

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met August 4, 2009, at the Holiday Inn, 1000 N. Interstate Drive in Norman, 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 July 31, 2009, at the front entrance of the Agriculture Building located at 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard in Oklahoma City.

### 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  
Virginia Kidd, Member

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director  
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director  
Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director  
Jana Chicoine, Administrative Officer  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Deputy Director  
Greg Kloxin, Water Quality Program Assistant Director  
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director  
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Bob Heidlage, Abandoned Mine Land Inspector  
Jean Lam, Intern  
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Sarah Love, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts  
Jackie Listen, Cleveland County Conservation District Director  
Dale Horton, Cleveland County Conservation District Director  
Gene Seiter, Cleveland County Conservation District Director  
Aaron Grey, Talihina Conservation District Director  
Frank Acker, Little River Conservation District Manager  
Candy Sexton, Okfuskee County Conservation District Secretary  
Dean Graumann, Greer County Conservation District Director  
Scotty Herriman, Nowata County Conservation District Director  
Lucas Cannon, Shawnee Conservation District Director  
Donna Neumeyer, Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist, Norman  
Larry Wright, Great Plains RC&D Coordinator  
Marty Hern, Cherokee Hills RC&D Coordinator

James Aldridge, State RC&D Council President  
Whitney Weingartner, Oklahoma Attorney General  
Mike Wofford, Attorney  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2009, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **WELCOME TO CLEVELAND COUNTY**

Jackie Listen, Cleveland County Conservation District Director, welcomed Commission members and guests and thanked them for participating in the RC&D Summit. He introduced board members Gene Seiter and Dale Porter, District Secretary Chris Ward, and District Conservationist Donna Neumeyer. Mr. Listen stated that the district is involved with outdoor classrooms, the Blue Thumb Program, water quality issues as well as the cost-share program. He detailed the challenges faced by the district due to urban pressures.

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

### **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

Bob Heidlage, AML Inspector, was recognized for five years of service.

### **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented amended agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the agreements as listed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, 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. He stated that request (a) had received previous approval by Mr. Gard and is needing ratification. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to ratify request (a). Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve requests listed as (b) through (e) adding approval for Mr. Stunkard to attend the National Association of AML Programs 2009 Annual Conference. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**FY2010-2014 LONG RANGE PLANS**

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve FY2010-2014 Long Range Plans for Cherokee County, Lincoln County and Pushmataha Conservation Districts. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION FISCAL YEAR 2010**

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve Joint Plans of Operation for FY 2010 as listed in Exhibit #5. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**COST SHARE PROGRAM YEAR 10 SPECIAL REQUEST FROM GRANT COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

The Grant County Conservation District has requested that the Commission add honey locust to the Brush Management (314) practice. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the request. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**REQUEST BY GARFIELD COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR SMALL WATERSHED REVOLVING FUNDS**

Mr. Thralls stated that the Garfield County Conservation District is requesting \$15,950.00 from the Small Watershed Revolving Fund for the completion of land rights for Turkey Creek Watershed, Site 3. He stated that 100 percent of the easements have been obtained. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the request. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

**POTENTIAL BUDGET RESCISSION FOR FY2010**

Mr. Thralls stated that there is a potential for budget rescissions during FY2010. He stated that the Commission needs to be conservative in travel and purchasing supplies. The Office of State Finance has not provided guidelines as they aren't sure if or when a rescission will happen. Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission will use its efficiencies and earnings from rehabilitation projects if a rescission occurs. If the Commission cannot absorb a rescission through efficiencies and earnings then it would need to look at furloughs for both state and district employees which would save \$35,000 per furlough day. The Commission would need to approve a furlough policy and submit it for approval to the Office of Personnel Management before a furlough could be implemented.

Mr. Coffman stated that if a rescission does occur the percentage of reduction would be taken from the agency's monthly allotment.

## **GREETINGS AND OVERVIEW OF OKLAHOMA'S RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) PROGRAM**

Gary O'Neill, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, thanked the Commission for inviting representatives of the RC&D Council to attend the meeting today and he expressed appreciation for the Commission's attendance at the RC&D Summit. He then introduced James Aldridge, Oklahoma Association of RC&D Councils President. Mr. Aldridge provided background on the history of the RC&D program in Oklahoma stating it was authorized in 1962 and received permanent authorization in the 2002 Farm Bill. There are 9 councils with 9 coordinators funded in Oklahoma. He stated that each council has a conservation district board representative. Mr. Aldridge stated that the program has a Memorandum of Understanding in place with the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts.

### Cherokee Hills RC&D

Marty Hern, Coordinator, reported on the poultry litter processing plant known as the Stamper Project. Mr. Hern stated that chicken litter is too costly to transport. This project will convert chicken litter to a concentrated liquid fertilizer that could be transported cost efficiently. This project is currently out of money. An application for a Conservation Incentive Grant was not funded by the NRCS. However, an application for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funds with the Department of Energy was submitted through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. The ODOC approved the application; however, final approval is needed from the DOE.

### Great Plains RC&D

Larry Wright, Coordinator, provided information on the Southern Plains Agricultural Resources Coalition (SPARC) stating that the organization determined that soil quality, economics, and water resources as the three priority resource concerns with the greatest potential for beneficial results. He introduced Dean Graumann, Chair of the Coalition. The Coalition encourages no-till conservation cropping system and the development of a market based system to create incentives for qualified producers. He described producers opting to grow canola and sesame when they experienced a winter kill on their wheat acres this year. Mr. Graumann stated that the Coalition is working with the OSU Food Service on a test market of their products with schools across the state.

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

Mr. O'Neill provided a written report of NRCS activities stating that the majority of activities this month concerns watershed dams, including stimulus funded projects. He stated that 17 agreements were funding remedial repairs and a bid package was delivered to the Commission for Emergency Watershed Protection Program construction.

Mr. O'Neill reported that staff is working on the 2010 budget and that the funding for rehabilitation looks good. He stated that under the Farm Bill funding that \$400,000 to \$500,000 more will be received for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and that the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program will receive an additional \$175,000. The Oklahoma NRCS sent back \$800,000 from EQIP funds but hope to get some of that money returned.

Mr. O'Neill also reported that the Contracting Officer position has been re-advertised. He stated that Regional Conservationist Tom Christiansen will be in Oklahoma the week of September 2 and will be participating in the Double Creek Watershed event.

Mr. O'Neill stated that staff has been in St. Louis for training on the Conservation Stewardship Program. A sign-up is scheduled for August 10-September 30. This program is based on work producers are doing or will do to their land. It will be a continuous sign-up but will have evaluation periods between sign-ups.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Rooker reported attending the Cross Timbers RC&D meeting. Ms. Kidd enjoyed the banquet during the RC&D Summit. Mr. Gard stated that Mr. Thralls attending the Major County Conservation District board meeting to discuss the bond issue. He attended an RC&D fish fry, a canola annual conference in Enid, and the State Tech Field day in Fairview. He stated that the NACD South Central Meeting is this month as well as a summer crop field day at Lahoma.

**OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration - Executive Director:* Mr. Thralls expressed appreciation to the staff attending all 88 district board meetings during July and August. He stated that legislative tour is being planned by the Speaker's office in mid-September to look at the benefit of water projects.

*Water Quality Program:* Greg Kloxin, Assistant Director, stated that the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program has doubled its enrolled acres over the past two months. He stated that the Commission is working on a wetlands project with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation using \$2 million stimulus funds. Mr. Kloxin stated that the division continues to develop success stories regarding the nonpoint source 319 program.

*Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program:* Mike Kastl, Director, is working with Congressman Boren's office on the use of emergency funds. He then reported on emergencies that have occurred near Hartshorne, Oklahoma.

*Financial Management and Human Resources Division:* Steve Coffman, Director, met with the Oklahoma Capitol Improvement Authority regarding the conservation bond. He stated that the first payment of the bond was made this past month in the amount of \$181,000.00 which is reflected in the claims summary.

*Information Technology Division:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported on a broadband mapping initiative to expand internet areas in counties that are unserved or under-served. Staff will be assisting with this initiative.

*Conservation Programs Division:* Tammy Sawatzky, Deputy Director, reported that the first watershed project using stimulus funds was submitted to the Department of Central Services. The first three projects using bond funds have also been submitted. She then introduced Jean Lam, intern, and daughter of OACD President Trey Lam.

*Administration - Assistant Director:* Mr. Pollard stated that Lisa Knauf, District Services Director, is attending the Wood County Conservation District board meeting today. He stated that the bulk of the District Services staff work for July was attending board meetings. Mr. Pollard stated that Joe Schneider retired after serving the Commission for 11 years. Mr. Pollard stated that Mark Harrison, Information Office, continues to publish success stories from the districts and the Commission on the Commission's website. He reported on attending a mortgage burning ceremony at the Craig County Conservation District.

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

Clay Pope, Executive Director, reported on meeting with the Upper Washita Conservation District on a wind farm issue affecting a flood control dam. He stated that the Department of Commerce will provide information on its website concerning watershed easements. He has been working on controlled burn and burn indemnity fund, flood control dam issues, carbon issues with Western Farmers Electric Cooperative and the Cherokee Nation. He reported on the OACD's award of \$308,000 in stimulus funds and meeting with Commission and NRCS staff to renew the Conservation Leadership Program. He is working on federal issues with Oklahoma's delegation. Mr. Pope will be attending the NACD Executive Director's Conference in August. He stated that the OACD website will be available this month.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on September 1, 2009, 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 Ms. Kidd to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on September 1, 2009.

  
CHAIR