

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met April 6, 2009, 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 2, 2009, 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
Shannon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Janet Stewart, General Counsel
Henry Roye, AML Inspector
Regina Switzer, Assistant Attorney General
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Program Chief
Bryan Smith, eCapitol
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. Gard and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2009, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

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. Stunkard 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 Mr. Rooker to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Henry Roye, AML Inspector, was recognized for 20 years of service.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

Mr. Thralls presented out of state travel requests for approval as listed in Exhibit #4. He stated that request (a) was previously approved by Chairman Lowrance due to time constraints. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to ratify the request listed as (a). Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the requests listed as (b) through (d). Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

NACD LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Mr. Thralls stated that the National Association of Conservation Districts Legislative Conference will be held on July 19-21, 2009 in Washington, D.C. He stated that Governor Henry has asked agencies to reduce travel budgets by ten percent. Mr. Lowrance stated that if the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts is sending representatives perhaps the Commission would not need to. This meeting will be placed on the May agenda for further discussion.

STATUS REPORT ON RULE-MAKING PROCESS

Mr. Pollard reported that Title 155: Chapter 1. Operation of the Commission; Chapter 10. Conservation Districts; Chapter 20. Conservation Cost-share Program; and Chapter 35. Coordination of Oklahoma's Geographic Information have been submitted to the Office of Administrative Rules for final adoption with an effective date of April 25, 2009. He stated that Chapter 40. Water Quality Programs will be submitted with an effective date of May 11, 2009. The Carbon Sequestration Program rules have received Gubernatorial approval and are awaiting legislative approval.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Members attended Conservation Day at the Capitol and agreed that it was a very successful event with good attendance. They commended employees for their efforts with this event.

Mr. Rooker attended the Murray County Conservation District banquet and gave a presentation at a leadership program sponsored by the Cattlemen's Association.

Mr. Gard attended Ag Day at the Capitol, a legislative reception hosted by REI, and an Eggs and Issues meeting. 4-H Day at the Capitol is being held today.

Mr. Lowrance expressed appreciation for the thoughts and prayers he received during his recent heart surgery and recovery.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration: Mr. Thralls stated that Governor Henry has appointed Mr. Lowrance to another five year term on the Commission and that this appointment requires Senate confirmation. He also stated that Shanon Phillips has been named the new Water Quality Program Director.

Mr. Thralls gave an update on legislative issues stating that the bond issue bill, Senate Bill 38, is being replaced with SB 238 and is scheduled before the full Appropriations Committee today at 3:30 p.m. Senate Bill 239 is the bond issue bill for the river parks in Tulsa.

House Bill 1489, which provides for a five year extension of the gross production tax monies which are divided between Tourism, the Water Board and the Commission, passed the House and needs action by the full Senate. An amendment provides the Commission to use up to 50% of the funds for administration. The bill also removes a restriction requiring the Commission to use funds first for rehabilitation then cost-share and leaves spending priorities with the Commission.

Regarding budget cuts, the House requested information on how the Commission would take a seven percent budget cut next year. The Senate requested information on taking a one percent cut this year and an additional five percent cut next year.

District Services Division: No representative present.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Director, gave members a copy of a packet of information that was provided to freshmen legislators during Conservation Day at the Capitol. This information will be published on the Commission's web page.

Ms. Phillips updated the Commission on the Stamper project stating that teleconferences are held twice a month with the Environmental Protection Agency. A Conservation Innovative Grant has been written for this project and it is hoped that stimulus funds can be used as well. Answering a question from Mr. Stunkard, Ms. Phillips stated that no outside funding has been obtained for the project but that Mr. Stamper received an OCAST grant and some funding from the Poultry Federation.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, reported on hosting the National Association of AML Programs Winter Business meeting in Oklahoma City. He then reported on projects and the AML emergency program as listed in the written report.

Mr. Kastl stated that staff is working on the National AML Conference scheduled for September 27-30, 2009 in Rogers, Arkansas and will be soliciting assistance.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Steve Coffman, Director, reported on meeting with the Department of Central Services Risk Management Division to discuss renewal of the general liability and directors errors and omissions policy for FY2010.

Information Technology Division: Mike Sharp, Director, stated that GIS Day at the Capitol was held on March 12 and he commended Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist, for her work with this event. He stated that Ms. Willoughby is expecting her first child in August.

Mr. Sharp reported on a mine shaft collapse at Tar Creek as detailed in the written report.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, reported on an upcoming ICS team training. He stated that the Double Creek Watershed has been rehabilitated and a celebration is being planned for September.

Mr. Toole continues to work with Dr. Shideler at Oklahoma State University on the conservation economic impact report.

Mr. Toole reported on the lawsuit involving a watershed rehabilitation project in Sequoyah County stating that a judgement has been issued against the conservation district. An appeal has been filed. Mr. Toole will be meeting with the board next week to discuss options.

Conservation districts were requested to prioritize their watershed structures needs and districts have responded with over \$15 million in estimated operation and maintenance needs.

Mr. Toole stated that the State Envirothon Contest is being held this week at Broken Bow.

Administration - Assistant Director: Mr. Pollard stated that eight high school teams are participating in the Envirothon Contest. The National Land and Range Judging Contest will be held on May 5-7 with the contest day and the banquet on May 7.

Mr. Pollard stated that the week of May 11 is Public Employees Recognition Week and several activities are being planned for the staff. Members will be provided information when it is complete.

Mr. Pollard stated that educators recognized at Conservation Day at the Capitol will have an opportunity to be recognized locally. Staff will be scheduling recognition ceremonies at respective schools prior to the end of school.

Mr. Pollard stated that the Commission is serving on a natural resources working group to discuss stimulus funds chaired by Secretary of Environment J.D. Strong. He also stated that \$25

million will pass through the Natural Resources Conservation Service for watersheds. Mr. Pollard stated that the Secretary of Agriculture will announce today that \$45 million is available nationally for watershed rehabilitation.

Mr. Pollard reported that Krysta Harden, CEO of NACD, has been appointed as Undersecretary for Congressional Affairs under the USDA.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

No representative present.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Gary O'Neill, Assistant State Conservationist, reported that 11 states will receive stimulus funds in the amount of \$45 million for watershed projects and that Oklahoma will fund 7 projects. The Floodplain Easements program sign up runs through April 10. Lands in flood prone areas are eligible and sixteen applications have been received.

Mr. O'Neill stated that the budget allocation for the remainder of the year should be received this week which will include Farm Bill and rehabilitation money. Mr. O'Neill stated that the allocation could include additional money for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and other farm bill programs.

Mr. O'Neill stated that training for the new Conservation Stewardship Program will be the first week of May with a nationwide sign-up in May or June. The Emergency Watershed Program has \$4 million to put on the ground which could be used for debris pick up in the Ardmore area due to tornado damage. The Assistant for Field Operations in Zone 1 will be announced next week.

USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Rod Wanger, Conservation Program Chief, stated that the FSA received \$5 million in stimulus funds for loans that went to 111 producers in 34 counties. He reported on the following program sign-ups: SURE program extended to May 15; ACRE program extended to August 14 and the Grasslands Program.

Mr. Wanger stated that the milk program has \$400,000 available to producers due to economic decline. The Emergency Conservation Program is available for Dewey and Harper Counties for fire damage, Love and Carter Counties for tornado damage, and Adair and Cherokee Counties for ice storm damage.

Mr. Wanger stated that regulations have not been published for lands coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program which would re-authorize 34 million acres instead of 39.6 million acres.

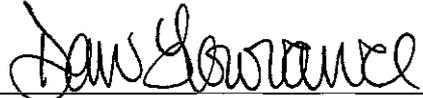
NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on May 4, 2009 beginning at 9:30 a.m. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Gard to change the location of the meeting to the Lincoln Plaza Office Building, 4545 North Lincoln, Room 269, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Gard to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on May 4, 2009.



CHAIR