

## **MINUTES**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, May 5, 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 3:15 p.m. Thursday, May 2, 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 -Attending Senate Confirmation Hearing

Others in attendance were:

Trey Lam, Executive Director  
Bert Bitseedy, Administrative Assistant  
Lisa Knauf Owen, Director 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  
Maryanne Dantzler-Kyer, Water Quality Environmental Projects Coordinator  
Rebecca Bond, Blue Thumb Director  
Trampas Tripp, Land Management Division Director  
Jeanne Jasper, NRCS State Conservationist  
Jean Lam, OACD Acting Executive Director  
Marla Peek, Oklahoma Farm Bureau

## **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS REGULAR MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Priess and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the minutes of the April 7, 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 is 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. Priess to approve the financial reports as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS**

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

Ms. Owen requested the approval of the following new agreements (Exhibit #2), items "h-k." After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Priess to approve the new agreements 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 #3. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Victor to approve the District Director's appointments as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTOR ELECTIONS FOR POSITION #3**

Ms. Green discussed with the Commissioners the procedures followed to conduct elections for the Conservation District. She outlined the steps for authorizing Executive Director Lam to certify the eligibility of candidate filings, approve polling locations, and determine the deposit amounts required from candidates requesting a recount. After discussion, Mr. Priess made a motion, and seconded by Mr. Victor, to grant the Executive Director the authority to carry out the actions presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **JOINT PLANS OF OPERATION**

Ms. Green presented the list of districts who have completed the requirements for the Conservation District Joint Plans of Operations as shown on Exhibit #4. Ms. Green recommended the approval of these plans. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Priess to approve the list of completed Joint Plans of Operation as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

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

Mr. Lam requested the ratification of the following essential out of state travel request (Exhibit #5), item "a." After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the travel request as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments

## **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business

## **CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP REPORTS**

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

*USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)*: State Conservationist Jeanne Jasper discussed recent events from the previous month. On Monday, April 28, 2025, they celebrated the Agency's 90th birthday with over 160 attendees, including current employees, retirees, and partners. The National Land and Range Judging Contest took place in El Reno, OK, from April 29 to May 1, 2025. Despite not having authorization for overnight travel, staff dedicated their personal time and effort to attending the event. Additionally, the final round of the deferred resignation program closed this month, resulting in 50 employees not returning. Efforts are still being made to manage workloads across the state. Most of the student interns returned, but the hiring process for interns that were selected in the fall of 2024 were not able to bring them on board this summer. Ms. Jasper provided updates regarding agreements that allow for payments even with some that are IRA funded, as long as they are not conflicting with the executive order. She clarified that the agreements did not have any restrictions on hiring and would not go against federal staff numbers. She also updated the staffing situation, noting that some positions were removed, leading to a loss of staff throughout the state. Nonetheless, they will continue to move forward and fill positions as much as possible. The updates regarding EQIP indicate that \$11 million has already been obligated this year. Additionally, \$26 million was received from headquarters through the Farm Bill funds, along with another \$10 million the week prior. In total, they have received \$36 million and will be sending out payments soon.

*Conservation Districts (OACD)*: Acting Executive Director Jean Lam announced that Sarah Blaney has resigned from her position, and she will be acting in her place. She acknowledged Ms. Blaney's dedication and hard work, wishing her the best in her future endeavors. Ms. Lam expressed satisfaction with the recent success of the National Land and Range Judging Contest in El Reno, noting the strong partnership that contributed to it. This event was one of their largest, attracting participants from 39 states, with 199 teams and 776 students attending, along with the sale of over 1,200 banquet tickets. Recently, the legislature passed two house bills: HB1910 Urban Cost Share Program and HB 2162, Terry Peach Watershed Restoration, which aims for statewide expansion. Ms. Lam also mentioned that Conservation Day took place on April 15, 2025, with over 100 attendees, and she thanked everyone for their participation. OACD held their first leadership class for the new associate directors and district directors who have served for less than five years, along with the care champions. Of the 32 care champions, 24 participated in the leadership classes, which included a day of advocacy and grassroots training, culminating in practical application the following day at Conservation Day at the Capitol. Ms. Lam provided

further details about the Urban Cost Share Program, highlighting enhanced efforts supported by Oklahoma County and Tulsa County. The Yard-by-Yard Program has also expanded, thanks to the hard work of urban outreach specialist Amanda Fitzgerald. Moreover, the Wildlife Habitat Grant Program has partnered with Okies for Monarchs, reviewing over 600 applications for wildlife grants. They are currently collecting dues from the districts, reporting that 93% have paid, which is a positive sign for their ongoing efforts. Two upcoming events to note:

- June 2025-Crossroads On the Road, seats are limited for the bus tour.
- September 2025-South Central Regional Meeting in Arkansas.

## **STATUS REPORTS**

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mr. Haven – reported his area was blessed with moisture, but Lawton had some flooding, but all is good.

Mr. Victor – reported his area is dry, but April brought more rain, area is looking good. Corn may need to be re-planted.

Mr. Priess – reported there has been an abundance of moisture, all is good right now.

Mr. Herald –reported his area is green and back to a hot month and drought days.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Executive Director:* Trey Lam mentioned the busy month with partnerships and thanked everyone for their efforts in making the events successful. He stated the meeting with the Chickasaw Tribe, Murray State College and OACD on the Urban Grant they received in Ardmore is progressing and ready to launch. The conservation bills are going well with approvals and budget in the works at the Capitol. The construction going on in the Agricultural building, where conservation commission is located has completed the first half part of the floor building on the HVAC installations.

*Water Quality Program:* Director Shanon Phillips handed out a flyer from the Director of the Blue Thumb, Rebecca Bond, who wanted to share with the Commissioners for H2Oklahoma educational event that has transitioned from a virtual format and is now going to be a live event, with Jack Hilgert running that program. The soil health team has been busy, conducting a lot of consultations with General Mills, the SHIP program, and the Yard-by-Yard initiative. Ms. Phillips also mentioned the participants in the National Land and Range Judging Contest and expressed hope that some of those students will return to join our soil health team in the future. Additionally, the monitoring team has been active in monitoring 110 streams throughout the southwestern part of the state. They have deployed the first round of automatic data loggers to identify which streams naturally have low oxygen levels. 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 reported there are 63% of the state completed aerial photography. He stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

*Land Management:* Director Trampas Tripp noted that, despite the heavy rainfall we've experienced this month, he anticipated receiving calls about failed projects. Instead, he received updates on projects that are holding up well despite the flooding. Many county commissioners are working on applications for grants, which will help provide funding for infrastructure needs and support their efforts. The Terry Peach Cedar program is progressing well, with new hires being trained to start projects that are actively developing in Stillwater. He also provided updates on new hires of Conservation Planners and Cedar Techs. He stated the report is in the packet and he would be happy to answer any other questions.

*District Services:* Director Clancy Green reported her involvement in the National Land and Range Judging Contest held in El Reno. Administrative Programs Officer Brandon Welborn also participated as a group leader. She expressed her gratitude to Justine Anderson for hosting the TEAMS training focused on marketing and branding for outreach materials. Ms. Green mentioned that additional training sessions will be held in May. The district coordinators are preparing for a training tour to visit areas for operations and outreach with the Blue Thumb, and for in-person training. She also noted that Mr. Tripp had mentioned new hires within his division that include the cedar techs and conservation planners, a new district manager for Murray County who have already begun their duties. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

*Conservation Programs:* Director Tammy Sawatzky reported that the recent weather has resulted in significant rainfall, leading to 17 auxiliary dam spillway flows across four different counties, with damage occurring at two of those sites. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is planning to assess the affected dams. The division will be preparing to deploy five new vehicles in the following week for the new hires. She also highlighted a recent workshop held in Decatur, TX, organized by the Watershed Coalition, which attracted 25 attendees from Oklahoma and a total of 100 participants. Wendie Sharp and TJ Hathcock presented on the easement project during the workshop. Overall, the sites are performing as expected things. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

*Assistant Director:* Lisa Knauf Owen mentioned that the Red River was full on her way back from Decatur, TX, due to all the recent rain. She also shared that Janet Stewart attended training with the Edmond Board of Realtors, where she is working to get more involved in getting the group to identify easements in court records, reminding them to look back over the past 30 years to be able to locate the easements. Additionally, Stephanie Acquario has been appointed as our Oklahoma DOGE reporting representative and submitted our first reports on independent contractors, storage space, and savings for our agency. Justine Anderson has been actively participating in many events as well. Jeannie and her team have continued to provide information for the 2021-2024 audit and will see the results soon. Ms. Parsley worked diligently on the budget revision to account for the \$575,000 to be returned from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, this funding is still earmarked for the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) to utilize, and it will be taken in smaller increments rather than a large lump sum, which caused the complications. Lastly, this week marks the official State Employee Recognition and Appreciation Week. Ms. Owen wanted to express her gratitude to all the employees at the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

**NEXT MEETING**

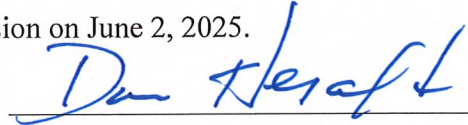
After discussion, the Commissioners next scheduled meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that was set for Monday, June 2, 2025, at the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Building, 2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma at 9:30 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mr. Herald declared the meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on June 2, 2025.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dan Herald", is written over a horizontal line.

Chair