

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, January 7, 2008, 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 Thursday, January 3, 2008, 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  
Jana Chicoine, Financial Management and Human Resources Administrative Officer  
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  
Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator  
Sheryl Gibson, Awards and Recognition Committee Chair  
Ed Crall, North Canadian River Project Coordinator  
Joe Schneider, Eucha Project Coordinator  
Joann Stevenson, Assistant Attorney General  
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist  
DeeAnn Littlefield, Natural Resources Conservation Service Public Affairs Specialist  
Teresa Stewart, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist for  
Field Operations - Zone 3  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Steve Thompson, Associate Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and  
Forestry  
Keith Owen, Rogers County Conservation District Manager  
Robert Gibbs, Rogers County Conservation District Education Coordinator  
Holly Smith, Rogers County Conservation District Education Program Assistant

Blake McQueen, Rogers County Conservation District Education Program Assistant  
Jeff Kuhn, Payne County Conservation District Manager  
Debi Carnott, Central North Canadian River Conservation District Programs Coordinator  
Dan Sebert, Lincoln County Conservation District Director  
Mark Schlachtenhaufen, Capitol Network News  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Virginia Kidd led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2007, 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 Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard 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**

Jana Chicoine, Financial Management and Human Resources Administrative Officer, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the claims and financial statement and to delay approval of this month's P-Card purchases until the February meeting since those were not included in the packet. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **SERVICE AWARD RECOGNITION**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, recognized Mark Harrison, Information Officer, for 15 years of service to the state of Oklahoma and presented him with a certificate and a service pin.

### **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENT**

Mr. Pollard requested ratification of an amended agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service No. 68-7335-7-32 Amendment #1 to add Cottonwood 16 and increase funding by \$2,461,500 as listed in Exhibit #3. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Gard to ratify approval of the amended agreement 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 out of state travel requests as listed in Exhibit #4. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the requests as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **NORTH CANADIAN RIVER PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Dan Butler, Water Quality Program Director, presented the North Canadian River Project Implementation Plan for approval as listed in Exhibit #5. He stated this plan has been approved by the Watershed Advisory Group. The practices are identical to the Fort Cobb project. This will be a three year project. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the plan as presented. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **ILLINOIS RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Mr. Butler presented the Illinois River Watershed Project Implementation Plan as listed in Exhibit #6. He stated that the EPA provided additional monies for the project after acquiring unused funds from the states of Arkansas and Louisiana. A Watershed Advisory Group was not formed for this project because it is the same plan as approved for the previous Illinois River Priority Watershed project and the Commission only has two and a half years to use the funds. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the plan as presented. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **ADOPTION OF PERMANENT RULES FOR THE NONPOINT SOURCE CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND LOAN APPLICATIONS**

Mr. Pollard stated that the Commission approved emergency rules for the Nonpoint Source Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan applications in July 2007 and now needs to proceed with adoption of permanent rules as listed in Exhibit #7. The Commission published notice of the rule and did not receive public comments nor requests for a public hearing. Upon adoption, copies will be provided to the Governor and the legislature for approval. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the rules as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **REQUEST FROM THE LITTLE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR ADDITIONAL COST-SHARE PROGRAM PRACTICE**

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, presented a request from the Little River Conservation District to add Animal Trails and Walkways (575) to the Cost-Share Program practice list and recommended its approval. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the request as presented. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **REPORT ON THE 2007 WILDLIFE EXPO**

Mr. Thralls stated he attended the Expo this year and commended those involved for a great event. Providing a history of Commission involvement, Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator, stated that the Commission was approached by the Department of Wildlife Conservation three years ago to work with them on an expo. They wanted an exhibit that was geared toward younger kids and would be family friendly. She contacted the Rogers County Conservation District for assistance and they agreed to help. The Expo is held at the Lazy E Arena near Guthrie and approximately 50,000 people attend each year. She recognized the following people for their help with the exhibit: Keith Owen, Rogers County Conservation District Manager, Robert Gibbs, Rogers County Conservation District Education Coordinator, Holly Smith, Rogers County Conservation District Education Program Assistant, Blake McQueen, Rogers County Conservation District Education Program

Assistant and Jeff Kuhn, Payne County Conservation District Manager. It takes many volunteers for this event and those include district directors and employees, Project WET, members of the Environmental Education Coordinating Committee, high school and college teachers and students.

Mr. Gibbs stated he has been with the district for seven years. During those years, conservation education has been taken to another level. He presented a power point of the Expo activities.

After the presentation, the employees were recognized for their efforts and presented certificates of appreciation.

### **RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER**

Mr. Pollard stated that during the Commission's full staff meeting on December 3, Joe Schneider, Eucha Project Coordinator, was named the Employee of the Quarter. He called on Sheryl Gibson, Awards and Recognition Committee Chair, to present Mr. Schneider with his award.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Gard reported on attending CCA training held at OSU . He stated that the Enid Farm Show will be held January 11 and 12.

Mr. Stunkard reported that Leroy Bryan, former Shawnee Conservation District director, has suffered a stroke and asked that Leroy and his family be kept in thoughts and prayers.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration:* Mike Thralls, Executive Director, reported that 2007 started with one of the worst droughts in history and ended with being the wettest. The conservation infrastructure has been tested. Meetings with the Senate subcommittees regarding the budget have been held and it appears there is support to address storm damage. A meeting was held with the Office of State Finance including the director, assistant director, budget director and budget analyst to discuss the emergency budget request. Mr. Thralls stated that districts have had an impact because of the letters that were sent to the Governor. A meeting with Representative Bengel and the Speaker's staff was held and the reception was a little more sober.

Mr. Thralls stated that he will not be attending the NACD Annual Meeting as he will be on the program for the State No-Till Conference on February 11-12.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf, Director, reported that she has been assisting employees with W-2's and 2008 payroll issues. She attended board meetings at Pontotoc County, Kiowa County and Shawnee Conservation Districts. She continues to work with the Pontotoc County board on tax and personnel issues.

Ms. Knauf stated that applications were received for the advertised district services staff position and that interviews will be scheduled during the month.

Ms. Knauf will continue work on the OACD state meeting trade show.

*Water Quality Program:* Dan Butler, Director, reiterated words expressed about Mr. Schneider and commended him again on being named Employee of the Quarter. Mr. Schneider was responsible for putting \$1.43 million of conservation practices on the ground in the Spavinaw Creek project.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, provided copies of the FY2008 total mandatory AML distribution showing Oklahoma received \$1,845,266, which is up from \$1.5 million received last year. He will continue working to get the \$3 million now that Oklahoma is scheduled to begin receiving in 2012.

Mr. Kastl reported on a new project in Broken Arrow as outlined in the report.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Jana Chicoine, Administrative Officer, stated there was nothing to add to the written report.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported on the Tar Creek Southeast Commerce project stating that they are waiting on dry weather so fencing can be installed. He stated that the Farm Service Agency requested a tour of the area and that is being planned.

Mr. Sharp reported that the Commission's servers have been moved to the Office of State Finance Data Center.

Mr. Sharp stated that GIS Day at the Capitol is scheduled for March 12.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, provided copies of the Conservation Cost-share Program Locally Led - Program Year 8 annual report and a summary of all program years. He stated that a total of \$16 million has been circulated at the local level and that those dollars multiply four to seven times in local economic impact.

*Administration:* Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, stated that disasters were the topic at the recent OACD Area Meetings and since the meetings no new Emergency Watershed Protection Program or Emergency Conservation Program dollars have been received. He expressed frustration that Congress has yet to fund disaster relief for six of the eight declared disasters in Oklahoma. He stated that contacts continue to be made with Oklahoma's congressional delegation.

## **OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that the Association also continues to work with the congressional delegation regarding the lack of money for disasters. It also continues to monitor the Farm Bill. Mr. Pope attended the OSU roundtable to discuss the Farm Bill.

Mr. Pope stated that meetings held with legislative leadership have been good and the meetings are setting up for a good legislative session. Mr. Pope will not be attending the NACD Annual Meeting as he too will be participating in the No-till Conference. He reported that Conservation Day at the Capitol is scheduled for March 19.

Mr. Pope stated that Congressman Lucas has been invited to speak at the state meeting as well as Scott Meacham, Representative Dewitt and Senator Wyrick. With the new facility this is a great opportunity for a new agenda. The meeting will be geared towards director and employee training, and the history of conservation. Mr. Pope stated that the Noble Foundation is sponsoring the Outstanding Director award, Chesapeake is sponsoring the educator awards, and the Nature Conservancy is sponsoring the Outstanding District award. Additional awards are being looked at for the state meeting. The Monsanto company will again sponsor Stewardship Week.

The OACD newsletter was emailed last week and the policy book is being developed.

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

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, introduced 2 new employees: DeeAnn Littlefield is the Public Affairs Specialist housed in Waurika and Teresa Stewart is the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Zone 3. Members welcomed the employees to Oklahoma.

Mr. Hilliard reported that the NRCS Chief requested all Environmental Quality Incentives Program funds be obligated by December 31, 2007. He stated that if the funds are not obligated prior to a new Farm Bill, those funds will be administered under new rules.

Mr. Hilliard reported that the Tulsa County Conservation District has been awarded the National Earth Team award and he will recognize the district at the annual state meeting.

Mr. Hilliard reported on personnel changes as listed in his written report. He will be attending the Cimarron County Conservation District's dinner next week. He stated that ICS training for directors will be held at the meeting in February. This is an opportune time to discuss potential disasters and who is responsible for what.

Mr. Hilliard referenced the budget as listed on page 4 of the report. Most categories exceed or match the continuing resolution. He stated that 9,000 earmarks nationally are tied to the Farm Bill. These earmarks take away from TA allocations.

### **USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY**

No representative present.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on February 4, 2008, 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 Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Rooker to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on February 4, 2008.

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CHAIR