

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met August 7, 2006, 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 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 3, 2006, at the front entrance of the building.

ROLL CALL

Lisa Knauf, District Services Director, took roll call and the following members were in attendance:

George Stunkard, Chair
Dan Lowrance, Vice Chair
Virginia Kidd, Secretary
Rick Jeans, 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
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Administrative Officer
Joann Stevenson, Assistant Attorney General
Virginia Gurney, State Auditor and Inspector's Office
Mike Starchman, State Auditor and Inspector's Office
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Kevin Norton, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Program Chief
Jillian Schultz, Farm Service Agency Intern
Steve Thompson, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Erin Boeckman, Capitol Network News
Jeff Packman, Journal Record
Larry Edmison, Sierra Club

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the minutes of the July 3, 2006, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, and Jeans. 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 Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve district director appointments listed as 1st Recommendation in Exhibit #1 with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

STATE AUDITOR AND INSPECTORS REPORT

Mr. Thralls introduced Virginia Gurney and Mike Starchman from the Office of the State Auditor and Inspector. Ms. Gurney presented the Commissioners with a report on agreed upon procedures for the time period of July 1, 2004 to December 31, 2005. Ms. Gurney presented an overview of their findings. She concluded by praising the Commission staff for their efficiency and professionalism in responding to each request made by the auditors. Ms. Gurney and Mr. Starchman left at 9:47 a.m.

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

PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION AGREEMENTS

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

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve amended agreements listed as (b) through (d). Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, and Jeans. 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. A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to ratify approval of request (a). Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

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

FY2007 CONSERVATION DISTRICT JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION

Lisa Knauf, District Services Director, presented Exhibit #5 indicating that 82 plans have been reviewed and she recommended approval. Mr. Jeans asked which districts have not yet completed the plans and why. Ms. Knauf indicated that each of the six districts had requested an extension due to extenuating circumstances such as staff vacancies and awaiting input from NRCS partners. A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the plans as listed. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DIVISION OF REAP FUNDS BETWEEN WATERSHED REHABILITATION, PRIORITY WATERSHED COST-SHARE AND FIELD SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Thralls presented the recommendation for division of REAP funds between watershed rehabilitation, priority watershed cost-share and field services administration as listed in Exhibit #6. Members requested to hold consideration of locally led cost-share funds until the September Commission meeting. Members also questioned if \$700,000 would be adequate for this fiscal year.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the division of REAP funds as listed in Exhibit #6 with the exception of the locally led cost-share funds. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Ms. Kidd reported that representatives from Channel 5 News in Ft. Smith, Arkansas have requested to visit the Club Lake AML site to conduct interviews of landowners and shoot footage of the restoration project. This event will take place on August 17.

Mr. Lowrance reported on attending the buffer initiative at Fort Sill in Comanche County as well as a meeting in Canadian, Texas hosted by the National Wild Turkey Federation discussing invasive species control in New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. Mr. Lowrance also reported on attending the NACD South Central Region meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas indicating that Oklahoma will host this meeting next year.

Mr. Jeans commended Robert Toole, Conservation Program Director, and Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition Executive Director, on their watershed presentation at the NACD South Central Region meeting. He also indicated that he had participated in an OACD issue team strategic planning session.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Executive Director: Mr. Thralls indicated that staff is beginning discussions on the FY08 budget priorities. On August 17, division directors will meet to review accomplishments within the strategic plan and begin budget proposal work. Mr. Thralls also reported on attending the

Governor's Executive Development Program, indicating that it was an excellent program and he enjoyed participating.

District Services: Ms. Knauf reported that District Services staff attended board meetings in Muskogee County, Coal County, Noble County and Kiamichi Conservation Districts this past month. She also attended the retirement reception for Sue Armstrong in Caney Valley Conservation District.

Ms. Knauf continues to work with several districts on personnel issues and training new staff. She also reported on facilitating the first session of the OACD Culture Issue Team as they begin to prepare their strategic plan.

Water Quality: Dan Butler, Water Quality Division Director, reported that the Environmental Protection Agency had recently made three visits to the Commission and that one more visit is scheduled in August. He also reported that staff has submitted three success stories to EPA and that there might be two more depending on negotiations between the Office of Management and Budget and EPA. If Oklahoma is allowed to count the final two success stories, it will have more documented nonpoint source successes than any other state or territory.

Abandoned Mine Land: Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Lands Program Director, yielded a portion of his time to Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director, in order for Mr. Sharp to provide a legislative update on AML re-authorization.

AML re-authorization language was removed from the Pension Reform bill and moved to the Tax Relief bill. Both the Pension Reform bill and the Tax Relief bill (raise the minimum wage and reduce estate taxes) were passed by the US House before adjourning for the August recess. The US Senate took up both bills and passed the Pension Reform bill but could not gather the 60 votes needed to close debate on the Tax Relief bill. A procedural move kept the bill on the calendar to be considered when the Senators return after Labor Day.

Mr. Kastl reported that bids would be opened today, August 7 on three AML emergency projects, maintenance on one AML emergency project and elimination of the drilling mud on the Kirk AML project in Haskell County.

Reclamation work is continuing on the O'Neal project near Sallisaw.

The pre-work conference with the low bidder (United General from Kingfisher, OK) was held at the McPheeters and the Greer Phase I project sites in Rogers County on August 3.

Information Technology: Mr. Sharp reported on Tar Creek activities stating that work continues on the West Commerce project. The contractor, Beachner Construction, has had considerable equipment problems but has made some recent adjustments resulting in an increase in daily work production. Chat placement on the Southeast Commerce project is virtually complete. The water collection system has been undergoing some re-design to adjust for site conditions. Work had begun on the construction of the pond. Final design of the Howerton project is undergoing OCC review.

Mr. Sharp reported that the IT staff has been working with the Office of State Finance on the implementation of HB 2935 which requires all state agencies to conduct a standard security risk assessment of technology-based physical and logical resources by December 1, 2006. The first phase of that process was completion of a survey of OCC IT systems. IT staff is assisting OCC administration and NRCS personnel in addressing security background checks on district and OCC personnel utilizing NRCS information technology resources.

Mr. Sharp reported that from a DCS approved list, the Geographic Information Council has selected a strategic planning consultant, Dr. Mary Jo Major, to assist it in preparing a strategic and business plan. The plan should be completed prior to the next legislative session.

Financial Management/Human Resources: Mr. Coffman reported that most of the month had been dedicated to completion and submission of the agency's FY07 budget work program. He also reported that approval was received by the Office of State Finance and that claims and payroll against the new years funding has taken place. Mr. Coffman stated that all claims for FY2006 from districts were in and that they were in the process of closing out the old fiscal year.

Conservation Programs: Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, reported on his presentation made at the NACD South Central Region Meeting titled "Communicating with Decision Makers." He discussed the development of Watershed Fact Sheets and the strategy for using them to communicate with federal, state, local and household decision makers. Washita County, Custer County and Upper Washita Conservation Districts have used the fact sheets to communicate the benefits of watershed structures to their respective County Commissioners resulting in assistance from those County Commissioners to acquire equipment for conservation district watershed O&M.

The annual Wildlife Expo is scheduled for August 25-27 at the Lazy E Arena and Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator, is again seeking assistance with staffing the Commission's Conservation Education exhibit those two days.

Mr. Toole reported that the Locally Led Cost Share Program continues to provide assistance to conservation districts and process claims for Program Year 8. Staff has been planning and preparing recommendations for the FY07 appropriations and those will be presented at the September Commission Meeting. Watershed Operations and Maintenance is an ongoing challenge with lack of dedicated resources being the limiting factor. Mr. Toole stated that we must redirect staffing and funding at the district level if we are going to catch up and keep up with the required O&M on our 2,105 structures. Currently, staff is monitoring 48 sites needing corrective action with NRCS requiring significant action on several of them. In the Rehabilitation Program, staff is about to bid the Sandstone 16A project. This project has an estimated cost of \$1,418,262. We anticipate having six rehabilitation sites under contract by the end of FY07.

Assistant Director: Mr. Pollard commended Mark Harrison, Information Officer, on the newly designed folders for the Commission. He also indicated that Mr. Harrison is working with OK.GOV and is in the process of modifying the Commission homepage.

Mr. Pollard reported on his attendance at the legislative tour hosted by Kay County Conservation District. He indicated that this tour was for legislative candidates in an effort to educate them on conservation issues.

Mr. Pollard also reported that he had preliminary meetings with NRCS and the Information Technology division as they begin working on federal computer security issues. He indicated that the federal requirements for background checks will have an impact conservation districts.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The OACD report was given by President Dan Lowrance in Clay Pope's absence. Mr. Lowrance indicated that Mr. Pope was attending a state association executive director's retreat in Colorado. Mr. Lowrance reported that OACD is continuing the development of the association's strategic plan with all issue teams having met this last month. OACD was represented at the NWTf meeting on invasive species and Mr. Jeans and Mr. Lowrance will be attending the NACD executive board meeting in Columbus, OH. The OACD executive board will meet on August 14 at the Commission office.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Kevin Norton, Assistant State Conservationist, presented members with the monthly partnership report. He indicated that Oklahoma leads the nation in Conservation Security Program approved contracts and applicants. Mr. Norton stated that the work in the Poteau River watershed was an excellent model for how a partnership works and conservation can be delivered. He indicated that it is not yet known what funding will be available for CSP in 2007.

Mr. Norton reported that Oklahoma held the first conservation easement signing ceremony in the nation for the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. The easement was established within the Fort Sill Army Base compatible use buffer area.

Mr. Norton reported that NRCS continues to detail staff to Louisiana to assist with delivering the Emergency Watershed Protection Program due to Hurricane Katrina.

USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Rod Wanger, Conservation Program Chief, introduced Jillian Schultz who is interning with FSA from Michigan. Mr. Wanger indicated that all 77 counties have received drought disaster designation. He reported that approximately 20 counties are still involved with the Emergency Conservation Program, drilling wells and cleaning out ponds.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on September 6, 2006, 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. Jeans and seconded by Ms. Kidd to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on September 5, 2006.


CHAIR