

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met May 7, 2007, in the Oklahoma City Zoo's Conservation Education Center, 2102 N.E. 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman George Stunkard. 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 May 3, 2007, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

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

George Stunkard, Chair  
Dan Lowrance, Vice Chair  
Virginia Kidd, Secretary  
Matt Gard, Member  
Rick Jeans, Member

Commission staff signed in were:

#### Administration

Mike Thralls, Executive Director  
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Darrel Dominick, Tribal Outreach Coordinator  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

#### Water Quality

Dan Butler, Water Quality Program Director  
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Assistant Director  
Greg Kloxin, Senior Technical Writer  
Monty Ramming, Fort Cobb Project Coordinator  
Brooks Tramell, Monitoring Coordinator  
Ben Berry, Water Quality Specialist  
Jeannette Lamb, Water Quality Specialist

#### Financial Management and Human Resources

Jana Chicoine, Financial Management and Human Resources Administrative Officer  
Lynn Weldon, Human Resources Specialist  
Karen Potts, Accountant  
Sheryl Gibson, Grants Accountant

#### District Services

Lisa Knauf, District Services Director

#### Conservation Programs

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director

Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator  
Eldon Merklin, Cost-share Program Coordinator  
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician  
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician  
George Moore, Watershed Technician

Information Technology

Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director  
Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist

Abandoned Mine Land

Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director  
Dianne Ireton, Systems Coordinator  
Chuck Nuttle, Project Inspector  
Gene Spurlock, Project Inspector

Others in attendance were:

Joann Stevenson, Assistant Attorney General  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist  
Jan Kunze, OGE Energy Corporation Representative  
Mike Rooker, Area 2 member elect  
Dianne Jeans, spouse of Rick Jeans  
Janet Merklin, spouse of Eldon Merklin  
Heather Warlick, Capitol News

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2007, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR 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. Gard to approve district director appointments listed as First Recommendation in Exhibit #1 with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. 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. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **SERVICE AWARD RECOGNITION**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director and Dan Butler, Water Quality Program Director, recognized Monty Ramming, Fort Cobb Project Coordinator, for his five years of service to the Commission. Ed Crall, Fort Cobb Education Coordinator, was not present but was recognized for five years of service as well.

## **PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION AGREEMENTS**

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the amended agreement listed as (d). A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve the amended agreement as presented. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Mr. Thralls presented out of state travel requests as listed in Exhibit #4. He recommended ratification of request (a) and approval of requests (b) through (g). A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the requests as presented. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **ATTENDANCE AT THE NACD SOUTH CENTRAL MEETING**

The National Association of Conservation Districts South Central Meeting will be held on July 26-28, 2007 in Catoosa, Oklahoma. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Ms. Kidd to approve five Commission members to attend. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **DECLARE AN EMERGENCY AT BARNITZ CREEK SITE 14 WATERSHED REHABILITATION CONSTRUCTION PROJECT**

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Division Director, appeared before the Commission to request that members declare an emergency at Barnitz Creek Site 14 Watershed Rehabilitation Construction Project. He stated that the contractor, Danny Wright Dozer & Pipeline, Inc., started the project and then ceased performance as of March 29, 2007, due to a dispute in contract specifications. The dam has been excavated down to the principal spillway drain pipe and a new drain pipe has been installed. The principal spillway tower has not been reconstructed and the dam has not been backfilled. The existing contract with Mr. Wright is being closed by the Department of Central Services and we must negotiate a new contract to complete the project. Because the dam is classified as high hazard and is at risk of breaching, particularly with the heavy rains being experienced, the Commission needs to declare an emergency so we can expedite a new contract. Due to heavy rains in the area, the site is being monitored daily and the Dewey County Conservation District is in the process of activating their Emergency Action Plan.

After discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Gard to declare an emergency at Barnitz Creek Site 14 watershed rehabilitation construction project. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **WATER QUALITY SUCCESS STORIES FEATURED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

Dan Butler, Water Quality Program Director, presented three Oklahoma water quality success stories that are posted on the web page of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Sandy and Yellowstone Creeks were recognized for education and demonstration efforts resulting in turbidity improvements; the Lake Creek project was noted for improvement of surface and ground water quality; and the Beaty Creek project was listed for significant reduction of bacteria and phosphorous loading.

## **PRESENTATION ON SCIENCEFEST AT THE OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO**

Jan Kunze, OGE Energy Corporation and Oklahoma County Conservation District director, and Karla Beatty, Education Coordinator, provided an overview of ScienceFest. Ms. Kunze stated that ScienceFest reaches between 4000 and 5000 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students annually across the state for hands on activities that contribute to conservation. The program was started six years ago in downtown Oklahoma City with 1200 students.

Ms. Beatty stated that this program has reached over 25,000 students and 1000 volunteers. Volunteers provide activities for water, wildlife, soils, and alternative energy. The program also includes a fin and feather show.

## **COMMENDATION TO JAN KUNZE, OGE ENERGY CORPORATION**

Commission staff presented a commendation to Ms. Kunze for her work with ScienceFest activities over the years and expressed appreciation for her work.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Pollard called on Darrel Dominick, Tribal Outreach Coordinator, and Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director, to discuss a request from the Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Council. Mr. Pope stated that the OACD executive board voted to become a member of this Council. The Council will bring organizations together to promote prescribed burn for invasive species control and pasture health. The Council would purchase equipment for burns and place it in conservation district offices for rent. Mr. Dominick stated that he has been asked to serve on this Council and work with tribes to obtain tribal representation on the Council. The first meeting is scheduled for June 11.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Ms. Kidd to join the Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Council. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Gard reported on attending conservation district directors day at the capitol, the Governor's Ag Conference in Weatherford, and an agri-tourism business event. He stated that Brent Kisling, USDA-Rural Development, was also in attendance and presented a check in the amount of \$99,000 to kick-off this agri-tourism event.

Ms. Kidd attended directors day at the capitol, Agriculture Day activities in Poteau, and the Governor's Boots, Bandanas, and BBQ.

Mr. Lowrance reported on attending the OSU Division of Agriculture Advisory Council Meeting for discussions on agriculture and water issues in Oklahoma. He stated that the Attorney General's office approached the OSU Division of Agriculture regarding agriculture issues.

Mr. Stunkard attended the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program signing ceremony and the National Land and Range Judging Contest. He commended the Commission and the OACD staffs for their work with these events.

Mr. Jeans attended the CREP signing ceremony and he commended staff on the event, particularly Water Quality Program staff members, Dan Butler and Shanon Phillips.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration:* Mr. Thralls credited Dan Butler and Shanon Phillips for their work with the first Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement in the state. The Commission also jointly sponsored a tour of the Commission's demonstration farm in Delaware County with the Tulsa Municipal Utility Authority. Mr. Thralls commended Cheryl Cheadle, Statewide Blue Thumb Coordinator, for her work with the tour.

Mr. Thralls congratulated Ms. Beaty and Ms. Kunze on their work with the successful ScienceFest program. He then congratulated Mike Rooker, newly appointed Area 2 Commission member from the Shawnee Conservation District. Mr. Rooker will replace Mr. Jeans beginning July 1. Mr. Thralls expressed his appreciation to Mr. Jeans for his contributions to the Commission and conservation issues statewide.

Mr. Thralls welcomed Janet Merklin, wife of Eldon Merklin, Cost-share Program Coordinator, stating that she is currently battling cancer. He also mentioned that the wife of George Moore, Watershed Technician, is also battling cancer. Mr. Thralls is also recovering from cancer surgery and he expressed his appreciation of the thoughts and prayers he received as well as the care he received at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

*District Services Division:* Lisa Knauf, Director, assisted with Envirothon by critiquing student presentations. She also attended the Billy B Concert in Rogers County with 2000 fourth grade students and made a presentation at Deer Creek Elementary school in Edmond to the OACD Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Knauf worked with the OACD in securing a new location for the 2008 state meeting. It will be held at the Reed Conference Center in Midwest City. She is also assisting conservation districts with audits stating that audits may be a topic for the next 10-minute guide series.

Ms. Knauf has been requested by a district to perform a field office review and staff is beginning work on this review.

*Water Quality Program:* Dan Butler, Director, reported that staff has finalized draft watershed plans for projects at Elk City and the North Canadian River and will submit them for 319

grants. The Elk City lake is a PL-566 structure. It is a recreation lake and was listed on the 303(d) list for bacteria. The City approached the Commission and will provide matching funds for this project.

Mr. Gard requested an update on the BMP's contract. Mr. Butler stated that information compiled by Commission staff has been turned over to the Environmental Protection Agency's Solicitor General's office. There will be no conversations with EPA while the review is ongoing. Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission has not placed the additional \$160,000 in the agreement until it receives a report from the EPA.

Mr. Gard questioned how the statewide water plan meetings are going. Mr. Butler responded that a list of comments can be obtained on the internet.

Mr. Butler stated that Gina Levesque has been hired as the new CREP manager and will be housed in the Cherokee County Conservation District office.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, stated that vegetation work on reclamation sites is on-going. A pre-bid meeting for contractors was held on April 30 for a site in Tulsa County.

Mr. Kastl stated that Mr. Thralls received a letter from U.S. Senator Tom Coburn in regards to the AML funding issues. He stated that the proposed rules and regulations are out and that Oklahoma received no increase in funding.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Jana Chicoine, Administrative Officer, had no further comments.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported on Tar Creek activities stating that the City of Commerce has installed the water collection system. He stated that there were problems getting chicken litter for vegetation for the West Commerce Project because of the shortage of rice hulls. Therefore, a commercial fertilizer will be used.

Mr. Sharp stated that the Geographic Information Council voted to request \$500,000 from the Rainy Day Fund for new digital photography for the state. This photography has not been done since 1995. The cost at that time was \$4 million; however, it is believed that it can be done now for around \$1 million. The additional \$500,000 would come from private partners. Mr. Gard questioned if we could use the USDA photography or county assessors. Mr. Sharp stated that those photos are "leaf on" photography and that this would be "leaf off."

*Conservation Programs Division:* Robert Toole, Director, reported that the Barnitz Creek Site 14 watershed site lacks approximately 3 inches before water flows through the notch and that erosion is occurring on the backside of the structure.

Mr. Toole appreciated the words expressed by Ms. Kunze about Karla Beatty and her work with ScienceFest. He stated that while Ms. Beatty's work looks fun, there is a tremendous amount of work involved in arranging events prior to conducting them. He congratulated George Moore on having a new grandson.

Mr. Toole stated that the fifth of six watershed rehabilitation construction projects scheduled for this fiscal year is about to begin. This will make a total of 5 projects under construction at one time.

Mr. Toole reported that NRCS has rescinded several watershed agreements and that the NRCS is essentially shutting down the watershed program as a result of Congress not funding the program in FY2007. He said there are 52 full-time Oklahoma NRCS employees funded with watershed funds - 30 directly assist the program and 22 indirectly assist the program. All conservation districts need to communicate the importance of the watershed program to all of our congressional delegation.

*Administration:* Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, stated that the Commission was busy this month with huge activities such as ScienceFest, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement signing, the National Land and Range Judging Contest and the water quality tour in Delaware County.

Mr. Pollard stated that employee recognition week is kicking off today with the luncheon and full staff meeting. He recognized the efforts of the Awards and Recognition Committee.

Mr. Pollard thanked Mr. Pope and Mark Harrison, Information Officer, for their work in obtaining public service announcements from Lt. Governor Askins for Soil and Water Stewardship Week and conservation in general.

## **OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Clay Pope, Executive Director, expressed his appreciation to conservation district employees and Commission employees for all the work they do.

He reported that the 2008 state meeting, scheduled for February 24-26, 2008, will be held at the Reed Conference Center in Midwest City. The rates are very competitive. Mr. Pope stated that the National Land and Range Judging Contest was held last week and he thanked Don Bartolina and the Oklahoma County Conservation District for their work with the contest. The Association has been working on Soil and Water Stewardship activities with the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Monsanto and Chesapeake Energy.

Mr. Pope expressed appreciation to the Commission for becoming a member of the Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Council. The Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees will also name a representative to the Council.

Mr. Pope reported on legislation stating that SB 704 authorizes the Commission to partner with County Commissioners on watershed rehabilitation and operation and maintenance, roadside erosion projects and invasive species control. House Bill 1520, the controlled burning indemnity fund bill, contains some language changes. House Bill 1829 is a measure to encourage energy reduction in the state and allows the Commission to trade any carbon credits generated by this reduction.

OACD is hosting directors at the State Capitol on May 8 and district employees on May 15. He stated that Kim Farber, Garfield County director, has been named Area 1 director, and Savoy Alexander, Creek County director, has been named Area 3 director.

Mr. Pope has participated in three Outstanding Educator of the Year awards ceremonies in Edmond, Talihina and Chickasha. He will be attending two more in Alva and Tulsa. He stated that he and Commission staff will be finalizing plans for the South Central meeting this Friday and will get information on the website.

Mr. Pope stated that the OACD as well as the National Association of Conservation Districts is monitoring work on the new Farm Bill.

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

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, stated that Christina Muedeking Regional Assistant Chief for the NRCS Central Region, visited the state last week. She toured Guthrie, met staff at the Commission and attended Agriculture Day activities at Poteau.

Mr. Hilliard reported on the Conservation Security Program stating that payment limitations have been released. He stated that OIG performed an audit on Oklahoma's budget and administration and a civil rights review was performed. The OIG will perform an audit on the watershed program on May 14.

Mr. Hilliard stated that students are being hired to work in the following areas: Pauls Valley, Woodward, Perry, El Reno, Waurika, Wilburton and either Jay or Claremore.

He attended the National Land and Range Judging Contest and banquet and commended the South Coffeyville, Oklahoma team for placing first. Mr. Stunkard commended Mr. Harrison and Mr. Phillips for filming the event.

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

No representative present.

### **UNVEILING OF THE COMMISSION'S NEW LOGO**

Mr. Pollard stated that the Commission uses the Oklahoma state seal as its logo. The Awards and Recognition Committee held a contest for a new logo design and Dianne Ireton, AML Systems Coordinator, was the winner of the design. Shellie Willoughby and Stacy Day presented Ms. Ireton with a plaque. Mr. Stunkard unveiled the new logo.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE COMMISSION'S EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**

Mr. Pollard stated that this is the first Employee of the Year presentation at the Commission. Employees of the Quarter are eligible for this award and those employees are: Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Assistant Director; George Moore, Watershed Technician; Cheryl Cheadle, Statewide Blue Thumb Coordinator; and Jeanette Lamb, Water Quality Specialist. Ms. Willoughby announced that the first Employee of the Year is Jeannette Lamb. Ms. Lamb was presented with a plaque and two-nights stay at any state lodge.



**NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on June 4, 2007, 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. Jeans and seconded by Ms. Kidd to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Stunkard, Lowrance, Kidd, Gard and Jeans. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on June 4, 2007.

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CHAIR