

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Thursday, September 1, 2011, at the Agriculture Building Board Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln in 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 August 30, 2011, 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
Jim Grego, Secretary
Karl Jett, Member
Mike Rooker, Member

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director
Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director
Shellie Willoughby, Information Technology GIS Specialist
Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Eldon Merklin, Cost-share Program Coordinator
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy Director
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Blayne Arthur, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate
Commissioner
Keili McEwen, Office of the Governor
Erin Boeckman, eCapitol
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2011, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, presented the recommendation for appointment of conservation district director as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the recommendation as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

Mr. Pollard presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. He recommended ratification of the amended agreement listed as (a) since it was previously approved by Chairman Stunkard. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to ratify the amended agreement as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of new agreements listed as (d) through (k). A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the new agreements as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

ADDITIONAL \$1000 PER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Mr. Thralls stated that the approval of the agreement with NRCS to add an additional \$300,000 will allow the Commission to allocate an additional \$1,000 to conservation districts that have a signed cooperative agreement with NRCS. A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve an additional \$1000 to conservation districts for other operating expenses if there is a signed agreement with the NRCS for assistance for delivery of farm bill programs. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

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

OACD AREA MEETINGS

Mr. Thralls stated that the area meetings are scheduled as follows and recommended that the Commission co-sponsor the meetings: November 1 - Area 2, Oklahoma City, Langston

University-Oklahoma City Campus; November 2 - Area 4, Ft. Cobb, Caddo-Kiowa Technology Center; November 10 - Area 3, Muskogee, Bacone College; November 15 - Area 1, Woodward, High Plains Technology Center; November 17 - Area 5, Wilburton, Eastern Oklahoma State College. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Grego to co-sponsor the meetings as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

LOCALLY LED CONSERVATION COST-SHARE PROGRAM - PROGRAM YEAR 13

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, presented the Locally -Led Conservation Cost-share Program - Program Year 13 Guidelines for approval as Exhibit #5 and recommended approval.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the guidelines as presented. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

COMMISSION'S FY 2013 BUDGET

Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission is required to submit its FY2013 budget on October 1 to the Office of State Finance. Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director, provided a copy of the districts budget requests for FY13 (Attachment A). The districts are requesting close to \$90 million in new funding.

Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission has been working on the statewide water plan with the Oklahoma Water Resources Board and is requesting to receive \$15 million annually for nonpoint source protection through cost-share and roadside erosion prevention; \$22 million for watershed operation and maintenance; and \$400 million over the next several years for watershed rehabilitation. Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission will be requesting \$2 million to fill the operating budget shortfall of general revenue.

HARPER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Stunkard stated that representatives from the Harper County board will not be attending the meeting and therefore will not be presenting their request to the Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Jett attended a town hall meeting with U.S. Senator Tom Coburn and will be attending a meeting in Woodward with U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe and the new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director.

Mr. Grego reported on a drained watershed issue in his district. He then reported on attending a Farm Bureau area meeting where they learned there is estimated to be \$250 million in additional funds for the legislature to appropriate.

Mr. Lowrance reported on meeting with members of the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission in Wagoner to discuss possible consolidation. He stated that the Stephens County Conservation District did not participate in the grass and forage contest at the county fair for the first time in 30 years due to the drought.

Mr. Rooker attended the RC&D State Summit. He also invited meeting participants to attend the Shawnee Ag Appreciation Banquet on September 8 at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Stunkard expressed appreciation to the OACD and Commission staff for their work with the NACD South Central Meeting held recently in Oklahoma City. He stated that the meeting with the Scenic Rivers Commission members and staff to discuss a possible consolidation of the two agencies went well.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration - Executive Director: Mr. Thralls thanked Mr. Stunkard and Mr. Lowrance for attending the meeting in Wagoner. He then thanked Mr. Toole and his staff for expediting the conservation cost-share program - program year 13. This program will assist producers with brush management and ponds to help with drought issues. He stated that Clay Pope was on Channel 9 this morning to discuss red cedars.

Mr. Thralls reported on attending the second meeting of the legislative water committee meeting yesterday. The Committee consists of six House members and six Senate members. The next meeting is scheduled for September 21 in the House Chambers. The committee discussed the process of developing technical information and will be reviewing the eight recommendations of the draft plan.

Mr. Thralls attended a planning meeting at OSU for the No-till Conference scheduled for February 21-22, 2012 in Norman.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf Owen, Director, stated that all district financial materials must be to the district's auditor's office by September 2. She has been reviewing the local operation agreements with NRCS. Ms. Knauf Owen has been working on the four new soil conservation technician positions and getting those positions advertised.

Ms. Knauf Owen stated she is working with Mark Harrison on a schedule of due dates to assist conservation districts with meeting various deadlines.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Director, reported working on recommendations to the state water plan. She also serves on the technical committee that will make recommendations to the Oklahoma Water Resource Board regarding the .037 phosphorous standard for the Illinois River Watershed.

Ms. Phillips received a request from the EPA Region 6 office to provide a suggested tour for the Regional Administrator of EPA.

Ms. Phillips stated that the division is going through personnel changes reporting that seven people have left the division recently going to new opportunities. This has allowed the division to redistribute the flow of work with a cost savings of \$295,000 in salary and benefits.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, stated there are two active AML sites in Sequoyah and Haskell Counties. Four project sites are in design phase with three ready to contract.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Mr. Pollard reported that the Commission has responded to the recent audit findings with the State Auditor's office and a representative from the office will be invited to attend the October Commission meeting. Mr. Pollard stated that the division has been assisting with the IT consolidation budget.

Information Technology Division: Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist, stated she has been working with Steve Coffman and other staff members to create the IT plan including a budget work program, an organization chart and spreadsheets, and an inventory of software and hardware. The agency will be requesting an exemption to keep the IT Division at the Commission.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, stated that he and General Counsel Janet Stewart have been advising districts on the subject of draining watersheds as a number of downstream landowners have been asking for water to be released. He stated that no one has the authority to operate a watershed gate except the conservation district unless authorized by the district.

Mr. Toole commended Tammy Sawatzky and Eldon Merklin for their work in developing the Cost-share Program - Program Year 13 guidelines. He stated that Program Year 11B ended on August 31 and that \$796,000 from that program year will be reallocated for operation and maintenance and watershed rehabilitation.

Mr. Toole stated that the Wildlife Expo is scheduled for September 23-25 at the Lazy E Arena.

Mr. Toole stated that watershed rehabilitation continues to be busy. He reported that Sallisaw 18M site is complete and a request for final payment will be made next week. Sugar Creek L43 site is also completed. Mr. Toole also reported that construction on the Cobb 1 site is shut down due to high temperatures, a bid has been accepted for Upper Clear Boggy Creek Site 36 and Caney Coon Site 2M, and a pre-bid conference has been scheduled for Clear Boggy Site 33.

Mr. Toole stated that requests for watershed rehabilitation funds will go up significantly next year because of the completion of the watershed assessment report.

Administration - Assistant Director: Mr. Pollard provided the OACD report and stated that the Association extends thanks to the Commission for its work with the South Central meeting. The NRCS has awarded the Association with a Conservation Innovation Grant to work on the Lesser Prairie Chicken issues. The OACD Executive Board Retreat is scheduled for September 29-October 2 and will be held at Lake Eucha.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

No representative present. Report was made by Mr. Pollard as noted above.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, stated that outreach meetings are being held in Okmulgee and Shawnee regarding the drought. He stated that four employees took the early retirement offered recently. Mr. Hilliard stated that Gary O'Neill will be on temporary assignment in Washington, D.C. to work on budget issues. He also stated that Kevin Norton, State Conservationist in Louisiana, has been assigned to a farm bill committee in Washington, D.C.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

Blayne Arthur, Associate Commissioner, reported that the Forestry Service was called to assist with recent metro area fires. She stated that the Department will be assisting with SeptemberFest scheduled for September 10 at the Governor's Mansion. Ms. Arthur was with the Ag Leadership Group in northwest Oklahoma last week. She also reported that the Governor and Lt. Governor visited the Agriculture Gardens.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on October 3, 2011, 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. Grego and seconded by Mr. Rooker to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on October 3, 2011.



CHAIR

Conservation District Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Request

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Increases to current district employee salaries | \$ 792,416.00 |
| New Conservation District Positions | \$ 935,509.00 |
| Increases in Operations Budget | \$ 2,136,986.00 |

Programs

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Cost-Share Programs | \$ 5,577,000.00 | |
| Watershed O&M | \$12,974,334.00 | |
| Watershed Rehab | \$56,037,500.00 | |
| Roadside Erosion | \$ 6,766,000.00 | |
| New Equipment | \$ 2,551,480.00 | |
| Vehicles | \$ 1,065,500.00 | |
| Water Quality Programs | \$ 847,100.00 | |
| Education Programs | <u>\$ 288,150.00</u> | |
| Total Program Requests | | \$86,107,064.00 |
| Total FY2013 Budget Requests | | \$89,971,975.00 |