

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met July 11, 2011, 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 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 July 7, 2011, at the front entrance of the building.

OATH OF OFFICE

Lisa Knauf, District Services Director, administered the Oath of Office and Loyalty Oath to Karl Jett, new Area 1 member.

ROLL CALL

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

George Stunkard, Chair
Dan Lowrance, Vice Chair
Karl Jett, Member
Mike Rooker, Member

Members absent:

Jim Grego, Secretary

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 Owen, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Janet Stewart, General Counsel
Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician
Johnny Pelley, Watershed Technician
George Moore, Watershed Technician
Nick Huber, Network Management Specialist
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Blayne Arthur, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate
Commissioner
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Programs Chief
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 June 6, 2011, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, and Lowrance. 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. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve district director appointments as listed with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. 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. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Dennis Boney, Watershed Technician, was recognized for 25 years of service to the Conservation Commission and the Garvin Conservation District.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

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

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of new agreements listed as (gg) through (ll). A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the new agreements as presented. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. 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. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the requests as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

RESULTS OF CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTOR POSITION #1 ELECTIONS

Mr. Thralls stated that district director elections were held on June 7, 2011 and the results were certified as listed in Exhibit #5.

CO-SPONSORSHIP OF NACD SOUTH CENTRAL MEETING

Mr. Thralls stated that the National Association of Conservation Districts South Central Regional Meeting will be held in Oklahoma City on August 7-9, 2011 and recommended that the Commission co-sponsor the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to co-sponsor the meeting. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION FOR FY12

Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director, presented Joint Plans of Operation for FY12 for approval as listed in Exhibit #6. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the plans as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DECLARATION OF ABANDONED COAL MINE EMERGENCY

Mike Kastl, AML Program Director, stated that an emergency was declared on a site in Wilburton, Oklahoma named Kingdom Hall, Emergency Number OK 2011-02-02 as listed in Exhibit #7. After discussion a motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to ratify the Declaration of Abandoned Coal Mine Emergency as presented. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

REQUEST BY DEER CREEK CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR COST SHARE PROGRAM - PY 11B VARIANCE

Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director, stated that the Deer Creek Conservation District is requesting a variance in the certification and payment requirements for Program Year 11B. The variance is requested for the certification and payment of waterways and terraces without completing the vegetation on the waterways. He recommended approval of the request. Members requested that staff suggest that the district use a temporary cover on the site. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the request as presented. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

REQUEST BY WOODWARD COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR COST-SHARE PROGRAM - PY 11B

Mr. Toole stated that the Woodward County Conservation District is requesting to add pipeline to Cost-share Program - Program Year 11B; however, he stated that this practice does not repair or replace an existing practice so it doesn't qualify under PY11B. Staff is recommending that the Commission not approve this request.

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jett to deny the request as presented. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF BUDGET AND ALLOCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Thralls stated that Mr. Stunkard, Mr. Rooker, OACD Past President Trey Lam, OACD Vice President Kim Farber, and OACDE Past President Bradley Hamilton make up the committee and he expressed appreciation to them. He stated that OACD Executive Director Clay Pope

Assistant State Conservation for Operations Gary O'Neill serve in an advisory capacity and Ben Pollard, Lisa Knauf, Steve Coffman and Robert Toole provide staff support.

Mr. Thralls detailed Exhibit 8. The budget overview page is a seven year summary of general revenue funding. During FY2007 the Commission received funding for significant pay raises for district and Commission employees. However, the FY12 budget is now below the FY06 budget.

Mr. Thralls explained the Commission and District Personnel Reductions page stating that the Commission has been reduced by five employees and that eight district positions were eliminated in addition to a number of benefitted positions restructured as part-time non-benefitted.

Mr. Thralls discussed Revenue Sources for FY11-12 and stated that the Commission will use thirty percent of the Conservation Infrastructure Fund for operations this fiscal year.

Mr. Thralls then reviewed policies being recommended for continuation for FY12 as listed in Exhibit #8 and requested approval of the Committee's recommendation. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jett to continue the recommended policies for FY12 as listed in Exhibit #8. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Thralls then discussed the Committee's recommendation on policies to be added for FY12, policies to be discontinued for FY12, and one policy to delay until funds are available. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to add the recommended policies as listed, to discontinue the policies as listed and to delay the policy as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION - FISCAL YEAR 2012

Mr. Pollard stated that the salary of the Executive Director for FY11 was \$72,398 and recommended that it stay at the same level for FY12. A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the FY12 salary for the Executive Director in the amount of \$72,398. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Pollard recommended that the Commission set the FY12 meeting expense for districts at \$25 per meeting (maximum of 12 meetings) A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to set the FY12 conservation district director meeting expense at \$25 per meeting (maximum of 12 meetings). Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Coffman presented district allocations as listed in Exhibit #9. The amounts represent a full year allocation, allocated hours, hourly rate, longevity and benefits. He stated that the employer share for retirement contribution is a \$65,000 increase and the health insurance rate is a \$38,000 increase to the agency. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the FY12 allocations to conservation districts for personnel and operating expenses as listed in Exhibit #9. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Coffman stated that meetings were held with division directors for preparation of the Budget Work Program. He recommended approval of FY12 Budget Work Program as listed in Exhibit #10. A motion was made by Mr. Jett and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the FY12 Budget Work Program as listed in Exhibit #10. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY REPORT

Rod Wanger, Conservation Programs Specialist, Oklahoma Farm Service Agency, reported on the Conservation Reserve Program stating that statewide 164,000 acres were accepted during the recent sign-up period. He stated that Cimarron County has reached twenty-five percent of its acres and that 191,000 acres will expire next year in the state.

The FSA spent \$835,000 for contracts in the Grasslands Reserve Program. The NRCS contributed \$513,000 toward the lesser prairie chicken initiative.

The Emergency Conservation Program is assisting producers with losses due to fires and tornadoes.

The Emergency Haying and Grazing Program was approved to allow grazing on CRP acres. On July 2, CRP lands could also be used for haying. Mr. Wanger stated that 138,000 acres of CRP are being grazed in 13 counties.

The Livestock Forage Program is also assisting with drought issues. The Livestock Indemnity Program has paid out \$800,000 to producers suffering losses.

Mr. Wanger stated that the State Emergency Board met and recommended that the Governor request a Secretarial Disaster in all counties due to drought.

Mr. Wanger stated that due to federal budget cuts the FSA is offering early retirement and voluntary separation to its employees.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Rooker attended an RC&D dinner and the Budget and Allocation Advisory Committee meeting.

Mr. Lowrance attended a conference in Washington, D.C. to regarding the USDA Senior Nutrition Program. He discussed the program with several members of Congress.

Mr. Jett attended the Blue Thumb education tour on the North Canadian River.

Mr. Stunkard also attended the Budget and Allocation Advisory Committee meeting.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration - Executive Director: Mr. Thralls had the opportunity to visit with Mr. Jett and his wife Charlene and was hosted at their home near Slapout shortly after Mr. Jett was appointed to the Commission.

Mr. Thralls stated that the blue-green algae issue at Grand Lake prompted a meeting a water quality agencies as requested by the Governor. The Governor's staff was made aware of a watershed plan jointly developed by the Commission and the Grand Lake Watershed Alliance Foundation.

District Services Division: Ms. Knauf has notified conservation districts of required audits or compilations for FY12.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Director, reported on the North Canadian River tour and expressed appreciation to Karla Beatty for her work with the tour. A similar tour may be planned for the Illinois River Watershed in partnership with the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission.

Ms. Phillips stated that additional special funds may be available from the EPA Region 6 and that Oklahoma has submitted the full proposal of the North Canadian River project for these funds.

Ms. Phillips stated that four staff members have resigned recently and that only one or one and half of the four positions will be replaced.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, reported on two active projects in Haskell and Sequoyah Counties.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Mr. Coffman stated that work was done on the budget work program and district allocations. A report of the agency's audit will be provided at next month's meeting. He also stated that staff has secured the liability policy for districts as well as the directors errors and omissions policy.

Information Technology Division: Nick Huber, Network Management Specialist, stated that the agency will ask for an IT consolidation exemption from the State CIO since the agency's IT operations are paid with federal funds.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, stated that Cost-share Program Year 12 will end on June 30 and Program Year 11B will end in August. Returned funds from Program Year 11B will be redirected to watershed operation and maintenance or rehabilitation. Returned funds from Program Year 12 will be redirected to the Locally Led Cost Share Program Year 13, pending the availability of additional funds.

Mr. Toole reported on watershed rehabilitation activities stating that a final inspection was held for Sugar Creek Site L-43 and that a final inspection will be scheduled on Sallisaw 18M. A work order for Cottonwood 16 and Sugar Creek L-44 is in progress. Sites Turkey Creek 9 and Cobb

1 continue with construction. Caney Coon 2M will be going to contracting. Mr. Toole stated that the Sallisaw 33 condemnation continues. He stated that the motion for declaratory judgment on Cottonwood 54 is continuing to move forward.

Administration - Assistant Director: Mr. Pollard discussed prescribed fire and stated that the Commission is a member of the Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Council. Staff is having discussions regarding a statewide burn association so that additional liability insurance can be obtained for prescribed fires.

Mr. Pollard stated that the Sugar Creek Site L-44 groundbreaking is scheduled for July 15 and that Representative Richardson and Senator Justice will be honored for obtaining bond funds for the project.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Clay Pope, Executive Director, stated that the NACD South Central meeting is scheduled for August 7-9 and that Congressman Lucas will be attending. Mr. Pope will be speaking at a Soil and Water Conservation Society meeting in Washington, D.C. as well as meeting with Oklahoma's congressional delegation regarding budget issues.

Mr. Pope stated that the blue-green algae issue in Grand Lake and E. Coli in Arcadia Lake made the news. These issues will remain as reductions in water quality funds occur.

Mr. Pope will be attending the Sugar Creek groundbreaking ceremony.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, stated that USDA is in the process of settling several discrimination suits and USDA agencies are holding outreach meetings to reach minorities in farming communities.

Mr. Hilliard stated that he does not know the 2012 budget but expects there will be cuts in technical assistance and some programs.

Mr. Hilliard will be attending an Invasive Plant Council meeting this week. The Central Regional NRCS meeting will be held in St. Louis, Missouri on July 25.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

Blayne Arthur, Associate Commissioner, reported on meeting with a delegation from Ireland and they toured Express Ranches, Braum's dairy, the Oklahoma City Stockyards and met with the Oklahoma Wheat Commission.

She also attended the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture meeting held in North Carolina and discussions centered on weather, budget, dredging of the Mississippi River, and the spreading threat of rabies moving from the east coast to the west coast.

Ms. Arthur stated that the Department posts an in-state/out-of-state hay directory for citizens on their website.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Tuesday, August 9, 2011, at the Renaissance Hotel, 10 N. Broadway Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 1:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on August 9, 2011.


CHAIR