

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met May 3, 2010, at the Oklahoma City Zoo - Education Building, 2101 NE 50th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman Matt Gard. 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 29, 2010, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

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

Matt Gard, Chair  
Mike Rooker, Vice Chair  
George Stunkard, Secretary  
Dan Lowrance, Member  
Virginia Kidd, 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  
Shanon Phillips, 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  
Janet Stewart, General Counsel  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy Director  
Kevin Varner, District Liaison  
Ed Crall, Special Project Supervisor  
George Moore, Watershed Technician  
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician  
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist  
Steve Thompson, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate  
Commissioner  
Ryan Chaffin, Attorney General's Office  
Jeanette Nance, Office of the Governor  
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. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the minutes of the April 5, 2010, 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, presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve district director appointments as listed 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. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of amended agreements listed as (b) through (g). A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the amended agreements 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 travel requests for approval as listed in Exhibit #4. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the requests as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **NACD SUMMER LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE**

The National Association of Conservation Districts Summer Legislative Conference is scheduled for July 16-20, 2010, Washington, D.C. Mr. Thralls stated that due to budget issues he is reluctant to approve attendance. Mr. Lowrance stated that Oklahoma does not have any pressing legislation therefore no need to spend the money. Discussion will be held at the June meeting.

## **DISTRICT DIRECTOR ELECTION**

To meet requirements for Conservation District Director Elections for Position #3, a motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to authorize the Executive Director to certify eligibility of candidates Filing a Notification and Declaration of Candidacy for District Director, Position #3 during the filing period from May 1-14, 2010; and to approve polling places in those conservation districts that will be holding elections for District Director, Position #3 on June

1, 2010. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**COST SHARE PROGRAM YEAR 12 SPECIAL REQUEST**

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, stated that a Cost Share Program Year 12 special request from the Jefferson County Conservation District was received to add the following components to Brush Management (314) and recommended approval:

- a. Chemical Brush Control - all other chemicals - \$28.37 / AC
- b. Cutting & Spraying <30% canopy - \$88.91 / AC
- c. Cutting & Spraying >30% canopy - \$171.30 / AC
- d. Individual Plant Treatment - chemical - \$28.50 / AC

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the request. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**REQUEST FOR SMALL WATERSHED REVOLVING FUNDS FROM GARFIELD COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Mr. Thralls recommended that the Commission approve an amendment to the request previously approved from Garfield County Conservation District for the use of Small Watershed Revolving Funds to add up to \$2000 additional funds for land rights expenses incurred by the District associated with Turkey Creek Site #3. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the request. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**REQUEST FOR SMALL WATERSHED REVOLVING FUNDS AND/OR REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDS FROM SEQUOYAH COUNTY**

Mr. Toole stated that two weeks ago the Sequoyah County Conservation District Manager and the District Conservationist were with a surveying crew on a site performing court-ordered work and they were physically assaulted by the landowner. Therefore, Mr. Toole is recommending approval of a request from the Sequoyah County Conservation District for the use of Small Watershed Revolving Funds and/or rehabilitation administrative earnings funds in an amount up to \$60,000 for fee simple condemnation of Sallisaw Creek Watershed Site 33.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the request. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A BUDGET AND ALLOCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Mr. Thralls recommended the establishment of a Budget and Allocation Advisory Committee to address the budget shortfall the Commission and districts will be facing in the coming fiscal year. He recommended two representatives from the Commission, two representatives from the OACD, one representative from the OACDE, and one ex-officio representative from the NRCS.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance to establish the Committee and to allow the Executive Director to determine the members; motion seconded by Ms. Kidd. 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 a Made in Oklahoma reception on March 7, the Lt. Governor's turkey hunt on March 15, the Blue Room Ceremony with NRCS Chief Dave White on March 19, the Turkey Creek 3 dedication on March 20 and an RC&D quarterly board meeting.

Ms. Kidd attended the Made in Oklahoma reception and the Turkey Creek 3 dedication with NRCS Dave White.

Mr. Gard attended the Turkey Creek 3 dedication, a carbon sequestration meeting at Fairview as well as an Eggs and Issues meeting with legislators Hickman and Sanders.

#### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration - Executive Director:* Mr. Thralls reported this week begins recognition of public employees and the Commission will be holding a full staff meeting and luncheon upon adjournment.

The visit with NRCS Chief Dave White was exceptional beginning with the Blue Room Ceremony and the Turkey Creek 3 dedication.

Mr. Thralls attended the Wagoner County stewardship breakfast and banquets at Logan County, Blaine County and Woodward County Conservation Districts.

Mr. Thralls has sent an email to the agency and districts regarding the formation of a budget advisory group to discuss budget issues. He stated that the legislature has approved a bill setting aside \$22 million for voluntary early retirement for state employees. District employees are not eligible.

Mr. Thralls stated that 16 Commission employees are paid by general revenue as well as all district employees. He stated that the Commission does not receive enough general revenue funds to finance districts and the Commission.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf, Director, has been looking at budget and allocations for conservation districts. She stated that there were 180 full time district employees and now there are 165.

Ms. Knauf worked with the OACD to formalize the contract for the 2011 State Meeting which will be held at the Reed Center. She is beginning revisions to the Personnel Management chapter of the Conservation District Handbook. She continues to assist the Tulsa County Conservation District with personnel issues and the Pittsburg County Conservation District with financial issues.

*Water Quality Program:* Shanon Phillips, Director, reported on the EPA/ARRA funded Green Roof Project which was installed on the OU Campus.

Ms. Phillips stated that staff will be hosting EPA representatives for a 2 day tour in June. The tour will include stops at the Honey Creek Demonstration farm, the Stamper project site, the CREP/319 program with the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission, Blue Thumb activities and the Thunderbird project.

Ms. Phillips stated that the Stamper project was submitted for a Conservation Innovative Grant.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, stated that the Rogers County project has been completed and that they are starting a project in Sequoyah County.

Mr. Kastl stated that they are working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on surveys of the American Burying Beetle. He provided copies of an article published in the Daily Oklahoman newspaper regarding the Highway 270 project. Mr. Kastl reported that funding for the emergency project has been cut to states.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Steve Coffman, Director, met with Risk Management on renewal of the district liability insurance policy and stated that it won't go up in cost and may be lowered.

Mr. Coffman stated that staff is working on moving the human resources and payroll to the CORE system. He reported that all districts are set up with electronic funds transfers.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported on the West Commerce Project at Tar Creek concerning a claim filed by Beachner Construction for extra compensation concerning this project. They are requesting an additional \$1,027,000.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, reported on the Turkey Creek 8 project stating that NRCS will enter into a contract in the next 30 to 45 days. He stated that land rights are a significant factor with rehabilitation projects.

Mr. Toole reported that districts have \$22 million in watershed operation and maintenance needs. The Commission has allocated \$1.3 million to districts. He reported that the Grady County Conservation District is requesting an additional part-time watershed aide.

Mr. Toole stated that the education and cost-share programs have been busy this month. He also stated that districts are requesting additional funds for Cost-share Program Year 11B.

*Administration - Assistant Director:* Mr. Pollard reported on the recent visit to Oklahoma by NRCS Chief Dave White. A ceremony was held in the Blue Room and the Governor issued a proclamation naming it NRCS Day in Oklahoma. Lt. Governor Askins was the keynote speaker at the ceremony. The Chief then attended the Turkey Creek 3 dedication which was hosted by the OACD, the Garfield County Conservation District and the NRCS. It was a first class event.

Mr. Pollard stated that this is Oklahoma Public Employee Recognition Week and staff will be participating in several planned events including a full staff meeting and luncheon following the meeting, the National Land Judging Contest practice day, and a river clean up in northeastern Oklahoma. Mr. Pollard also stated that two projects have been submitted for a Quality Oklahoma Award and a ceremony will be held this week announcing the recipients.

Mr. Pollard reported that the Oklahoma Today publication has an article on Henry Bellmon and one on the dust bowl.

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

Mr. Pollard gave the OACD report stating that staff is attending a General Conference Committee on Appropriations meeting this morning. Stewardship Week ended May 2 and OACD sent out an ad recognizing the NRCS for 75 years. Mr. Pollard stated that Mark Harrison, Public Information Officer, sent out a public service announcement by Lt. Governor Askins.

The OACD Executive Board will meet on May 6 at 1:30 p.m. at the Biltmore Hotel.

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

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, also participated in the events with Chief White and stated it was good to have him in Oklahoma. The Deputy Secretary of Agriculture will visit Oklahoma this month.

Mr. Hilliard stated that the NRCS is ready to go on the Turkey Creek 8 project. The Turkey Creek 3 dedication received quite a bit of publicity.

Mr. Hilliard stated that an open house will be held in Knox City, Texas on June 7-8 for the Plant Material Center. He stated that an all employees meeting will be held June 15-17 at the Oklahoma City Sheraton. A letter will be sent to all districts from Mr. Hilliard and Mr. Thralls inviting district employees to attend.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY**

Steve Thompson, Associate Commissioner, stated that the Department offered a voluntary buyout to its employees and around 30 people accepted the retirement offer. It is unlikely they will participate in the program that was recently passed by the legislature. He reported on legislation stating the Wheat Commission received exemption from the Central Purchasing act and the Equine Dentistry bill was signed by the Governor. Mr. Thompson stated that the puppy mills legislation was defeated but an alternative bill would create a new board and agency.

**NEXT MEETING**

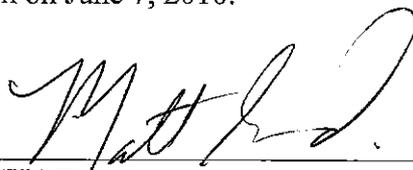
The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on June 7, 2010, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on June 7, 2010.

  
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CHAIR