

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met December 6, 2010, at the Agriculture Building Board Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Chairman Mike Rooker. 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 December 3, 2010, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

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

Mike Rooker, Chair  
George Stunkard, Vice Chair  
Dan Lowrance, Secretary  
Jim Grego, Member  
Matt Gard, 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  
Ron Cardwell, Engineer  
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director  
Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Janet Stewart, General Counsel  
Cheryl Cheadle, State Blue Thumb Coordinator  
Jean Lemmon, Blue Thumb QA Officer  
Kevin Gustavson, Blue Thumb Low Impact Development Educator  
Kim Shaw, Blue Thumb Education Coordinator  
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician  
Jana Chicoine, Administrative Officer  
George Moore, Watershed Technician  
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician  
Eldon Merklin, Cost-share Program Coordinator  
Ed Crall, Special Project Supervisor  
Tracy Reeder, AML Inspector  
Gene Spurlock, AML Inspector  
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist  
Steve House, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Vice President  
George Fraley, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Joe Parker, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Steve Thompson, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate  
Commissioner  
Jeanette Nance, Office of the Governor  
Ed Fite, Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission Executive Director  
Steve Randall, Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission Chairman  
Virginia Kidd, LeFlore County Conservation District Director  
Delia Haak, Illinois River Watershed Partnership Executive Director  
Mike Wofford  
Clint Sloan, eCapitol.net  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Grego 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 November 1, 2010, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Gard, 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. Grego and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve district director appointments as listed with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Gard, 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. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Grego to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **RECOGNITION OF JEANETTE NANCE, GOVERNOR'S LIAISON**

Commission members and staff recognized Jeanette Nance, Governor's liaison, for her service to the Commission.

### **RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEES**

Jean Lemmon, Blue Thumb QA Officer, was recognized for 10 years of service to the state.

Kevin Gustavson, Blue Thumb Low Impact Development Educator, was recognized for being named the Employee of the Quarter during the September 2010 full staff meeting.

## **RECOGNITION OF THE BLUE THUMB PROGRAM.**

Blue Thumb Program Staff Cheryl Cheadle, Jean Lemmon and Kim Shaw were recognized for receiving the Golden Paddle Award from the Illinois River Watershed Partnership recently. Dr. Delia Haak, Executive Director of the partnership, was introduced and then introduced Steve Randall, Chairman of the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission and Ed Fite, Executive Director. Dr. Haak provided an overview of the partnership noting that 5 members of her 30 member governing board are from Oklahoma.

## **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

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

## **OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Mr. Thralls presented travel requests as listed in Exhibit #4. Mr. Thralls recommended ratification of the request listed as (a) since it was previously approved by Chairman Rooker. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Grego to ratify approval of (a). Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the request listed as (b). Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **FINAL ALLOCATIONS TO DISTRICTS FOR FY2011**

Mr. Thralls stated that in July 2010 the Commission made a six month allocation to districts for FY11 to determine the budget situation. At that time each district took an \$1150 cut and each board determined where that cut would be made. Staff is recommending final allocations to districts for FY11 as listed in Exhibit #5.

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the final allocations to districts for FY2011 as listed. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Grego attended the Area 5 meeting and Mr. Lowrance attended the Area 4 meeting. Mr. Rooker attended all five area meetings.

Mr. Grego stated that his district is finalizing the purchase of a new building.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration - Executive Director:* Mr. Thralls attended an interim study last week to discuss Government Modernization sponsored by Representative Jason Murphey. At that meeting the Oklahoma Council on Public Affairs recommended that the water quality divisions of the Commission, Department of Agriculture, and the Water Resources Board consolidate to the Department of Environmental Quality.

Mr. Thralls stated that Jim Reese has been named Secretary of Agriculture. He was serving as executive director of the USDA-Farm Service Agency when the first Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program project was implemented in cooperation with districts and the Commission. Most recently he served as policy advisor to the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Mr. Thralls provided members with a copy of a letter from the Kiowa County Conservation District board requesting that they be considered for the consolidation incentive funds. The Kiowa County Conservation District and the Mountain View Conservation District consolidated effective December 1, 2009 prior to the time that the consolidation incentive was put in place. Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director, stated that the two boards had been in discussions for over a year and were already sharing resources with the district manager and the watershed technician. This experience created an atmosphere of trust that made consolidation the desire of both districts.

Mr. Thralls stated that the budget and allocation committee will be meeting this month to begin discussions on performance based allocations.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf Owen, Director, reported on training for new district employees in East Woods County, Kiowa County, Payne County, Pittsburg County and Caney Valley Conservation Districts.

Mrs. Knauf Owen is working with districts on IRS changes related to payroll taxes. She is gathering information for the budget and allocation committee meeting regarding performance based allocations.

Mrs. Knauf Owen provided members with results from a survey handed out at all five area meetings.

*Water Quality Program:* Shanon Phillips, Director, stated that the water quality program has had many successes this past year and she thanked the NRCS and the districts for their work as the success could not be made without their partnership.

Ms. Phillips stated they are waiting on final approval of the Oklahoma/Illinois River Watershed based plan and thanked the Oklahoma Scenic River Commission for its input. Ms. Phillips is waiting to hear from the EPA regarding additional special funds. She stated that December 14 is the date for the Quarterly Urban Stream Workshop being held in El Reno.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Ron Cardwell, Engineer, reported on two active sites. The Shouse-251 in Rogers County is a 22 acre site nearing completion and the Farley-085 in Sequoyah County is a 48 acre site that should be completed by mid-January. The

Azbill-246 in Roger County (Oologah) should start construction in early January. Mr. Cardwell stated that the Reeves Phase 2 project is 80 acres and bids will be opened next week. The 18 acre Peevyhouse project will be advertised next week and the McSpadden 15 acre site is being designed.

Mr. Cardwell stated that staff will be reviewing proposals for aerial surveying of the Northeastern Oklahoma State University - Broken Arrow Campus on an 80 acre site near the Creek Turnpike.

Mr. Cardwell stated that staff will be working with Northeastern Oklahoma State University - Broken Arrow Campus on an 80 acre site near the Creek Turnpike.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Mr. Coffman stated that staff will be updating the allocation orders for districts to reflect the final allocations approved today. Staff also completed benefits information for health insurance for distribution to districts.

Mr. Coffman stated that work is in progress to change from Chase to Bank of America for the credit cards.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, stated that staff completed the Information Technology Assessment Survey. Staff moved files to the new servers and moved all equipment into the new data center. He commended Nick Huber for work with this project. Mr. Sharp stated that an upgrade will be made to the web mail system and districts will notice a change.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, reported that the property buyouts in the City of Kingfisher with bond funding are beginning. The Commission will be the owner of these properties until the bond is paid off. The budget is set at \$2.5 million with any remaining funds directed for a flood warning system.

Mr. Toole reported on the cost-share program stating that some Program Year (PY) 11B funding has been turned back and that PY12 has been completed. Remaining funds in these two program years may be used for PY13.

Mr. Toole recognized Janet Stewart, General Counsel, for her work in clearing land rights for watershed rehabilitation projects. Five more contracts have been approved for construction management. The Rehabilitation Assessment Project is going well and he recognized the Watershed Technicians for their work.

Mr. Toole reported on operation and maintenance stating that the first ever watershed aide workshop will be held on December 14. He stated there are six watershed aides in place and five more are needed. Operation and maintenance repairs continue.

*Administration - Assistant Director:* Mr. Pollard stated that the Deer Creek Conservation District hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for Crowder Lake project. It is a \$5 million contract to rehabilitate the dam on property where Southwestern Oklahoma State University is the principal landowner.

The Awards and Recognition Committee provided a gift to each Commission member. Mr. Pollard stated that when you look at the dollars coming to the Commission for conservation, programs are being delivered with fewer people than comparable agencies. He thanked the members for their service and employees for their work.

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

Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that 2010 has been a good year with more money for programs coming to Oklahoma than ever before. He stated that 2011 will have its challenges.

Mr. Pope stated that the area meetings went well and he thanked the staff for their help. The state meeting planning is underway and asked that anyone present feel free to contact him with ideas for the meeting.

Mr. Pope stated that the Prairie Chicken Initiative is moving forward. He stated that the US Fish and Wildlife Service provided equipment to the Dewey County Conservation District to assist with the initiative.

Mr. Pope attended the Crowder Lake groundbreaking at the Deer Creek Conservation District.

Mr. Pope stated that Sarah Pope and Amanda Ewing have been asked to make a presentation on the EcoPass program and the carbon initiative during the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting. Regarding the carbon initiative, he stated that over 25,000 acres have been enrolled.

Mr. Pope stated that a teleconference with NRCS Chief White is scheduled to discuss the Farm Bill programs delivered by districts and the NRCS.

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

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, reported on attending a coordinating meeting in Fort Smith, Arkansas last week to discuss the Illinois River/Eucha Spavinaw Initiative.

Mr. Hilliard stated that the NRCS will be operating under a continuing resolution through December 12. He reported that funds for the Conservation Security Program will be released and participants are required to let NRCS know if they want payments this year or next.

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

Steve Thompson, Associate Commissioner, also stated that Jim Reese is the new Secretary of Agriculture. He stated that State Forester John Burwell will be retiring January 1 and that George Geissler is the new Director of the Forestry Services Division. Blayne Arthur has been named Director of the Agriculture Communications, Outreach and Agritourism section of the Market Development Services Division. She will remain as Social Media Coordinator. Mr. Thompson stated that Lori Peterson has resigned her post at the Oklahoma Farm Bureau to become the executive director of the Railroad Association.

**RECOGNITION OF JANA CHICOINE**

Jana Chicoine, Administrative Officer, is retiring effective January 1, 2011. She was recognized for her capable and faithful service to the Commission.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Tuesday, January 4, 2010, 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. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Gard to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on January 4, 2011.

  
CHAIR