

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met February 4, 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 Vice Chair Virginia Kidd. She 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 March 31, 2008, at the front entrance of the building.

ROLL CALL

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

Virginia Kidd, Vice Chair
Matt Gard, Secretary
Mike Rooker, Member
George Stunkard, Member

Member Absent:

Dan Lowrance, Chair

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director
Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy 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
Darrel Dominick, Tribal Outreach Coordinator
Kim Shaw, Blue Thumb Education Coordinator
Cheryl Cheadle, Blue Thumb Coordinator
Joann Stevenson, Assistant Attorney General
Regina Switzer, Assistant Attorney General
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Program Chief
John Henry Ward, The Poultry Federation
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. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2008, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: 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. Gard 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: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

AUTHORIZE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO CERTIFY ELIGIBILITY OF CANDIDATES FOR DISTRICT DIRECTOR POSITION #1 AND TO APPROVE POLLING PLACES

A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to authorize the Executive Director to certify eligibility of candidates for District Director Position #1 and to approve polling places in those conservation districts that will be holding elections for District Director, Position #1. Those voting aye were: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director, presented the P-Card purchases summary that was omitted from the January meeting packet as listed in Exhibit #2. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the P-Card statement from the January meeting. Those voting aye were: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Coffman presented the claims, P-card summary and financial statement for the February meeting packet as listed in Exhibit #2. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the claims, summary and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

SERVICE AWARD RECOGNITION

Kim Shaw, Blue Thumb Education Coordinator, was recognized for 5 years of service to the state of Oklahoma.

STATUS REPORT THE STAMPER PROJECT

Darrel Dominick, Tribal Outreach Coordinator, provided a progress report on the 319 funded project to demonstrate a process technology for converting poultry waste to fertilizer, known as the Stamper Project (See Attachment A). This has been a joint project with the Commission, Office of the Secretary of Environment, Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the Poultry Federation, the poultry industry, and the Cherokee Hills RC&D.

PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION AGREEMENTS

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. He recommended ratification of new agreements listed as 3a and 3b. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to ratify the agreements as listed. Those voting aye were: Kidd,

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the new agreement listed as 3c. He corrected the exhibit stating that \$75,000 of the total amount is from state funds not federal. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the new agreement as listed. Those voting aye were: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

Mr. Thralls presented out of state travel requests for approval as listed in Exhibit #4. He stated that Mr. Lowrance will not be attending the NASCA meeting as listed in the exhibit. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the requests as presented. Those voting aye were: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

AMENDMENT TO THE LITTER TRANSFER PROGRAM

Mr. Thralls stated that the Attorney General's office has done extensive research in the Illinois River basin regarding bacteria in the water. He met with representatives from the Department of Agriculture and the Office of the Secretary of Environment to make adjustments to the guidelines of the litter transfer program and the areas where the Commission would pay incentives.

Dan Butler, Water Quality Director, provided copies of a two maps highlighting the litter transfer program (See Attachment B). The first map shows the areas where the Commission currently does not pay an incentive. The second map shows areas of high ground water vulnerability and very high vulnerability as defined by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

Mr. Butler recommended amendments to the litter transfer program that would make, in addition to nutrient limited watersheds, the following areas ineligible to receive incentive payments: groundwater areas east of I-35 whose vulnerability to contamination is high or very high as defined by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the amendment as presented. Those voting aye were: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Rooker attended the Cross Timbers RC&D meeting where officers were elected for the new year.

Mr. Gard attended several producers meetings for spring crop rotations. He reminded everyone to vote on Tuesday. He will be attending the Northwest Area Alliance banquet this week as well as the upcoming NACD Annual Meeting. The Farmers Union State Meeting is February 16.

Ms. Kidd attended the Enid Farm Show and reported on its success.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration: Mike Thralls, Executive Director, participated in budget meetings with the House and Senate. He attended two meetings in January and presented the Commission's performance review and budget request respectively.

Mr. Thralls will be attending the No-Till Conference on February 11-12, 2008 in Oklahoma City and will be chairing a session during the conference.

Mr. Thralls reported that is scheduled for a deposition on the Illinois River Watershed lawsuit on Thursday of this week. Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Assistant Director, was deposed in January.

Mr. Thralls stated that Joann Stevenson, Assistant Attorney General, will no longer be the Commission's liaison and introduced Regina Switzer as the Commission's new liaison with the Attorney General's office.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf, Director, conducted interviews for the District Liaison Position and offered the job to Kevin Varner. Mr. Varner comes from the County Extension office in Duncan.

Ms. Knauf has been working with attorneys on the tort claim suit in Tulsa County. She has been working on the OACD State Meeting and reported that over 38% of the directors have 5 years of service or less. There are 23 districts with 3 or more directors with five years of service or less. A session will be held at the state meeting geared towards new directors.

Water Quality Program: Dan Butler, Director, made a correction on his written report stating that under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program there are currently 454.3 acres pending contracts not 254.3.

He is excited about the Stamper Project and the reports he heard today. This project provides another solution for addressing nutrient issues in the Illinois river watershed and should benefit growers.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, stated they are still trying to get sites vegetated and are gearing up for Phase 2 of the 61st Street Project in Broken Arrow.

Staff dealt with two emergencies this past month as indicated in the written report. Mr. Kastl met with Office of Surface Mining officials from Tulsa and Alton, Illinois to discuss an acid mine drainage project. He will be attending the National AML Conference in Arizona this month.

Information Technology Division: Mike Sharp, Director, reported on Tar Creek activities stating there was a subsidence in the McNeely Project and plans are being made to repair that subsidence.

Mr. Sharp reported that Chris Dunlevy has submitted his letter of resignation and that position will be filled in the next thirty days but it will be advertised as a Network Applications Specialist.

Staff met with Homeland Security personnel to discuss GIS data and layers and how information could interface with Google Earth. They viewed a system in place by the state of Alabama. A list is being compiled for development of an Oklahoma system. Mr. Sharp stated that GIS Day at the Capitol is scheduled for March 12 from 9:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Steve Coffman, Director, has been preparing information for house and senate budget meetings and hearings.

Conservation Programs Division: Tammy Sawatzky, Deputy Director, reported working on Emergency Action Plans for high hazard sites.

Ms. Sawatzky reported on two claims from watershed rehabilitation contracts. The claim from Donald Melton on Cobb Creek 2 was denied by the Department of Central Services. A claim from Danny Wright Dozer on the Barnitz 14 site is being settled as this site required extra work due to rock.

Administration: Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, reported that staff is working with the NRCS on incident command training. Mr. Pollard stated that when there are emergencies, like the one on Sugar Creek L44 watershed dam last August, there are quite a few agencies involved and this training details how to coordinate an emergency response.

Mr. Pollard expressed his appreciation for Mr. Dominick's role with the Stamper Project. He stated that Mr. Dominick has been working with the Chickasaw Nation on natural resources issues and has developed a draft MOU for natural resource work with the tribe. Mr. Pollard also stated that guidelines are being developed for the North Canadian River water quality project within the Cheyenne/Arapaho Nation.

Staff participated in the recent Enid Farm Show.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Clay Pope, Executive Director, has been working with several partners on conservation issues. He has brought on Sarah Love to help the Association with grant-writing.

Mr. Pope expressed appreciation to Commission staff for their assistance with the state meeting. He stated that Chesapeake Energy has donated a truck to be raffled at the meeting. Every dues paying district that has at least one director registered for the meeting will receive a ticket, and then one additional ticket for every director registered.

Mr. Pope reported that Representative Chris Benge is the nominee for Speaker of the House. As session begins today there are several bills the Association will be watching. Senator Wyrick will sponsor a bill for the conservation district act changes and Representative Anderson will sponsor a bill for the Commission's emergency funding request.

After meeting with the Kiowa Tribe, Mr. Pope is happy to report that Oklahoma now has 89 conservation districts. The Tribe has formed a district and has accepted an invitation to join the OACD.

Conservation Day at the Capitol is scheduled for March 19.

USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Rod Wanger, Conservation Program Chief, reported that the State Committee toured Tar Creek sites in Picher, Oklahoma as well as areas with ice damage.

Mr. Wanger reported on programs stating that the Emergency Conservation Program is down \$60 million and Congress is not approving any new funds. He reported on sign-ups for the Livestock Compensation Program and the Livestock Indemnity Program.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, provided a written report stating that DeeAnn Littlefield has redesigned the report.

Mr. Hilliard reported on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program stating that over \$17 million has been obligated in 989 contracts. The amount obligated is 82% of the fund allocation.

He stated that the budget allocation for NRCS operations in Oklahoma has been received and it is short for this year. Staff is putting the request together and will ask for additional funds but cannot submit the request until funds are 95% obligated.

Mr. Hilliard reported on engineering events as listed on Page 3 and personnel changes as listed on Page 5. He reported that State Conservationists positions are open in Kansas, Iowa and South Carolina; however, the Florida State Conservationist is taking the South Carolina job.

Mr. Hilliard reported on attending the Enid Farm Show, the Boise City Farm Show and the Cimarron County Conservation District dinner.

Mr. Thralls questioned whether the Contributions agreement would continue for the next year and Mr. Hilliard responded that is his plan, depending on funding.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on March 3, 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 Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on March 3, 2008.

CHAIR