

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, April 7, 2025, in the Agriculture Building located at 2800 N. Lincoln Blvd in Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Dan Herald. He stated this was a scheduled regular meeting held in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Title 25, Oklahoma Statutes, Sections 301 and following as amended. The agenda for this meeting was posted at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, April 3, 2025, at the front entrance of the Oklahoma Agriculture Building, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, as well as on the agency's website [conservation.ok.gov](http://conservation.ok.gov).

### ROLL CALL

Bert Bitseedy, Administrative Assistant, took roll call and the following members were in attendance:

Dan Herald, Chair, Area 1 Member  
Robert Priess, Vice Chairman, Area 2 Member  
Joshua Haven, Area 4 Member  
Grant Victor, Secretary, Area 3 Member

Absent:

Gary Crawley, Area 5 Member

Others in attendance were:

Trey Lam, Executive Director  
Bert Bitseedy, Administrative Assistant  
Jeannie Parsley, Comptroller  
Stephanie Acquario, Attorney I  
Justine Anderson, Public Information Manager  
Mike Sharp, Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services Division Director  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Division Director  
Paige Porter, Conservation Program Administrative Programs Officer  
Moriah Manuel, Conservation Programs Administrative Assistant  
TJ Hathcock, Conservation Programs Division GIS Specialist II  
Wendie Sharp, Conservation Programs Division GIS Specialist III  
Tom Goode, Conservation Programs Field Operations Manager  
Clancy Green, District Services Director  
Brandon Welborn, District Services Administrative Programs Officer  
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Director  
Greg Kloxin, Soil Health Director  
Maryanne Dantzler-Kyer, Water Quality Environmental Projects Coordinator  
Trampas Tripp, Land Management Division Director  
Jeanne Jasper, NRCS State Conservationist  
Sarah Blaney, OACD Executive Director  
Kaytlin Davis, Oklahoma County Conservation District, District Manager  
Ben Pollard, Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society

## **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS REGULAR MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Priess and seconded by Mr. Victor to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2025; Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

Commissioners reviewed the claims register, p-card statement, revenue summary and allotment budget / available cash report as provided by Ms. Parsley in Exhibit #1. Ms. Parsley stated the finance team report in the packet, and she would be happy to answer any other questions. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the financial reports as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

Mr. Lam requested the approval of the following amended agreements (Exhibit #2), items “a-c.” After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Priess and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the amended agreements as presented. Those voting are were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Lam requested the approval of the following new agreements (Exhibit #2), items “d-n.” After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the new agreements as presented. Those voting are were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **ESSENTIAL OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Mr. Lam requested the approval of the following essential out of state travel request (Exhibit #3), item “a.” After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Priess to approve the travel request as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS**

Ms. Green discussed with the Commissioners recommendation of Conservation District Director Appointments shown on Exhibit #4. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Priess and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the District Director’s appointments as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **SPONSORSHIP FOR THE SUSTAINABLE URBAN LANDSCAPE CONFERENCE**

Mr. Lam requested approval to sponsor the Sustainable Urban Landscape Conference, June 27-28, 2025. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Priess for approval of the sponsorship as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess Victor and Haven. Naye votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ben Pollard of the Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society invited the Commissioners to the following upcoming events:

1. April 14, 2025-Black Sunday 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the Harn Homestead
2. April 22, 2025- OACD and 2 Conservation Districts, Evening Affair in Guymon at the Victory Memorial Methodist Church.

3. April 28, 2025-Partnering with Jeanne Jasper NRCS to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of SCS/NRCS at the Canadian County Expo Center.

He thanked all partners, NRCS, OCC, and OACD.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business

## **CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP REPORTS**

*Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF)*: ODAFF was not in attendance at the meeting.

*USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)*: State Conservationist Jeanne Jasper announced the appointment of a new NRCS Chief at headquarters taking on her new position. She shared that last month Roderick Dukes stepped down from the acting role, which is now filled by Valerie Glasgow. The agency is still under a hiring freeze and has asked probationary staff to return to the office. Additionally, they are continuing to advertise for other deferred resignations and extending the early retirement option. All offices are being covered as much as possible. The contracts for their farm bill specialists have been terminated and removed. However, financial assistance programs for producers are still being processed and are moving forward. A request for additional farm bill funding has been submitted to the national headquarters, and approval has been granted. Currently, agreements with their partners are under review, and no modifications or new agreements can be requested during this period. Travel is limited and requires a multi-level review process within the department and has pushed back training for travel. Despite these challenges, staff members continue to work closely with producers. They are also preparing for an upcoming event to celebrate the 90th birthday of SCS/NRCS.

*Conservation Districts (OACD)*: Executive Director Sarah Blaney provided an update on their funding status. In March, they received funding related to agreements for completed work from December 31, 2024. However, the Climate Smart Commodities funding has been frozen, and currently not receiving payments for the other three agreements past January 19, 2025. Instead, they will rely on private funding until September 30, 2025, with the existing staff. The Urban Hub Grants have been approved and received. Ms. Blaney attended the Fly-In Meeting in Washington, D.C., where the meetings with representatives and congress members went well, developing positive relationships with attendees. A total of 29 people has enrolled in the upcoming leadership class, which is scheduled to start on April 14, 2025, in Oklahoma City and later in the evening an event with Oklahoma Conservation Historical Society to celebrate the 90th anniversary at Harn Homestead. Currently, 60 people have RSVP'd for Conservation Day on April 15, 2025. Additionally, the National Land and Range Judging event is set for April 28 to May 1, 2025, with 125 teams registered to participate.

## **STATUS REPORTS**

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Priess – reported there were wildfires in his area and mentioned three families he knew had lost their homes who had no insurance. He was able to assist one of the families by buying groceries for them. He requested prayers for those that lost their homes and happy to know the area received some rain.

Mr. Haven – reported his area received 1-2 inches of rain with some wildfires that affected areas in Roger Mills County and lost some pastures.

Mr. Herald –reported Texas County had lightening fires and reported the area received 1/2 inches of rain. He also updated us about his health and recovery.

Mr. Victor – reported some rainfall in his area but no fires in his area with the dry ground. Some corn was planted for the season. He mentioned his fly-in trip to Washington DC and made great relationships with the legislative teams and state representatives.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Executive Director:* Trey Lam discussed the current status of legislative activities, primarily focusing on conservation, conservation districts, and related programs. He mentioned that two different bills involving the Terry Peach Project are moving toward statewide implementation. There was a discussion about concerns regarding conservation budgets, particularly the issue of recurring revenue, as state revenues remain flat, with only a slight increase expected. Some of the one-time funding collected last year will be allocated to special projects, including improvements for unpaved roads and purchasing cedar equipment. Additionally, there is a cedar bill for Beckham County that extends to Lake Altus and a watershed plan for Spring Creek. The Urban Conservation cost-sharing program is advancing, and an easement bill is currently under consideration. On the federal side, Mr. Lam participated in a fly-in trip to Washington D.C., where he met with Congressional members and staffers to discuss grant funding, potential staff cuts, and program cuts and he made valuable connections during these meetings. Mr. Lam mentioned collaborating with the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA), the National Association of State Directors of Agriculture (NSDA), and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). He also engaged with national leaders from non-point source programs in North Carolina, Alabama, and Iowa, who hold positions similar to his.

*Water Quality Program:* Director Shanon Phillips presented a handout regarding information from the 2024 load reduction report, highlighting that Oklahoma ranks #2 in Nitrogen, #1 in Phosphorus, and #11 in Sediment. For the period from January to April 2025, Oklahoma is ranked #3 in Nitrogen, #1 in Phosphorus, and #26 in Sediment. This data is collected from the 319 non-point source program specifically for matching funds. She expressed her gratitude to Greg for compiling the report and thanked the staff for their hard work. Additionally, she announced the “No Till on the Plains” tour scheduled for June 30 to July 2, 2025, which has limited space and aims to showcase the positive developments in agriculture for the state of Oklahoma. Ms. Phillips also shared that Blue Thumb received the 2025 Vision Award at the National Water Quality Monitoring Conference for over 30 years of water quality protection through their volunteer monitoring programs. There are grant challenges due to some frozen funds like those from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). However, there are partner funds that were not frozen, allowing for the continuation of projects, such as using drones to plant native grasses in areas where cedar trees were removed, and they also approved an agreement for salt cedar spraying. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

*Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services:* Director Mike Sharp announced that the aerial photography contract for this season is concluding for the eastern section of I-35, which runs from Kansas to Texas. Next year, the focus will shift to the western part of I-35 to complete the project. The use of color-infrared technology helps in spotting cedar trees more effectively. He stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

*Land Management:* Director Trampas Tripp mentioned that LeFlore County contacted him to express their appreciation for the work that was done in the area on the unpaved roads project. They

reported that everything held up as expected after receiving more than five inches of rain, resulting in no damage and no maintenance needs. He also noted that the unpaved roads program is progressing well, and training sessions are being scheduled. There has been an increase in funding requests from various counties. Additionally, the Terry Peach Project has been expanding, and the crew has been clearing high focus areas that were target areas for potential wildfire. Mr. Tripp highlighted that the prescribed fire training has been beneficial, enabling communities to come together during the recent wildfires in the state. Since these wildfires occurred, there have been more requests for prescribed fire training. Lastly, he reported that land restoration efforts are going well, and the Coppermine project is on schedule for completion. He also mentioned several hires and vacancies. He stated the report is in the packet and he would be happy to answer any other questions.

*District Services:* Director Clancy Green reported that training sessions were held with the conservation districts, featuring presentations by Jack Hilgert and Cheryl Cheadle on the Yard-by-Yard program. The next training session will be conducted by Justine Anderson, who will focus on marketing and branding for advertising events. The Area District Coordinators are actively visiting districts and participating in outreach events. Currently, the districts are preparing for elections, with the notice of filing period scheduled to run through April 22, 2025. The new rounds of Joint Plan of Operations have begun, and the process is expected to proceed smoothly this year. Dianne Ireton and Ms. Green will assist with the National Land and Range Judging Contest. Additionally, she mentioned the recent new hires and current vacancies. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

*Conservation Programs:* Director Tammy Sawatzky announced the launch of the PY27 cost-share program in March, which will include a TEAMS training session to refresh everyone on the new program and set them on the right path. In March, the watershed technicians and aides worked in Logan County, in which they ended up escaping safely from wildfire near the area, they were able to clear out 4-5 sites. They also cleared a site in Delaware County. She mentioned that she has been collaborating with Janet Stewart and NRCS staff on rehabilitation projects in Meeker, Perry, and Wilburton. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

## **NEXT MEETING**

After discussion, the Commissioners next scheduled meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that was set for Monday, May 5, 2025, at the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Building, 2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma at 9:30 a.m.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mr. Herald declared the meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on May 5, 2025.

  
Chair