June meeting agenda for approval.

National Association of Conservation Districts Summer Board Meeting and Legislative Conference, July 18-23, 2008, Washington, D.C. Mr. Thralls recommends two members and two staff to attend.

National Association of Conservation Districts South Central Meeting, August 21-23, 2008, Hot Springs, AR. Mr. Thralls recommends all members and up to four staff to attend.

National Association of State Conservation Agencies 2008 Annual Meeting, September 7-10, 2008, Whitefish, Montana. Mr. Thralls recommends three staff to attend.

COMANCHE COUNTY CD REQUEST FOR AN ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION

Mr. Thralls stated that over the past three years the Commission has made additional allocations to help sponsor the Envirothon team to travel to the National competition. The Comanche County Conservation District is requesting an additional allocation to sponsor the Lawton Eisenhower High School Envirothon Team to travel to the Canon Envirothon competition in Flagstaff, Arizona in July 2008. Before making an allocation, Mr. Lowrance would like to see a budget on how the funds will be used, such as for fuel, van rental, etc. He suggested this item be tabled until next month to give members time to receive this information. After discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to table this item until the June meeting. 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

Mr. Rooker reported on attending an FFA banquet, RC&D banquet, the Oklahoma City Farm Show, and the Pawnee Tractor Show. He gave a land run show at Choctaw.

Mr. Gard stated that several crop land tours are scheduled this month including a sunflower meeting in Enid on May 13 and the Lahoma Wheat Tour on May 16.

Ms. Kidd attended the Builder's Home and Garden show in Enid as well as the Ag Trade Show in Poteau. OK Foods served over 600 people in Poteau.

Mr. Stunkard gave an update on the flooding at Kadashan Site 2. On April 11 he received a call from the Golf Club of Oklahoma stating there was a flooding problem. The Wagoner County Conservation District placed calls to the Sheriff's office, the County Commissioners, and the Civil Defense stating there was a potential life-threatening flood occurrence. Within a short amount of time road blocks had been set up. The water rose 8-10 feet and was flowing over the emergency spillway 2-3 feet deep. It was eroding at the rate of a foot per minute. They were fortunate that water erosion hit hard material and did not drain the lake.

Mr. Stunkard expressed his appreciation the local emergency personnel as well as the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Conservation Commission. He thanked Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, for providing the presentation on the Incident Command System during the April meeting.

Mr. Stunkard reported that the Soil Stewardship Breakfast was held the next day and he thanked Mr. Thralls for making a presentation to Paula Templeton.

Mr. Lowrance reiterated the importance of districts having Emergency Action Plans ready. He then reported on attending the Outstanding Educator Award ceremony at Eisenhower High School in Lawton. He also participated in the judging of Envirothon teams.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration: Mike Thralls, Executive Director, congratulated Mr. Stunkard for being appointed to another 5 year term.

Mr. Thralls reported that SB 1766 was signed by the Governor. This bill makes district directors eligible for state health insurance at their own expense, better defines liability with flood control structures, establishes fee language for carbon sequestration and carbon credit trading, and updates terms of directors. Because of these changes, the agency's rules will need updating and that process will begin in the near future. Staff will also be working on new rules for carbon sequestration and water quality standards implementation plan.

The budget for Oklahoma is a flat budget. Meetings have been scheduled with division directors to begin work on the FY09 budget. The legislature will adjourn on May 23 and now have the opportunity to consider a bond issue. The Commission is still in the mix.

Mr. Thralls reported that the Commission is working with the South Caddo Conservation District on Sugar Creek Watershed repairs and that FEMA funds were approved in the amount of \$7 million. The state will need to match these funds through the Office of Emergency Management. The Commission may be asked to help manage this process.

Mr. Thralls reported on Little Deep Fork Site 38 in Creek County where the tower was plugged causing water to backup on an oil field production and water covered the landowner's planted grass. The Commission placed 2 pumps at the site costing \$1800 per day for fuel. He complimented the Conservation Programs Division for their work on flooding situations this past month.

Mr. Gard inquired on the status of the Stamper Project. Mr. Thralls stated that the buildings are complete and that Darrel Dominick reports good process is being made.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf, Director, reported that she served as judge and critiqued presentations at the annual state Envirothon competition. Envirothon is organized and supported by a State Steering Committee made up of members from Rogers County Conservation District, the Commission, NRCS, private forest industry and the employees association.

Staff conducted 5 district information meetings throughout the state and scheduled a make-up meeting on May 6 in Oklahoma City. She has provided districts with the new budget request form. Ms. Knauf also conducted new director orientation for Upper Washita Conservation District board of directors. Ms. Knauf sent out letters to 23 districts that have 3 or more directors with 5 years of service or less to participate in training. She has received 3 positive responses. Staff continued providing training to Tulsa County staff and assisting with litigation.

Ms. Knauf stated that two districts are delinquent with annual reports and one district does not have its audit completed.

Water Quality Program: Dan Butler, Director, reported on the litter transfer program stating that the \$300,000 has almost been expended. The districts are to be commended on selling this program and it was a good idea to give them \$1.00 per ton. A notice was sent to districts stating that the program has exhausted all funds but that it will honor all claims to producers who have ordered litter but have not yet received it.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, reported on emergencies as outlined in the written report. He stated that Henry Roye is meeting today in Adamson on a potential subsidence. He reported on the 61st Street project stating that the Commission accepted the bid from Thomas Construction. Staff is working on the West Chelsea Phase 2 project.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Steve Coffman, Director, stated that work is being wrapped up with the Auditor's office on the Commission's annual audit. He is working with the House, Senate and State Finance staffs in setting budget limits for next year.

Information Technology Division: Mike Sharp, Director, introduced Nick Huber as the new Network Management Specialist. Mr. Sharp stated that the fact sheet for underground mine mapping in the Tulsa area has been completed and sent to interested persons. He then stated that Shellie Willoughby, GIS Coordinator, was awarded the Mid-America GIS Consortium Award for Coordination during the Conference in April. She was selected from a pool of 14 nominees.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, stated that cost-share claims are increasing due to grass planting season. He stated that the 2008 Oklahoma Envirothon competition was held in April.

Mr. Toole reported that the cost of repairs on Kadashan 2 is estimated at \$150,000. There are no operation and maintenance funds available for the remainder of the fiscal year. An O&M assessment was conducted in cooperation with the NRCS and to date the overall needs total \$11.5 million, with some assessments still remaining.

Mr. Toole reported that the site showing for Double Creek 3 site was conducted. When Double Creek 3 rehabilitation construction is finished it will complete the first watershed project to be totally rehabilitated. The final inspection is scheduled for the Barnitz 14. Staff will be delivering 2 rehabilitation contracts to the Department of Central Services this week for Sallisaw Creek Sites 16 and 20.

Administration: Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, stated that the Commission will have display booths at Prescribed Fire Day at the Capitol on May 12 and Water Day at the Capitol on May 14. The National Land and Range Judging Contest kicks off today and runs through May 7. The banquet will be held on May 6 at 6:00 p.m. at the Cowboy National Museum.

Mr. Pollard stated that today marks the beginning of Public Employee Recognition Week and that the Awards and Recognition Committee has several events planned for staff in the Oklahoma City area and the Tulsa area.

Mr. Pollard yielded time to Mr. Butler to introduce Tashina Mitchell, Watershed Project Coordinator.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that Lt. Governor Askins will give the welcome at the National Land and Range Judging Contest banquet on May 7. He commended Oklahoma County Conservation District and employee Don Bartolina for their work with the contest.

Mr. Pope also stated that SB 1766 was signed by the Governor. He stated that SB 1696 will establish a fund to cost-share with rural cities and towns on water issues. Only three weeks remain in the legislative session and emergency funding is still in the mix. He reported on SB 1816 regarding controlled burns.

OACD continues to monitor the Farm Bill. Mr. Pope attended a meeting in Washington, D.C. regarding carbon sequestration. More work needs to be done with the NACD and NASCA on this issue. The Cherokee Nation has given the OACD \$25,000 for the carbon initiative. A website is being developed for the initiative as well as an updated website for the OACD.

Mr. Pope is scheduling a meeting with the Daily Oklahoman editorial board to discuss the comments published in the newspaper that flood control does not deserve to be in the bond package.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, provided a written report. He stated that sign up for the Conservation Security Program in the Upper Washita River Watershed is currently underway and will continue through May 16. He encouraged people to apply by the deadline date. He stated that a list of rehabilitation projects was listed on Page 6 of the report.

USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Rod Wanger, Conservation Program Chief, reported on the following programs and money paid out to date:

Crop Disaster Program - \$80 million
Livestock Compensation program - \$25 million
Livestock Indemnity Program - \$456,000

Mr. Wanger reported on the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Program that began in northwest Oklahoma on May 1.

The Disaster Assistance Program ends today. The Emergency Conservation Program for damage from floods, ice storm, etc has no money available but has \$2 million in requests.

Mr. Wanger reported on the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program stating is a 2 to 3 year program to help with the storage of grain, to build grain bins, and purchase equipment.

CHANGE DATE AND LOCATION OF THE SEPTEMBER 2008 MEETING

Mr. Thralls suggested changing the date and location of the September 8, 2008 meeting to hold it in the Deer Creek Conservation District since it was recognized as the Outstanding Conservation District of the Year. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Gard to hold the meeting on Thursday, September 4 in Weatherford, Oklahoma. The location will be determined by the Deer Creek Conservation District. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.


NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on June 2, 2008, 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 Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Rooker to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on June 2, 2008.


CHAIR