

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met October 6, 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 October 2, 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

Members absent were:

George Stunkard, 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 Assistant Director  
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director  
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director  
Lisa Knauf, District Services Director  
Sheryl Gibson, Grants Management Specialist  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy Director  
Regina Switzer, Assistant Attorney General  
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Steve Thompson, Associate Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry  
Bryan Smith, eCapitol.net  
Jeff Packham, Capitol Network News  
Paul Jackson, American Farmers and Ranchers  
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. Gard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the minutes of the September 4, 2008, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, and Rooker. 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. Rooker 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, and Rooker. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **RECOGNITION OF COMMISSION EMPLOYEES**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented the following employees for recognition: Lisa Knauf, District Services Director, for completion of the Governor's Executive Development Program for State Officials; Sheryl Gibson, Grants Management Specialist, for completion of the Certified Public Manager Program; and Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy Director, for Employee of the Quarter.

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

## **OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Mr. Thralls presented out of state travel requests for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the requests as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, and Rooker. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **COMMISSION'S FY2010 BUDGET REQUEST**

Mr. Thralls presented the Commission's FY2010 budget request for approval as listed in Exhibit #4. He stated that the priorities have changed since the September meeting because of legislation authorizing the transfer of the Gross Production Tax to the Commission's Infrastructure Revolving Fund through June 30, 2011.

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

## **MODIFICATIONS TO THE CONSERVATION BOND SPENDING PRIORITIES**

Mr. Thralls presented modifications to the Conservation Bond Spending priorities as listed in Exhibit 5. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to table action until the November meeting. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, and Rooker. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #6. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve amended agreements listed as (a) and (b). Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, and Rooker. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the new agreement listed as (c). Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, and Rooker. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **BLAINE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S JOINT PLAN OF OPERATION**

Lisa Knauf, District Services Director, requested approval of the Blaine County Conservation District's Joint Plan of Operation. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the plan. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, and Rooker. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Ms. Kidd reported on attending a land sale in Noble County as well as the Commission staff meeting.

Mr. Rooker attended the Pottawatomie County Farmers Appreciation banquet, SeptemberFest at the Governor's Mansion and the Commission's full staff meeting in Noble County. He gave a farming demonstration at Bethel Schools

Mr. Lowrance participated in the Region 5 Comprehensive Water Planning meeting.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration:* Mike Thralls, Executive Director, attended the National Association of State Conservation Agencies annual meeting along with Ms. Knauf and Kevin Varner. He hosted the full staff meeting in Noble County where the staff kicked off its State Charitable Campaign.

Staff is working on revisions to the Commission's rules which will be presented to members in the future.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf, Director, stated that all districts have delivered financial papers to auditors. She is working with four conservation districts on an agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service regarding prescribed burns.

Ms. Knauf held meetings with NRCS staff to discuss and communicate activities between the NRCS and the Commission and to discuss the long range plan process.

Personnel vacancies are being filled in Shawnee and Texas County. There are vacancies in Central North Canadian River, Woodward County and Okfuskee Conservation Districts.

Ms. Knauf stated the NASCA annual meeting was excellent.

*Water Quality Program:* Shanon Phillips, Assistant Director, provided an update on the Stamper Project as listed in Attachment A. The October 16 ribbon cutting is rescheduled indefinitely as the project is short \$450,000. Funding is being sought in both the public and private sector.

A Blue Thumb Volunteer Conference and Rally is scheduled for October 24-26 at War Eagle Resorts in Tahlequah. She invited all members to attend.

Ms. Phillips reported on the poultry litter transfer program stating that \$28,667 remains unobligated.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, stated that the annual inspectors workshop was held recently in Tulsa and stated it was an excellent meeting. Staff from the Office of Surface Mining attended the meeting and the tour. Mr. Kastl stated that the National Association of AML Programs annual conference will be held October 26-30, 2008 in Durango, Colorado.

Mr. Kastl reported on current projects as listed in his written report.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Steve Coffman, Director, stated that staff will be inputting the budget request now that it has been approved. All reporting has been completed with the Office of State Finance.

Lynn Weldon, Human Resources Specialist, will be holding insurance meetings around the state for district employees during the next 2 weeks. He commended Ms. Gibson on completion of the Certified Public Managers program.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported on Tar Creek activities stating there was a small subsidence on the West Commerce site that will be filled within the next couple of weeks. He stated that a possible AML emergency in McCurtain is being investigated by Henry Roye, AML Inspector.

Mr. Sharp updated the Commission on the Homeland Security GIS Clearinghouse grant.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, reported on watershed rehabilitation projects status and emergency action plan project status as listed in the written report. He stated that an additional 41 sites have been declared high hazard. Mr. Toole stated that the recent Wildlife Expo was bigger and better and commended Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator, and the Rogers County Conservation District for their efforts with this event.

Mr. Toole and Mr. Thralls attended a field day at the Agriculture Research Station sponsored by the Corps of Engineers to view rapid response levy breach techniques.

*Administration:* Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, stated that the Commission is a member of the Oklahoma Tribal Advisory Council. The Council held an outreach meeting in Shawnee recently and he discussed the Commission's programs and met with tribal staff.

Mr. Pollard commended Gary O'Neill, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, on his support of the Commission and its goals and the work he does at the NRCS state office.

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

Clay Pope, Executive Director, reported on attending the north central water meeting along with Mr. Thralls. He reported on the upcoming area meetings and sponsorships by Western Farmers and Chesapeake Energy. Due to the economic climate, Chesapeake is scaling back its sponsorships but will sponsor OACD at a reduced amount.

Mr. Pope participated in the Municipal League's water summit to talk about watershed protection. He is working with Garfield County on a legislative bird hunt. He is also working to find financial assistance with the National Land Judging Contest. Mr. Pope is mailing fund-raising letters to assist with OACD efforts.

Work continues with NACD on possible USDA reorganization and South Central Conservation Alliance on legislative issues.

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

Gary O'Neill, Assistant State Conservationist, reported that State Conservationist Ron Hilliard could not attend today's meeting as he is in Tulsa meeting with NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster. Staff will be meeting with the Chief on a number of issues including high hazard dams, diverting technical assistance funds and increasing financial assistance funds, and requesting funds for the Stamper Project.

Mr. O'Neill reported that the additional Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding has been received. Oklahoma obligated 1,605 contracts for \$26 million. He stated that 81 Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contracts were obligated for over \$1 million.

Mr. O'Neill stated that NRCS will be operating under a Continuing Resolution through March 6, 2009. The initial allocation will be received during the week of October 27. A hiring freeze has been initiated until an allocation is in place; however, positions advertised prior to the freeze will be filled.

Mr. O'Neill reported that the Louisiana State Conservationist contacted Oklahoma for assistance to implement the Emergency Watershed Program in the amount of \$80 million.

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

No representative present.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on November 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 Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Rooker to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, and Rooker. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

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

  
CHAIR