

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met February 4, 2010, at the Agriculture Building Board Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman Matt Gard. 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 on February 2, 2010, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

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

Matt Gard, Chair  
Mike Rooker, Vice Chair  
George Stunkard, Secretary  
Dan Lowrance, Member

Members absent:

Virginia Kidd, 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, Information Technology Director  
Lisa Knauf, District Services Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Janet Stewart, General Counsel  
Lynn Weldon, Human Resource Specialist  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy Director  
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Mike Wofford  
J.T. Winters, Woodward County Conservation District Director  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Rooker led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2010, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, 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. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve district director appointments as listed with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. 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. He also provided a summary of the bond payment to accompany Exhibit #2. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

Lynn Weldon, Human Resource Specialist, was recognized for 15 years of service to the state of Oklahoma.

## **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. He recommended approval of the new agreement listed as (a). A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the new agreement as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

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

## **COST-SHARE PROGRAM YEAR 11B AVERAGE COSTS AMENDMENTS**

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, presented amendments to Cost-share Program Year 11B average costs as listed in Exhibit #5. He stated the costs are current NRCS costs. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the amendments. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **COST SHARE PROGRAM YEAR 12 SPECIAL REQUESTS**

Mr. Toole represented the following special requests from conservation districts for Cost-share Program Year 12 and recommended approval:

- a. Beaver County to add Pumping Plan (533) for solar pumps
- b. Caney Valley to add Mullin to Pest Management (595)
- c. Love County to use Pipelines (516) as a stand alone practice
- d. Noble County to add the following components to Brush Management (314):
  1. Cutting & Spraying <30% canopy - \$88.91 / AC
  2. Cutting & Spraying >30% canopy - \$171.30 / AC
  3. Chemical Brush Control - all other chemicals - \$28.37 / AC
  4. Individual Plant Treatment - chemical - \$28.50 / AC
- e. Noble County to increase average costs on the following components to Brush Management (314):
  1. Mechanical <30% canopy - \$104.32 / AC (this includes stacking)
  2. Mechanical >30% canopy - \$240.54 / AC (this includes stacking)

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the requests. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **STIMULUS FUNDS REPORT**

Mr. Pollard provided a quarterly report of stimulus funds being managed by the Conservation Commission listed as Exhibit #6.

## **GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATION FOR FY2011**

Mr. Thralls presented the Governor's budget recommendation for the Conservation Commission for FY2011 as listed in Exhibit #7. The Governor is recommending an additional 3% cut for the Commission and also for the agency to be consolidated with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. The agency will begin the new fiscal year down about \$1 million from last year. Mr. Thralls is hopeful that the conservation bond payment will be made through appropriations by the legislature.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Thralls stated that an amended agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service No. 68-7335-9-23 was submitted for approval after the agenda had been posted. The agreement is being amended to return \$750,000. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the amended agreement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Lowrance attended the retirement party for Larry Caldwell and stated it was a great event.

Mr. Stunkard stated that the final inspection for Kadashan 2 was held and that the local contractor did a great job.

Mr. Rooker attended an RC&D meeting.

Mr. Gard attended the Enid Farm Show and the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting. He will be speaking at the upcoming No-Till Conference and will attend a legislative event hosted by the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration - Executive Director:* Mr. Thralls reported on a media event held at the State Capitol to highlight the de-listing of four streams from the 404(b) list. He thanked Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director, for assistance with the event as well as OACD Vice President Kim Farmer.

Mr. Thralls will be attending the upcoming No-Till Conference. He reported that J.D. Strong has been named interim director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board while its director takes a leave of absence to assist with water issues overseas.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf, Director, has been assisting districts with tax issues, W-2's and payroll. She has been working on the grant received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ms. Knauf stated that vacant district positions are being filled on a case-by-case basis.

*Water Quality Program:* Shanon Phillips, Director, also reported on the de-listing media event. She stated that the program wants to showcase 9 streams in the state to de-list with anticipation that more will be added in the coming year. Ms. Phillips was questioned about the health of the Oklahoma River and stated that the City of Oklahoma City is open to ideas to implement practices to help the river.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, stated that the program has denied the low bid for the Bronson project as listed in the report. He does not feel the contractor has the equipment to get the job done.

Mr. Kastl stated that the President's budget zeroes out the emergency funding. He then introduced Ron Cardwell as the new engineer.

Mr. Kastl thanked Janet Stewart, General Counsel, for her assistance with the rules hearing and revisions to the rules.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Steve Coffman, Director, has been compiling data for the legislative staff and the Governor's office as they prepare for the legislative session. Big changes have been made in the CORE system.

Mr. Coffman stated that a 2-year water quality audit was completed. He also reported that staff sent out 900 1099's.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported that the USDA will acquire new aerial photography for Oklahoma this year in late spring/early summer. The state has applied for stimulus funds to assist with broadband in under-served areas of the state and the Commission is assisting with the mapping for this project. An email will be sent to all district to help in identifying the type of broadband service available in the area.

Conservation Day at the Capitol is March 8 and GIS Day at the Capitol is March 10.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, stated that watershed rehabilitation and construction continues. He reported that a pre-bid was held for Big Wewoka in Seminole County. The Turkey Creek 3 site contract is complete and staff is working on getting Turkey Creek 8 site cleared.

*Administration - Assistant Director:* Mr. Pollard stated that a rule hearing was held for comments on the prescribed fire indemnity fund. The final rules will be brought to the Commission for approval.

Mr. Pollard thanked Mr. Stunkard for his work with the OETA on the Kadashan watershed story. Work is continuing on the upcoming OACD state meeting. Mr. Pollard welcomed Gary O'Neill back to the state after his 3 month detail in Washington, D.C. NRCS Chief White has been invited to Oklahoma and he may be invited to the dedication of the Turkey Creek 3 site.

#### **OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY**

Mr. Gard welcomed Steve Thompson, Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Mr. Thompson stated his appreciation for including Secretary of Agriculture Terry Peach in the media event at the Capitol for the stream de-listings

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

Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that the Governor's recommendation of consolidation is bad news. He stated that conservation will have to take its fair share of budget cuts but that the savings from consolidation is less than \$100,000. It would put at risk the NRCS dollars the state is receiving.

The state meeting is scheduled for February 21-23 and Congressman Lucas will be the opening session keynote speaker. The luncheon will be attended by 3 of the 4 gubernatorial candidates and NCS Chief White has been invited. The new NACD executive director will attend as well as Vice President Earl Garber.

Conservation Day at the Capitol is March 8. Work continues with the Western Farmers Electronic Coop on the carbon program.

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

Gary O'Neill, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, reported that an allocation of \$19,889,384 to support the Environmental Quality Incentives Program was received in Oklahoma. He reported on the Conservation Stewardship Program stating that 411 contracts have been selected for pre-approval.

Mr. O'Neill stated that he served a 3 month detail in Washington, D.C. and stated that Oklahoma is carrying the load for ARRA funds.

Mr. O'Neill stated that 14 employees retired at the end of the year and that 38% of the workforce can retire in the next few years.

Mr. O'Neill stated that the President's budget zeroes out the watershed program and the RC&D program. The CTA funding is level and the Stewardship Program received a funding increase.

Mr. O'Neill stated that staff is looking at EWP damage from the recent ice storm.

**USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY**

No representative present.

**NEXT MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to hold the next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, March 8, 2010 in the Governor's Large Conference Room, Second Floor State Capitol Building, 2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on March 8, 2010.

  
CHAIR