

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, August 3, 2020, in the Agriculture Building Conference Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and via open teleconference. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Phil Campbell. He stated this was a regular scheduled meeting held in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Title 25, Oklahoma Statutes, Sections 301 and will include teleconferencing in compliance with the Open Meetings Act as amended by Senate Bill 661. The agenda for this meeting was posted at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, July 30, 2020, at the front entrance of the Oklahoma Agriculture Building, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, as well as on the agency's website www.ok.gov/conservation.

ROLL CALL

Chair Campbell requested callers to identify themselves so that the minutes reflect an accurate account of who participated in the meeting.

Lisa Knauf Owen, Assistant Director, took roll call and the following members were in attendance in person:

Phil Campbell, Chair, Area 2 Member
Scotty Herriman, Vice Chair, Area 3 Member
Karl Jett, Area 1 Member

The following member was in attendance via teleconference:

Gary Crawley, Area 5 Member

The following member was absent:

Clay Forst, Secretary, Area 4 Member

Others in attendance or participating in the meeting via teleconference were:

Trey Lam, Executive Director
Lisa Knauf Owen, Assistant Executive Director
Clancy Green, Administrative Programs Officer
Janet Stewart, General Counsel
Mike Sharp, Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services Division Director
Robert Toole, Abandoned Mine Land Division Director
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Division Director
Greg Kloxin, Water Quality Division Assistant Director
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Division Director
Amy Seiger, Soil Health Program Coordinator
Ed Crall, Director of Water Quality Finance
Larry Wright, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, President
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Chaylum Hogue, The Chickasaw Nation

JanLee Rowlett, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Legislative Liaison
Marla Peek, Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Cate Brantley, Legislative Analyst Oklahoma State Senate

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Scotty Herriman led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS REGULAR MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Herriman to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2020 Commission meeting as written. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Commissioners reviewed the claims and financial statement as provided by Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Comptroller Bob Richardson in Exhibit #1. Mr. Richardson noted that the FY21 budget had been uploaded and approved today. A motion was made by Mr. Herriman and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the claims and financial statement. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

RECOGNITION OF COMMISSION EMPLOYEE

Trey Lam, Executive Director, stated that today we were recognizing three outstanding employees with a combined 85 years of service. He expressed his appreciation to each of the employees for their outstanding work and dedication to the agency and conservation. He also noted that together with the other Division Director in the Agency this accounts for a total of 172 years of service and knowledge. Mr. Lam also recognized that his staff is very well educated in their fields of expertise with twelve staff members holding advanced degrees and an additional five holding a Doctorate degree.

Mr. Lam recognized Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Director, for 25 years of service and Dr. Mike Sharp, Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services Director, for 40 years of service to the State of Oklahoma. Shanon Phillips recognized Greg Kloxin, Water Quality Assistant Director, for 20 years of service.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

Ms. Owen presented one new agreement for ratification listed on Exhibit #2 as item "a" that were previously approved by Chair Campbell. She recommended ratification of this new agreement. A motion was made by Mr. Crawley and seconded by Mr. Herriman to ratify the new agreements as presented. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Owen presented new agreements listed as items "b through r" on Exhibit #2. Ms. Owen recommended approval of the new agreements as presented. A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the new agreements as presented. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Owen next presented one amended agreement listed as item “s” on Exhibit #2. Ms. Owen recommended approval of the amended agreement as presented. A motion was made by Mr. Herriman and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the amended agreement as presented. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUEST

Mr. Lam presented one out of state travel request that had previously been approved by the Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur, as shown in Exhibit #3. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Herriman and seconded by Mr. Crawley, to approve the out of state travel as presented. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Owen presented the appointment of directors to their respective conservation districts for consideration as outlined in Exhibit #4. She noted that the Commission had not received any additional information regarding the appointment of Dusti Graves to the Delaware County Conservation District board. A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the appointments as presented. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

REVIEW OF CONSERVATION DISTRICT SPECIAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR DISTRICT DIRECTOR ELECTION FOR POSITION #1

Ms. Owen presented the results of the special election held in Little River Conservation District as listed in Exhibit #5. No action was required to be taken.

JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION FOR JULY 1, 2020 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

Ms. Green reported that to date the Commission had received and reviewed 76 Joint Plans with 71 being complete and 5 pending revisions. She noted that there were 8 conservation districts that have not yet submitted their plan for review. She recommended approval of the Joint Plans of Operation as listed in Exhibit #6. A motion was made by Mr. Herriman and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the plans as presented. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Campbell asked if anyone joining the meeting wished to address the Commission during public comments. There was no request for public comments.

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business.

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry: JanLee Rowlett, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Legislative Liaison reported on the following items:

- A virtual town hall event will be held today for the public beginning at 9 a.m.;
- The Department is taking grant applications for improvements and / or upgrades to meat

processing plants. The Department has \$10 million in grant funds to award.

- Will be participating in a legislative interim study on August 12.
- Responding to individuals receiving seeds in the mail that were not ordered.

Natural Resources Conservation Service: Gary O'Neill, State Conservationist, reported on the following items:

- Congratulated staff on their service awards;
- Continuing to work through the process of reopening field offices. Ten offices have been allowed to move to Phase 3 where district boards may now hold their board meetings in the office. Three offices, Oklahoma, Tulsa and Norman have not been allowed to move to Phase 1. All others are in either Phase 1 or 2;
- Staff continues to work to obligate EQIP and CSP funds;
- Work continues on planning for Grassland CRP in the panhandle;
- Title work for easement projects must be completed by the end of the federal fiscal year;
- USDA has established a 15 member minority advisory board. Two Oklahomans have been selected to serve on the board; Arnetta Cotton of Wagoner County and Claude Evans of Okfuskee County;
- A new public affairs specialist, Macee Hammack has started to work today for NRCS;
- Twenty-two student trainees presented virtual final projects to the leadership team;
- The Nation to Nation meeting will be conducted virtually with the Chickasaw Nation hosting the meeting on August 18;
- Working with OCC on a watershed pilot project to identify and address corrugated pipe issues on 50 structures;
- NRCS Chief Matt Lohr announced he was leaving the agency effective August 15. It is expected that Kevin Norton will serve as acting chief until after the election;
- The Feral Swine project has been extended for one year; additional funding has been provided to add additional pilots to the two project areas – Osage/Pawnee in the northern Oklahoma project and Greer/Beckham in the southwest Oklahoma project.

Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts: Larry Wright, OACD President, gave the following update:

- The OACD Executive Board met this past month;
- Area meetings will be conducted virtually this year;
- A series of videos are being created for online training for district staff and directors;
- Fourteen districts have not paid dues this year;
- The Nature Conservancy pollinator grant timeline has changed due to the challenges of funds raising during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Working to sign agreement with NRCS for the “Conservation Reaches Everyone” project to assist socially disadvantaged, minority and veteran producers. This is a joint project with Texas;
- Continue to work with University of California on identifying food desserts through the Farm to Food program;
- Applied for TSET funding to hire a volunteer coordinator to manage the Milpa gardens.
- Have begun work on 2021 National Land and Range Judging contest;
- The NACD South Central Regional meeting will be hosted by Arkansas in Hot Springs August 11 – 13, 2021.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Jett repair work continues on their district shop building that was damaged in the Beaver County fires.

Mr. Herriman stated that his chaos garden is very chaotic. He also expressed his appreciation for the service of the three employees recognized today.

Mr. Crawley stated that a lot of conservation was completed this month and the weather has cooperated. He thanked the NRCS for getting technicians out in the field to get practices designed and completed.

Mr. Campbell stated that he participated in the National Watershed Coalition webinar on Operation and Maintenance. He also noted that he had met with the state trapper, Mike Foreman, who is trapping feral swine in his area.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Executive Director: Mr. Lam stated that the agency is still working a combination of telework and alternating staff in the office. He also noted that Division Directors will be giving reports today either in person or on teleconference. Mr. Lam reported the following items:

- The Commission is working with an NRCS intern to develop a library of education videos to make available to district for training of staff and directors. Forty different topics have been identified;

- Continue to participate in the weekly OACDE teleconferences;

- Participated in weekly state FAC calls to review and discuss office re-openings. He thanked Gary O'Neill for allowing the agency participation in this discussion;

- Participated in NRCS / Muskogee Creek Nation / Choctaw Nation Zoom outreach meetings;

- Participated in the Governor's Virtual Leadership Summit;

Participated in discussions with the American Farmland Trust and OSU regarding the soil health economic studies.

Water Quality Program: Mrs. Phillips stated a written report is in the packet. Mrs. Phillips reported on the following items:

- Met with Dr. Lixia Lambert, OSU Agriculture Economics professor to discuss the soil health economic project;

- There was a great article published by the Tulsa World about the kick off of the Yard by Yard program in Tulsa County;

- The Division is working with NRCS to build wetlands to protect Wes Watkins reservoir using Oklahoma Department of Transportation and Oklahoma Water Resources Board state revolving funds;

- Researching the feasibility of using a combination of Grand River Dam Authority and OWRB revolving funds to create a septic tank replacement program to improve water quality.

Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services: Mike Sharp, Director, stated a written report is in the packet. Dr. Sharp also reported the following: In mid-July the FCC adopted new rules to improve the collection and mapping of broadband availability data pursuant to the Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) Act passed by

Congress one year ago. This was sparked by the well-known fact that today's broadband availability maps are grossly inaccurate that depict areas in the country, in particular rural, that appear to have broadband coverage meeting minimum standards but in fact have either no coverage or very limited, substandard coverage. Implementation of these rules will require fixed and mobile providers to submit standardized broadband availability maps at a much more granular, detailed level to provide service to homes and businesses. Additionally the FCC proposes to develop processes for broadband users to challenge the availability data presented on maps as well as to verify the data submitted by providers. These processes may include several techniques to crowdsource the collection and assimilation of data that can be used to fill in the gaps in actual broadband availability. Recently the Kansas Farm Bureau embarked on a crowdsourced effort to identify flaws in the current availability maps. With the understanding that the Oklahoma Farm Bureau is interested in a similar effort, the Office of Geographic Information is offering their assistance should they wish to pursue such an effort. However, time is of the essence since it is my understanding that the FCC is planning to distribute \$16 Billion this fall to providers to fill in gaps before much of the crowdsourcing work can get underway.

- *Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Robert Toole, Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Reclamation Program Director, stated that a written report was in the Commissioner's packet. Mr. Toole summarized the report stating that: two projects were in construction; five projects were contracted for American Burying Beetle (ABB) surveys (undergoing as we speak) with the hope of moving them to contracting in September; six projects were in vegetative management & maintenance monitoring; six projects were in design; four projects were pending realty; three projects were scheduled for release letters in August pending minor maintenance and final vegetation management; the Mooney 2 AML Emergency was completed without complications. In conclusion, Mr. Toole noted that reauthorization of funding for the AML Program is moving forward. H.R. 4248, the preferred bill and one co-sponsored by Congressman Markwayne Mullin, was "scored" by the Congressional Budget Office and it essentially indicated that there will be a \$395 million decrease in the deficit, which is good news for the bill's prognosis.

Conservation Programs: Tammy Sawatzky, Director stated that a written report was in the packet. Ms. Sawatzky reported the following items:

- The agency and Sequoyah County Conservation District has been working on rehabilitation of Sallisaw Site 33 since September of 2004. After many challenges the site showing is scheduled for Wednesday, August 5th.

- Working with NRCS on the partnership pilot project on repair of sites with failing corrugated pipe.

Assistant Director: Lisa Knauf Owen reported on the following items:

- Continued to work Department of Agriculture Finance team to get the Fiscal Year 21 budget up and running;

- Worked through end of year fiscal year issues with purchase order shortages;

- Notified districts that blank timesheets would no longer be accepted;

- Met with USDA/APHIS to demonstrate the feral swine damage assessment app;

- Issues with unemployment claims continued as the Commission received a bill for unemployment claims on current employees;

- Clancy Green created half of the conservation district PO's; provided training to new employee in Ellis County and finalized work on the Little River special election.

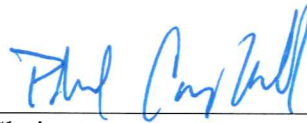
NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 2020, in the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Board Room. 2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma at 9:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Jett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Crawley, to adjourn the meeting at 11:17 a.m. A roll call vote was taken and those voting aye were: Herriman, Jett, Crawley, and Campbell. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on September 1, 2020.



Chair