

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met June 6, 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 Mike Rooker. 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 at 8:30 a.m. on June 3, 2011, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

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

Mike Rooker, Chair  
George Stunkard, Vice Chair  
Dan Lowrance, Secretary  
Jim Grego, Member  
Matt Gard, 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 Owen, District Services Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Janet Stewart, General Counsel  
Stacey Day, Water Quality Program Senior Technical Writer  
Brooks Tramell, Water Quality Program Director of Monitoring, Assessment & Wetlands Program  
Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist  
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist  
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist  
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Program Chief  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Blayne Arthur, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate Commissioner  
Mike Talkington, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Laboratory Services Director  
Tanna Kilpatrick, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Laboratory Services Supervisor  
Keili McEwen, Office of the Governor

Ashton Mese, Office of the Governor  
Erin Boeckman, eCapitol  
Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition Executive Director  
Phyllis Stunkard, Guest  
Virginia Kidd, Guest  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Grego 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 May 2, 2011, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. 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 Mr. Gard to approve district director appointments as listed with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. 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. Gard to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITIONS**

Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director, was recognized for 20 years of service to conservation. Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist, was recognized for obtaining the Geographic Information System Professional Certificate.

## **RECOGNITION OF BLUE RIBBON AWARD RECIPIENTS**

Mr. Thralls stated that the Field and Lab Connection Project was a team effort with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF) and the Commission and subsequent winner of the Blue Ribbon Award presented during Quality Team Oklahoma Day. He stated that the project came about when personnel recognized the need for greater understanding between the OCC staff collecting water samples out in streams and the ODAFF staff analyzing the samples in the lab to produce water quality data. Those involved in the project and present at the meeting were Stacey Day, Water Quality Program Senior Technical Writer, Brooks Tramell, Water Quality Program Director of Monitoring, Assessment & Wetlands Program, Mike Talkington, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Laboratory Services Director, and Tanna Kilpatrick, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Laboratory Services Supervisor.

## **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

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

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

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

## **NACD SUMMER LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE**

The National Association of Conservation Districts Summer Legislative Conference is scheduled for July 17-19, 2011 in Washington, D.C. Mr. Thralls stated that due to over \$400,000 in budget reduction for FY12 he is not recommending staff attendance. Members concurred with the recommendation. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Grego to not send any representatives to the conference. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **DISTRICT DIRECTOR ELECTED POSITION #1**

Mr. Thralls presented information for Elected Position #1 as listed in Exhibit #5. He recommended certification of candidates in districts where only one eligible person filed a Notification and Declaration of Candidacy. Mr. Thralls also recommended that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to declare candidates receiving the highest number of votes during the elections on June 7, 2011 as elected to Position #1.

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to certify the candidates in districts where only one eligible person filed a Notification and Declaration of Candidacy as elected and to authorize the Executive Director to declare candidates receiving the highest number of votes during the elections on June 7, 2011 as elected to Position #1. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **AML EMERGENCY**

Mike Kastl, AML Program Director, stated that an emergency was declared on May 20, 2011 for the Bill McMahan 2 site in Pittsburg County. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to ratify the Declaration of Abandoned Coal Mine Emergency, Emergency No. OK 2011-01-01, Emergency Name: Bill McMahan 2. Those voting aye

were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **DISCUSSION OF THE COMMISSION'S FY12 APPROPRIATIONS AND BUDGET**

Mr. Thralls reported that the Commission received a 2.9 percent cut however, the bond payment was not held harmless so the cut to the operating budget is actually 3.7 percent. In addition, and as approved earlier in the meeting, the NRCS has reduced its Contributions Agreement for FY12 by \$100,000. The Commission will see an increase in its retirement contributions for Commission and district employees totaling approximately \$100,000. With all these reductions and increases the Commission will realize nearly a \$500,000 cut this year.

Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission has saved around \$500,000 from Commission and district employee positions being converted or held open or over the past year and rehab earnings are still holding. The Budget Advisory Committee will be meeting on June 23 and will provide recommendations to the Commission at its July meeting.

Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director, stated that they have been informed to prepare for a 20 percent between now and October 1.

### **LEGISLATION AFFECTING OCC AND DISTRICTS**

Mr. Thralls stated that four bills were passed this session affecting the Commission. HB 1170 consolidates several agencies into the Office of State Finance, including the 2 agencies providing benefits to the Commission and district employees; HB 1304 consolidates information technology with the OSF; Senate Bill 196 deals with emergencies which affects the AML and Conservation Program divisions; and Senate Bill 629 which gives statutory authority for the Commission to have general counsel.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition Executive Director, expressed his appreciation to the Commission for supporting the recent National Watershed Conference held in Oklahoma City.

Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Program Chief, reported that the Emergency Conservation Program is assisting producers affected by the recent tornadoes, drought and fires. He stated that sign-up 41 for the Conservation Reserve Program ended in April and that FSA is waiting to hear on acceptance. Mr. Wanger stated that the Livestock Indemnity Program is assisting with the loss of livestock and that 22 counties in western Oklahoma were approved for emergency grazing.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Gard attended the National Watershed Conference. He extended his best wishes to the new Area 1 member, Karl Jett. Mr. Grego wished Mr. Gard the best as he leaves his post as Area 1 member.

Mr. Lowrance expressed appreciation to Commission employees, Ben Pollard, Lisa Knauf,

Robert Toole, and Mark Harrison, for their assistance with the National Watershed Conference and he thanked the Commission for sponsoring the meeting.

Mr. Stunkard attended the National Land and Range Judging Contest and commended staff and the NRCS for a great event. He was on the OACD board when it became the primary sponsor of the event. Mr. Stunkard expressed pleasure in serving with Mr. Gard over the years.

Mr. Rooker also attended the National Land and Range Judging Contest and the National Watershed Conference. He attended the Bethel FFA banquet and received an award for the Shawnee Conservation District.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration - Executive Director:* Mr. Thralls expressed appreciation to staff for assistance with the National Watershed Conference. He attended a retirement party for Ralph Morgan, member of the Grady County Conservation District. Mr. Thralls stated that Ron Cardwell, AML Engineer, lost his home and two horses during the May tornado.

Mr. Thralls noted that the Kiowa County Conservation District will be requesting participation in the consolidation incentive program and that will be addressed in July.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf Owen, Director, reported on assisting with the National Watershed Conference.

*Water Quality Program:* Shanon Phillips, Director, stated that the program will see additional cuts in the coming months which will mean looking at a smaller 319 program.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, stated that staff is showing a site southwest of Stigler with a bid opening scheduled for June 16. Mr. Kastl detailed Senate Bill 196 stating that it removed the cap expenditure on emergencies. Mr. Kastl stated that an emergency is being declared on a site in Wilburton.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Mr. Coffman reported that the audit of Commission and water quality is winding down. He will begin work on the budget work program and allocations to districts for FY12. Mr. Coffman reported on House Bill 1170 stating that several agencies were consolidated into the Office of State Finance and the consolidation must show a 15 percent savings. This bill consolidates the Oklahoma Employee Benefits Council and the Oklahoma State Employees Group Insurance Board as well as the Department of Central Services.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported on the information technology consolidation bill stating there are more questions than answers at the present time. The State Chief Information Officer will be meeting with agency IT Directors this week and hopefully will shed some light on consolidation procedures and process.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, stated that in the interest of time he would defer to questions about the written report included in the meeting packet.

*Administration - Assistant Director:* Mr. Pollard thanked the OACD for its good work during a challenging legislative session. He stated that a written report was in the meeting packet.

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

Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that the NACD South Central Meeting is scheduled for August 7-9 in Oklahoma City and that Congressman Lucas is confirmed.

Mr. Pope stated that the federal budget will take more time as will working on the 319 program. He is very concerned with the U.S. House Ag appropriations and stated that the agreement on the debt ceiling could accelerate the development of a new Farm Bill.

Mr. Pope stated that the OACD sent out releases on the drought and that there were no dust storms due to conservation practices. An Australian broadcasting company wants to do a story about the drought and conservation. Mr. Pope also stated that the chair of the U.S. Senate Ag Committee mentioned the fact there were no dust storms in a presentation on the Senate floor.

Mr. Pope also stated that the Daily Oklahoman ran a series on Oklahoma water issues.

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

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, stated that he is still waiting on a final budget figure. He stated that the NRCS is offering a buy-out and an early out for its employees; however, the buy-out is only available to RC&D Coordinators.

Mr. Hilliard provided a written report and directed members to read page 2 which details the programs. He then reported on a landmark dedication ceremony held last week at the NRCS state office and stated that the first watershed inspector and the first project engineer attended.

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

Blayne Arthur, Associate Commissioner, reported on an animal health issue the Department faced over the past few days dealing with equine herpes virus. As a caution, one horse event was cancelled in Tulsa; however, future shows will go on.

Ms. Arthur reported on meeting with visitors from Tajikistan. She stated that the Secretary of Agriculture from Ireland will be in the state the week of June 20 and that an ag delegation from Taiwan will be visiting in September.

Ms. Arthur stated that the Department is working on ways to comply with consolidation and budget cuts. The Forestry Division is debating how to handle the federal cuts.

### **NEXT MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to change the next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission from Thursday, July 7, 2011, to Monday, July 11 in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**OFFICERS FOR FY12**

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Gard to rotate officers for FY12 as follows: Chair - Area 3, George Stunkard; Vice Chair - Area 4, Dan Lowrance; and Secretary - Area 5, James Grego. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Grego to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on July 11, 2011.



CHAIR