

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, August 13, 2012, at the Agriculture Lab Conference Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln in 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 August 9, 2012, 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
Jim Grego, Vice Chair
Karl Jett, Secretary
Mike Rooker, Area 2 Member
George Stunkard, Area 3 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, Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services Director
Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Jason Harvey, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Market Development Coordinator
Sandra Drummond, former Oklahoma Conservation Commission Member
Matt Gard, former Oklahoma Conservation Commission Member
Virginia Kidd, former Oklahoma Conservation Commission Member
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency
Bill Wilson, former Haskell County Conservation District Director
Carolyn Wilson, Guest/Spouse
Erin Boeckman, eCapitol
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the minutes of the July 2, 2012, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Jett, 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. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve district director appointments as listed with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Jett, 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. Jett and seconded by Mr. Grego to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Mr. Lowrance moved the OACD report up on the agenda due to scheduling for Mr. Pope. Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that the OETA has partnered with the Commission and the OACD to hold outreach meetings on the upcoming Ken Burn's dust bowl film. The first screening will be held in Woodward on August 16 with a reception, screening and panel discussion. Screenings in Guymon and Altus are being planned along with two in Oklahoma City and one in Tulsa. The final screening will be held on November 5 in Stillwater with NRCS Chief White being invited to attend. A screening for ag groups with Secretary of Agriculture Reese and Secretary of Environment Sherrer is planned for August 28 at the OETA studios. Mr. Pope stated that curriculum about the dust bowl is being developed for the second semester of the school year. Mr. Pope has met with a production crew who will be filming five news stories about the dust bowl which will be made into a mini-documentary to air nationwide.

Staff continues to monitor the Farm Bill. Mr. Pope thanked the Commission for approving the cost-share program today and stated that the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association wants to help get the word out about the program.

Mr. Pope stated that Senator Justice and Representative Armes are in discussions regarding a drought package for the next legislative session which may include personnel for farm bill delivery, additional money for cost-share, additional money for rural fire departments; and money to deal with invasive species.

Mr. Pope stated that the NACD South Central meeting was informational. The OACD Executive Board met during that meeting. The Board has scheduled a retreat in September. Staff is working on the area meetings and is soliciting ideas for those meetings.

Mr. Pope recognized Bill Wilson and expressed appreciation for his leadership in conservation on behalf of the OACD.

Mr. Stunkard commended Mr. Pope for his presentation on the Field Office of the Future during the South Central Meeting as did Ron Hilliard, NRCS State Conservationist.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

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

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

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

FY2013 JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION

Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director, presented FY2013 Joint Plans of Operation for approval as listed in Exhibit #5. A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the plans as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DECLARATION OF AML EMERGENCY

Mike Kastl, AML Program Director, stated that an Abandoned Coal Mine Emergency designated McAlester Expo E Gate Emergency was declared and approved prior to the meeting as listed in Exhibit #6. He recommended ratification of the emergency. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to ratify the emergency as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CO-SPONSORSHIP OF EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator, recommended that the Commission co-sponsor the following events in which the Commission participates annually:

- a. 4-State Ecosystem Workshop, September 20-23, 2012, Farmington, Missouri.
- b. 2012 Wildlife Expo, September 28-30, 2012, Lazy E Arena, Oklahoma City.
- c. Oklahoma Environmental Education Expo, February 1, 2013, Oklahoma City.

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Jett to co-sponsor the events as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

LOCALLY LED COST SHARE PROGRAM - PROGRAM YEAR 14 GUIDELINES

Mr. Thralls stated that due to the drought conditions in the state it is important to make financial assistance available to conservation districts to assist producers. He thanked Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, and his staff for preparing Program Year 14 of the locally led cost-share program.

Mr. Toole presented the Program Year 14 Guidelines as listed in Exhibit #7. He stated that this program year totals \$1.4 million and is similar to Program Year 13 with a few exceptions:(1) OCC is offering solar pump panels as a standard practice and (2) pipeline and water wells are limited to livestock use only as the recreational component has been removed. Allocations to districts are based on the district's budget requests.

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

DISCUSSION OF USDA AND STATE DROUGHT RELIEF ACTION

Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission is working with the Office of Emergency Management on drought issues and that Mr. Toole is the Commission's liaison to that agency. Mr. Toole is fielding water release questions and issues from districts. The cost-share program approved today will provide assistance to producers.

Ron Hilliard, Natural Resource Conservation Service State Conservationist, stated that the NRCS can assist producers with drought through Environmental Quality Incentive Program contract modifications. The NRCS has applied for extra funds and should those be approved funds would be available to assist with livestock watering such as pipelines, water storage facilities, etc. Mr. Hilliard stated that producers can apply to hay and graze Conservation Reserve Program acres and that the WRP, Conservation Reserve Program, and Wildlife Incentive Program acres can also be accessed for emergency grazing

Mr. Toole stated that the state has a Drought Management Plan from 1997 in place. He stated that because of recent wildfires the OCC provided the OEM with locations of watershed structures for firefighting purposes.

Mr. Toole stated that the OCC is receiving calls from districts regarding release of water from watershed structures. He stated that a model Release of Water form has been modified and that when such a request to release water is received the district should make sure all users downstream sign off on the request. The Commission will also be sending guidance to districts to not open the gates during annual inspections or repairs in case there is a failure in getting the gates closed. This recommendation will remain until the drought has broken. Mr. Toole gave an example of a landowner in Hughes County that has opened the gate which is now stuck open, all the water has drained out, and he wants the district to fix it. He also stated that the Oklahoma Water Resources

Board can issue an administrative order to release water but would probably deny any request unless water is running into the structure.

RECOGNITION OF BILL WILSON

Mr. Thralls stated that it is an honor to recognize Bill Wilson, former director of the Haskell County Conservation District, former President of the OACD, former president of the National Association of Conservation Districts, and founding member of the National Watershed Coalition, for his service to the conservation partnership. Members expressed their appreciation to Mr. Wilson for his wisdom and leadership. Former members Virginia Kidd, Matt Gard and Sandra Drummond also expressed admiration and appreciation to Mr. Wilson for his longtime commitment to conservation. Mr. Wilson was then presented an official Commendation from the Commission. A luncheon will be held following adjournment.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency, provided a written report on FSA programs with highlights of the drought and recent wildfires. He reported that 100,000 acres had burned as of August 1.

Mr. Wanger stated that under the Emergency Conservation Program each county committee applies for funds and implements funding requests. The program can assist with water wells, tanks and pipelines. The FSA has sent in a request for approval of a water hauling practice which would assist producers hauling water to livestock. Mr. Wanger stated that under the Conservation Reserve Program producers could sign for haying and grazing beginning July 1 and that over 60,000 acres were signed up in July .

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Rooker and Mr. Stunkard reported on attending the NACD South Central meeting and stated it was a very good meeting. Mr. Rooker also attended the Farm Bureau board tour of the North Canadian River project.

Mr. Jett reported on attending a meeting regarding an Ogallala irrigation water plan. A final draft will be available this week. He stated that his area of the state would need 21" of rain to get back to normal.

Mr. Lowrance attended the NACD Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. He also met with Oklahoma's congressional delegation and staff and urged them to allow the Farm Bill to be heard on the House floor.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration - Executive Director: Mr. Thralls participated in a Farm Bureau board tour hosted by the Commission and the OACD. He thanked the Water Quality Program staff for assisting with this successful tour, the NRCS for assistance with the rain simulator demonstration and the Central North Canadian River Conservation District for hosting the dinner. Mr. Thralls stated that

Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese would like to view the rain simulator and a demonstration is being planned in Oklahoma City.

Mr. Thralls will be participating in the dust bowl screening event in Woodward this week. Other screenings are being planned in Guymon and Altus, with a finale on November 5 in Stillwater.

Mr. Thralls and Mr. Toole traveled to the Dallas, Texas to see Larry Caldwell be inducted as a fellow in the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf Owen, Director, stated that a written report was in the meeting packet and then yielded for questions.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Director, gave an update on the ARRA projects with OU and OSU stating that money had been turned back from their projects. In order to utilize the returned funds one of the streambank restoration projects has been expanded. This project will be completed by September 30.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, thanked the NRCS for assisting with engineering design of AML sites.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Mr. Coffman stated that a written report was in the meeting packet and then yielded for questions.

Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services: Mike Sharp, Director, stated that a written report was in the meeting packet and then yielded for questions.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, stated that a written report was in the meeting packet and then yielded for questions.

Administration - Assistant Director: Mr. Pollard thanked the Water Quality Program staff for hosting the Conservation Leadership Class recently. The next meeting of this class will be in the Woodward area in September. Mr. Pollard reported that Janet Stewart, General Counsel, has been selected as a member of the Ag Leadership Class which is a two year program.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, provided a written report. He noted personnel changes stating that Joe Buford, currently Supervisory Soil Conservationist in Utah, has been selected as the new Resource Conservationist in the State and that Joy Martin, currently the DC at Pawnee, has been selected on the Programs staff as the Resource Conservationist (Easement Programs). All summer NRCS student interns are back in school.

Mr. Hilliard stated that the rain simulator demonstration will be held at all OACD Area Meetings.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

Jason Harvey, Market Development Coordinator, stated that the Department is collaborating with jeweler B.C. Clark on its Pray for Rain campaign. Mr. Harvey stated that 122,407 acres have been lost to wildfires recently which would include the loss of fences and livestock.

Mr. Harvey stated that the Department's Hay Directory is available to producers needing hay.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Monday, September 10, 2012, 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. Grego and seconded by Mr. Rooker to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on September 10, 2012.


CHAIR