

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met August 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 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 July 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:

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
Kevin Varner, District Services Liaison
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician
Regina Switzer, Assistant Attorney General
Joe Maxwell, State Auditor and Inspector's Office
Samantha Bradshaw, State Auditor and Inspector's Office
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Candice Adson, eCaptiol News
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Stunkard 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 July 1, 2008, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

REVIEW OF THE AUDIT FOR PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2006 - DECEMBER 31, 2007

Joe Maxwell and Samantha Bradshaw, State Auditor and Inspector's Office, presented the Commission's audit for the period of January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2007 and provided copies of the report.

The Auditors had three objectives to achieve: Review the Commission's internal controls, the Commission's compliance with laws and regulations and any corrective action that needed to take place.

The audit found one incorrect disbursement account code, inadequate electronic data storage and access of the inventory list, and the lack of a physical inventory and data reliance. These issues have been or are being resolved.

The audit found that the Commission is in compliance with the Department of Central Services' Purchase Card procedures.

Other items noted in the audit is that the Commission did not have a cell phone policy for its state-owned phones. A policy has now been adopted by the agency.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, reported on the following resignations: Frank Rosenthal, Pushmataha and Joyce McClennen, Stephens County. He then presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Gard 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 Mr. Stunkard to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

SERVICE AWARD RECOGNITION

Leonard Moore, Water Quality Specialist, was recognized for his 25 years of service to the Conservation Commission.

COMMISSION AGREEMENTS

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented Commission agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. He recommended approval of new agreements listed as (a) through (c). After

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the amended agreement listed as (d). A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Rooker 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 an out of state travel request as listed in Exhibit #4. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the out of state travel request as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION

Kevin Varner, District Liaison, presented Joint Plans of Operation for approval as listed in Exhibit #5. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the plans as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

INCREASE TO THE 2008 OKLAHOMA ENVIROTHON TEAM ALLOCATION

Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator, requested a \$1000.00 increase to the 2008 Oklahoma Envirothon Team allocation bringing the total to \$2500.00. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the additional allocation. 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

Ms. Kidd reported on attending a meeting in Spiro to assist poultry farmers with applying for program assistance.

Mr. Stunkard reported that the Wagoner County Conservation District and the Tulsa County Conservation District re-scheduled the legislative dinner and reception from July 29 to August 14 at 7:00 p.m. He invited all members to attend.

Mr. Rooker attended the Cross-Timbers RC&D meeting on July 17.

Mr. Gard reported on a poultry litter meeting scheduled in Fairview on August 9, an RC&D meeting held in Kremlin, a canola meeting on July 19 in Enid, and the upcoming Wheatland Stocker Conference on August 28 or 29 in Enid and the Grazing Lands Conference this week in Oklahoma City. Mr. Gard stated that the Farm Bureau and the American Farmers and Ranchers are preparing

their resolutions for the next legislative session and he urged members to provide input.

Mr. Lowrance reported on attending the Oklahoma Water Law Seminar and will be participating in the regional water meetings.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration: Mike Thralls, Executive Director, reported on attending the water law seminar and stated that 30-35 district directors and employees as well as NRCS employees were chosen to participate in regional water plan meetings.

Mr. Thralls reported on attending the NACD Legislative Conference and met with members and staff of Oklahoma's congressional delegation. Topics of discussion included the watershed program, rehabilitation and the AML program.

Mr. Thralls provided copies of 2 separate articles that were printed in *The Daily Oklahoman*; one on no-till and carbon and one on water quality.

Mr. Thralls stated that the Stamper Project will have a kickoff announcement on October 16.

District Services Division: Kevin Varner, District Liaison, reported on attending board meetings as listed in the report and helping draft leave policies for conservation districts. Staff continues to input electronically budget requests received from conservation districts. The requests total \$77 million with \$65 million in new money requests. Staff has also been working on revisions to the agency's rules, the new terms of employment issues, and assisting on federal IT services to conservation districts.

Water Quality Program: Dan Butler, Director, stated that staff is gearing up for the Caddo Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program which will be a massive project.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, reported on projects as listed in the report. He then reported on a meeting he attended in St. Louis to discuss changes to the AML program rules and regulations. Laws were changed in 2006 and rules are being updated to reflect those changes.

Mr. Kastl reported that Oklahoma may be hosting the National AML Association's meeting in March 2009 as well as co-hosting the 2009 annual conference.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Jana Chicoine, Administrative Officer, referred to report for the division's activities.

Information Technology Division: Mike Sharp, Director, explained further the agreement that was approved today with the Office of Homeland Security stating it is a foundation to build a statewide data warehouse. The challenge is getting this data into a format for the general public to utilize.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, referred to the written report. He stated staff was busy with government affairs this month as depicted in the report. Under cost-share program, he reported that 189 locally led claims were processed for a total of \$322,683.62 which are tax dollars going back to the local community. He is working with an economist to find the economic impact these dollars are having to the local community.

Mr. Toole reported that staff is working to develop more stream trailers. He also stated that staff approved 65 O&M projects to 23 conservation districts for a total of \$162,428.03.

Mr. Toole reported on the Sallisaw Creek sites 15, 16 & 20 project as listed in the report as well as the Double Creek site 3 project.

Administration: Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, stated that staff is working on rule revisions due to changes to the Conservation District Act. He reported that the emergency rules for the carbon program were approved by the Governor.

Mr. Pollard reported that five CPR/First Aid training sessions have been scheduled across the state for district staff.

Mr. Pollard reported on the conservation bond stating that he attended a special meeting of the Oklahoma Capitol Improvement Authority. He believes that funds may be available by January 2009.

Mr. Pollard reported on the CREP program on Sugar and Cobb Creeks in Caddo County and stated with all the state and federal programs available for repairs in that area, staff is facing a huge challenge in educating land-owners in the area. He reported that Ed Crall is being housed in the Anadarko office to assist with FEMA and CREP work.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that the OACD Board Retreat is scheduled for August 12-13 for the purpose of developing its legislative agenda for the next session.

Mr. Pope stated that a ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for August 28 for the North Canadian River Carbon Project at Geary. He also stated that Western Farmers will again sponsor the OACD youth awards.

Mr. Pope stated that he will be meeting with Dean Bob Whitson at OSU to discuss a partnership on the carbon initiative and water quality.

Mr. Pope stated that the \$3 million for the Caddo County CREP could become a \$40 million project with match funds.

Other activities include the planning of the area meetings, an interim study sponsored by Representative Phil Richardson concerning the development below upstream flood control structures, and participation in the statewide water plan regional meetings.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, stated the Oklahoma panhandle drought continues to receive media attention as detailed in his written report.

Mr. Hilliard stated that Tallgrass RC&D Coordinator Greg Kindell has spent the last year serving in Iraq and recently received the State Department Meritorious Honor Award for his dedication, teamwork and vision with US efforts. He also stated that Jim Green is in Afghanistan working with local farmers. More information can be found at natotv.com.

Mr. Hilliard reported that the Emergency Watershed Program has received \$390 million. He encouraged conservation districts to submit projects for this program.

Mr. Hilliard reported that Jamey Wood will leave for a detail in Washington, D.C. through the month of September. Jay Martin, Soil Conservationist at Perry, has accepted a detail for August and September in Hawaii.

Mr. Hilliard will be meeting with intern students today so they can provide reports on their summer activities. He reported on addressing the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association annual meeting on the farm bill.

Mr. Hilliard stated that the NRCS will operate under a Continuing Resolution as there will be no budget until probably April.

USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY

No representative present.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Thursday, September 4, 2008 at 9:30 a.m., Deer Creek Conservation District Office, 300 South Broadway, Weatherford, Oklahoma.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

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


CHAIR