

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, June 2, 2025, in the Agriculture Lab 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 special 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 7:00 a.m. Friday, May 30, 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.

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
Gary Crawley, Area 5 Member

Others in attendance were:

Trey Lam, Executive Director
Bert Bitseedy, Administrative Assistant
Lisa Knauf Owen, Assistant Director
Jeannie Parsley, Comptroller
Janet Stewart, General Counsel
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
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
Rebecca Bond, Blue Thumb Director
Jason Baker, Water Quality Grants and Budget Administrator
Trampas Tripp, Land Management Division Director
Jeanne Jasper, NRCS State Conservationist
Jean Lam, OACD Acting Executive Director
Marla Peek, Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Jeri Fleming, Grand River Dam Authority

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS REGULAR MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Priess and seconded by Mr. Victor to approve the minutes of the May 5, 2025; Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, 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. Haven and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the financial reports as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

Ms. Owen reviewed the twenty-seven new agreements with Commissioners and requested approval of items "a-aa" as listed in Exhibit 2. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Crawley and seconded by Mr. Victor to approve the new agreements as presented. Those voting are were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Ms. Owen next reviewed the seventy-two amended agreements with Commissioners and requested approval of items "bb-uuuu." as listed in Exhibit 2. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the amended agreements as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, 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. Priess and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the District Director's appointments as presented except for Matt Thompson, Blaine County Conservation District, whose appointment will be provisionally approved for a six-month probationary period contingent upon him meeting 75% attendance during the time period of July – December 2025. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DECLARING CANDIDATES AS ELECTED WHERE ONLY ONE PERSON FILED

Ms. Green discussed with Commissioners possible approval to declare the candidates in districts where only one eligible person filed a Notification of Declaration of Candidacy as elected to Position #3 (Exhibit #4). After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Priess to declare the candidates elected in districts where only one individual filed. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DECLARING POSITION #3 VACANT WHERE NO ONE FILED FOR ELECTION

Ms. Green discussed with Commissioners possible approval to declare Position #3 vacant in conservation districts where no one filed for election (Exhibit #5). Ms. Green made the recommendation to declare the position vacant. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Priess and seconded by Mr. Haven declare position 3 vacant in districts where no one filed. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

REVIEW OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS ELECTIONS

Ms. Green discussed the review of Conservation District Elections where more than one candidate filed for position #3 (Exhibit #6). No vote or action required.

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 #7. Ms. Green recommended the approval of these plans. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the list of completed Joint Plans of Operation as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, 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 #8), item “a-b.” 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, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CO-SPONSOR OF EVENTS

Mr. Lam requested the approval of co-sponsorship of the following events: No Till on the Plains/OCC Crossroads on the Road Soil Health Bus Tour, June 30-July 2, 2025, and the Oklahoma Onsite Wastewater Association Conference, September 23-24, 2025. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Priess and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the requested co-sponsorship events as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

COMMISSION FY2026 APPROPRIATION AND BUDGET

Mr. Lam reviewed the Commission’s FY26 appropriation as outlined in Exhibit #9. The FY26 appropriation will increase by \$216,680 or .07%. No action needed.

ADOPTION OF THE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT REGARDING RELATIONSHIP AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST SAFEGUARDS

Ms. Owen requested the adoption of the disclosure statement presented in Exhibit 10, highlighting its importance considering recent changes within the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). With Jean Lam appointed as the new interim Executive Director—who is also the daughter of Trey Lam, the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC)—it is crucial to maintain transparency and trust. This disclosure statement is designed to protect both the association and the state agency, clarifying how they will collaborate effectively. General Counsel Janet Stewart has meticulously crafted this statement and submitted it to the ethics commission, ensuring it meets the highest standards of compliance. Adopting this statement is a proactive step toward fostering a strong and principled partnership. A motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Priess to adopt the disclosure statement as written. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jeri Flemming from the Grand River Dam Authority provided an update on the statewide septic program that she has been managing for the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC). She reported that they received 28 applications from across the state, of which 16 were approved, committing \$219,000. While the recent rain has slowed down some projects, they are still making efforts to complete installations for those that remain unfinished. Ms. Flemming noted that the Seminole and Stephens County Conservation Districts have stepped up in managing the reimbursements for some of these installations within their surrounding districts that are not participating in the program. They have experienced many success stories, especially for veterans and others in need of septic tanks and working with DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) in which they have gone above and beyond in taking application to those in the area and helped filled the applications out.

Ms. Flemming wanted to discuss the Poultry Program, which recently installed a poultry dehydrator in LeFlore County. This dehydrator assists a poultry farmer by processing chicken waste into a dust-like powder that is sterilized. It operates overnight for seven hours and produces approximately 1,300 pounds of powder. The dehydrator is monitored remotely and does not emit any odors or attract vermin or flies, which has been beneficial in preventing buzzard issues that can harm the trees in the surrounding area. The processed material will be mixed with the litter when the farmer exports it. This powder can be used as fertilizer, as it is rich in protein and nutrients, containing more nitrogen and less phosphorus. Ms. Flemming mentioned that further testing is planned, and that staff from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF) have visited to consider approving this method as a viable mortality management practice. The monthly electricity cost for the dehydrator for the farmer that used the dehydrator was about \$400, which is significantly lower than the traditional composting method that can range from \$2,000 to \$4,000. There is increasing interest in the dehydrator from Delaware and Adair Counties, with a total cost of \$154,000 for two units. Agreements for these installations are currently in process for approval. She mentioned NRCS has funded two projects in Craig County for \$230,000 and \$30,000 (not dehydrator) for composting facilities.

Lastly, she mentioned the Educator Workshop Teachers Camp, which is organized with the Blue Thumb, the OSU Extension, Ag in the Classroom, and the Illinois River Watershed Partnership. Currently, 16 teachers have signed up for the watershed educators' workshop, which will be held in Arkansas along the Illinois River. There will be 11 kids camp held in Tahlequah during the summer.

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 announced that Jimmy Emmons has been appointed as the Assistant Chief for NRCS. Mr. Emmons has a great background in advocating for agriculture. She mentioned that they are finalizing the EQIP funds and moving towards obligating those for the fiscal year 2025. Final notifications regarding IRA financial assistance will not be expected, as they will only be receiving funds from the Farm Bill. Additionally, she stated that there is a court stay on the implementation of the executive order concerning research plans. As a result, they have not received any information about agency planning for approval. In the meantime, they will continue to cover field positions and ensure counties are supported with additional staff from other areas. For upcoming agreements, they will not be funding any other new agreements. They are working closely with

the commission to receive new funding for their partnerships with the current techs without losing the extra support. Travel remains restricted, with no overnight trips or registrations allowed. She emphasized that if NRCS is unable to attend upcoming events, it is due to these travel restrictions. Additionally, she mentioned the State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting scheduled for June 18, 2025.

Conservation Districts (OACD): Interim Executive Director Jean Lam reported that she attended the Southern Plains Lands Stewardship Summit, where she was excited to learn about new topics and programs, and to make connections for potential future partnerships. She also wanted to mention OACD receives 85% of their funding from NRCS and Washington DC, that they are working through challenges of their grants have been frozen or terminated. Ms. Lam stated the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant involving the OCC soil health team and the Kansas Association with Conservation Districts grant has opened back up and will begin support work in northwestern Kansas and northwestern Oklahoma. The OACD has been actively encouraging all directors to participate in the legislative process in real time as well. The Farm to School program is still in progress, working diligently to bring local foods to schools. They are continuing to meet for input and sponsorship in order to help producers increase their income in which also enhance conservation efforts. Additionally, Lam attended a training session with Taylor Marshall called the Fundraising Workshop, aimed at improving their grant writing skills for nonprofit organizations, which will help them secure more funding. She also pointed out that the Climate Smart Commodity grant was terminated on April 22, 2025, and they are currently considering the next steps for applying to the Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) grant, with an application deadline of June 20, 2025. They plan to refine the language for the Climate Smart grant in hopes of receiving more assistance.

STATUS REPORTS

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Haven – reported his area is blessed with moisture and all is good.

Mr. Victor – reported his pasture was in great shape but the wheat wasn't looking to great due to a lot of rain. The ponds are full and thankful for the moisture.

Mr. Priess – reported his area has received 9" of rain and ready to harvest the wheat. He mentioned that there have been reports of bridges with flooding issues.

Mr. Herald –reported his area has received 577" of rain for the year, it has been beautiful and green with the wheat doing good and ready for harvest.

Mr. Crawley- reported it is wet in his area and cannot do much with all the rain that has come through. There were some tornado damages in some areas (no injuries reported), a tornado had come close near his home 8 miles away.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Executive Director: Trey Lam attended a meeting with the conservation team regarding easements. He noted that when things move forward with the Farm Bill, more opportunities for easements will arise. Mr. Lam mentioned that the legislation aiming to ban the use of biosolids on agricultural land did not pass due to concerns about its impact on landfills. He emphasized that

increased support from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and congressional staff, including Senator Lankford, would be beneficial in advancing this issue.

Water Quality Program: Director Shanon Phillips reported on the excellent work being done in collaboration with Jeri Flemming from GRDA. She also announced that Jack Hilgert received the Informal Educator Award at the OSTA Science Educator celebration. Additionally, Steve Glassgow and Grant Victor were recognized in a New York Times feature titled “50 States and 50 Fixes,” which highlighted the successful non-point source initiatives. The article showcased the partnership between conservation districts, NRCS, and volunteers in efforts to protect local water bodies, specifically mentioning the Horse Creek watershed. 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 provided a handout to the commissioners regarding the use of drones for aerial photography at altitudes of 11,000 to 12,000 feet. He outlined the steps involved in the process known as georectification, where distortions in the images are corrected. The images are divided up into tiles to enhance clarity. Once processed, the photographs are reviewed by Wendie Sharp and TJ Hathcock. The handout includes a scale on page 1, indicating a 1" to 40' area, while page 2 offers a sectional breakdown for review. These images focus on areas north of Boswell in Choctaw County. Additionally, the photos can be rendered in infrared color. Once integrated into OKMAPS, the images will facilitate the identification of cedar trees. Training will also be provided to technicians on how to use the app effectively.

Land Management: Director Trampas Tripp reported that the unpaved roads program has received positive feedback. There were many requests to host training sessions and to involve county decision-makers from their respective areas. A schedule for additional training will be announced soon. The Terry Peach restoration program is currently underway, focusing on new methods to enhance the program and address eradication efforts statewide. Additionally, staff updates include the hiring of new team members for cedar technicians and currently receiving 70 applications that are under review for new locations that were advertised. The prescribed fire program has been approved for 13,000 acres for payments, and interest among participants is growing. Upcoming pre-bid meetings are scheduled for Areas I and II related to land restoration projects. More phone calls regarding erosion issues and flooding concerns and have been addressing those as they arise. 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 they have begun their summer tour with her division throughout the month of June, for hands on learning and training in each area. The TEAMS Meeting for June is with Greg Kloxin for the SHIP program and in July there will be training with the allocations for the new fiscal year. She also provided updates on staffing, including new hires in Murray, Creek, and Pushmataha counties, as well as the current vacancies in Konawa Conservation District. 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 conservation staff attended the National Watershed Coalition Operations and Maintenance meeting in Decatur, TX. She had extended invitations to district employees and directors, many of whom participated. The team is making progress in the watershed rehabilitation department, particularly with Sallisaw 33, pending an agreement for additional funding from NRCS. Additionally, they are working on the Upper Black Bear 62 watershed, which is also awaiting further funding, as well as the relocation

of a water line relocation before construction begins. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

Assistant Director: Lisa Knauf Owen mentioned collaborating with Ms. Green to meet with the NRCS to push for an agreement on the shared services contract, which expires at the end of August. She also noted that the Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association agreement, which has been in progress since January, has received funding and now has an expiration date set for 2027. Budget meetings with the division directors of the agency are scheduled for the coming weeks and will be presented to the commissioners in July. Office renovations are slightly delayed due to a water line break that occurred this past week during our principal staff meeting, which caused some flooding and other issues. As a result, the location for the current commission meeting was changed, and the water break was not included in the construction plan.

COMMISSION OFFICERS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

Commissioners discussed the rotation of officers for the coming fiscal year. Mr. Priess will be stepping up this year as chair. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the fiscal year 26 slate of officers as Robert Priess, Chair; Grant Victor, Vice Chair; Joshua Haven, Secretary. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess, Victor and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PROPOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 11:41 a.m., a motion was made by Mr. Preiss and seconded by Mr. Haven to enter Executive Session as authorized by the Oklahoma Meeting Act Section 307 (B)(1) of Title 25 of the Oklahoma Statutes, an executive session may be held for the purpose of discussing the employment, hiring, appointment, promotion, demotion, disciplining or resignation of any individual salaried public officer or employee. Those voting aye were; Victor, Priess, Haven, Herald and Crawley. Naye votes: none. Motion Carried. The Commissioners requested that Ms. Stewart and Ms. Owen remain in Executive Session.

The Commission entered Executive Session at 11:41 a.m. on Monday, June 2, 2025.

The Chair invited the public back into the room and stated that the Commission returned to open session with all Commissioners present at 11:49 a.m. A motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Crawley to return to open session. Those voting aye were: Victor, Priess, Haven, Herald, and Crawley.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

Dan Herald, Chair, announced that the Commission entered into an executive session at 11:41 a.m. to discuss the salary of the Executive Director as it relates to the state's statute and rules regarding the Agency Director Pay Structure. Those present for the entirety of the executive session were Commissioners Dan Herald, Grant Victor, Joshua Haven, Gary Crawley and Robert Priess, as well as agency staff Lisa Knauf Owen and Janet Stewart. No action was taken by the Commissioners while in executive session. The Commission returned to open session at 11:49 a.m.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS RELATED TO MATTER DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dan Herald, Chair asked if there were any actions or motions regarding agenda item #21 dealing with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission Executive Director's salary and compensation. No action or motion was presented for consideration.

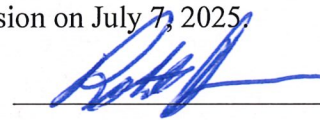
NEXT MEETING

After discussion, the Commissioners next scheduled meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that was set for Monday, July 7, 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 11:50 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on July 7, 2025.



Chair