

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, July 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 Robert Priess. 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 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 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.

SWEARING IN OF GARY CRAWLEY

Lisa Knauf Owen, Assistant Director and notary public, administered the Oath of office and Loyalty Oath to Gary Crawley, Area 5 Commission Member, for his new term ending June 30, 2030.

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
Gary Crawley, Area 5 Member

Absent:

Grant Victor, Secretary, Area 3 Member

Others in attendance were:

Trey Lam, Executive Director
Lisa Knauf Owen, Assistant Director
Bert Bitseedy, Administrative Assistant
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
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
Johnny Pelley, Conservation Programs Watershed Technician
Paige Porter, Conservation Programs Administrative Programs Officer II
Clancy Green, District Services Director
Brandon Welborn, District Services Administrative Programs Officer
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Director
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 SPECIAL MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Crawley and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2025; Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess 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. Herald and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the financial reports as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

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

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

RATIFICATION AGREEMENT WITH COMPLETION OF FY24 FEDERAL AUDIT

Ms. Stewart requested the approval of ratification agreement with HBC CPA's and Advisors in order to have a mechanism for completing the FY24 federal audit as required by EPA 319 Non-Point Source Program on Exhibit #3. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Herald and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the ratification agreement as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess 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 #4), item "a." After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Herald and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the ratified travel request as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Lam requested the approval of the following essential out of state travel request (Exhibit #4), item "b." After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Crawley and seconded by Mr. Herald to approve the travel request as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess 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 #5. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven

and seconded by Mr. Herald to approve the District Director's appointments as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DECLARING CANDIDATE AS ELECTED WHERE ONLY ONE PERSON FILED

Ms. Green requested Commissioners declare John Lamb elected to position #3 in Tillman County Conservation District as the only eligible candidate to file. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Herald and seconded by Mr. Haven to declare Mr. Lamb elected in Tillman County. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

REVIEW OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS ELECTIONS

Ms. Green reviewed the outcome of the Arbuckle Conservation District Election 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. Herald and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve the list of completed Joint Plans of Operation as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION - FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET:

Mr. Lam requested approval of the conservation district personnel and financial management policies on Exhibit #8, item "a." After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Herald to approve the policies as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven.

Ms. Green requested the approval of allocations to conservation districts for personnel and operating expenses on Exhibit #9, item "b.". After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Herald and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the district allocations as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven.

Mr. Lam requested approval of the FY26 Agency Budget Work Program on Exhibit #10, item "c." After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Haven and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the FY26 Agency Budget Work Program as presented. Those voting aye were: Herald, Crawley, Priess and Haven.

Mr. Lam discussed setting the conservation district director meeting expense at \$25.00/meeting for a maximum of twelve meetings as seen in item "d." After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Herald and seconded by Mr. Haven to approve to set the conservation district director expense at \$25.00/meeting with a maximum of twelve-monthly board meetings. Those voting aye were: Herald, Priess, Crawley 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 was not in attendance at the meeting.

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): State Conservationist Jeanne Jasper announced that they will move forward with their agreements with partners and the watershed program. Updates include the onboarding of summer interns in various offices, as well as the gradual filling of critical vacant positions by advertising and relocating existing staff. The team is actively evaluating additional funding and positions to support these agreements and expedite the process. Last month, an in-person State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting took place in Stillwater, with 60 attendees. The meeting recapped the accomplishments of FY25 and discussed goals for FY26, focusing on advancing financial assistance and payment rates with cost share for producers, while maintaining an estimated cost coverage of 75% to encourage farmer participation. Looking ahead, there are upcoming events such as the Nation-to-Nation event on August 18-20, 2025, in Shawnee, OK, and hosting the Chief at the end of August.

Oklahoma Association Conservation Districts (OACD): Acting Executive Director Jean Lam reported that the AMP (Advancing Market Producers) grant had been submitted on June 19, 2025, and the opportunity to reapply for previous Climate Smart Commodity funds to help with the supply chain developments and AMP with 65% of federal funds to go to farmers and ranchers. Recently, they have placed significant emphasis on partnership efforts, particularly collaborating with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Soil Health and Water Quality division on various projects. They have also been organizing tours, one of which is called "Urban Suburban," inviting members from the House and Senate to participate and visit 230 yards in the Oklahoma and Tulsa areas and are enthusiastic about the growth of this program. The Crossroads Tour, organized by No Till on the Plains, invites members of the Leadership class and CARE program to participate in a valuable and impactful event. Ms. Lam is excited to share the upcoming events they will be attending and sponsoring:

- Mid-July: Oklahoma Cattleman Association Convention and Trade Show - Norman, OK-Setting up a vendor table to create visibility with their agricultural adjacent organizations.
- July 25-29, 2025: National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Summer Meeting- Milwaukee, WI
- September 21-23, 2025: South Central Region Meeting – Hot Springs, AR

STATUS REPORTS

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Haven – reported that he received rain and all is good in his area.

Mr. Priess – reported the central part received rain and growing corn and soybeans successfully, although the wheat is down, the grass is green all around.

Mr. Herald –reported that there was good harvest weather and received 3” of rain in July and green grass all around.

Mr. Crawley- reported no changes in his area, with continued rain they were able to start back haying every three days and all the grass is growing good.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Executive Director: Trey Lam reported a busy month focusing on the FY26 budget and meetings with all divisions. He highlighted a meeting with the partners of the Terry Peach Project to discuss various approaches to invasive woody species. The recently approved Juniper Evaluation Tool (JET) project presents an opportunity for OCC to advance its objectives with support from the Chickasaw Nation, particularly in planning and modeling by utilizing the program drone imagery. Additionally, a new partner, the Comanche Pool—an organization of ranchers in Kansas and Oklahoma managing over 7 million acres—will be collaborating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Kansas Grazing Coalition. The Urban Grant Program, involving the Ardmore FSA grant and partnerships with OACD, the Chickasaw Nation, and Murray State College, will be launching soon with some challenges to still get through. The soil health crossroads tour was successful and provided valuable learning opportunities from other producers. Special thanks were given to Soil Health Director Greg Kloxin for partnering with Kansas No-Till on the Plains and setting up the crossroads tour. Lastly, our agency is in the final process of the FY21-24 audit and ready to move forward.

Water Quality Program: Director Shanon Phillips reported that the cedar monitoring equipment has been set up successfully and is producing positive results in clearing cedar and assessing soil moisture levels. The soil health and wetlands team are currently working on their second year of soil health sampling and making progress. The Blue Thumb team was enthusiastic about participating in the District Services training held across the state, and the districts that attended have received an education trunk to utilize for outreach efforts in the area. Due to the wet weather this year, the water quality monitoring team faced challenges in reaching their goal of collecting fish samples from 50 streams. As a result, they were only able to complete collections from 5 streams this season. However, they hope to complete more in the coming months. Ms. Phillips expressed her gratitude to the partners who assisted with the Crossroads bus tour, showcasing the excellent work that producers are doing. She also highlighted the successful conference on sustainable urban landscaping that she attended and thanked Water Quality Environmental Programs Specialist Marcus Long for his efforts in collaborating with partners to organize the event. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services: Mike Sharp, Director, has been busy working on the budget and has utilized most of the FY25 funds for IT equipment. He mentioned that they are still in the process of reviewing imagery blocks and have completed 14 out of 18 blocks. He stated the report is in the packet and he would be happy to answer any other questions.

Land Management: Director Trampas Tripp reported that there have been requests for training in the Clinton area for the unpaved roads program scheduled for July 17, which will be open to the public. The Terry Peach watershed project is progressing well, with meetings held to discuss various approaches to removal of invasive woody species, as mentioned in Mr. Lam's report. He noted that the conservation planners have completed their training and are now prepared to assist in writing plans within their areas. Lastly, there were updates on land restoration, including two pre-bid meetings held in Kingfisher County (\$369,000) and Ottawa County (\$338,000). He was able to find a solution for a landowner that had reached out to the land management division on an erosion issue on the landowner's property with great success. 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 the division is working on budget training and allocation processes with districts. The districts continues to advance in completion of Joint Plans of Operation (JPO). She highlighted the successful training session with Jack Hilgert, which was part of the District Service Tour on the Project WET (Water Education Today) program, with 68 staff members in attendance out of the 65 districts. Additionally, the June TEAMs training for district services included information about the SHIP program, hosted by Greg Kloxin. Clancy also announced the retirement of Belinda Dimitratos and Donna Gilpatrick from Jackson County and Greer County Conservation Districts. She provided updates on staffing and hiring within district services and land management positions. She stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

Conservation Programs: Conservation Programs Field Operations Manager Tom Goode represented Director Tammy Sawatzky at the meeting. Mr. Goode reported that, in the cost-share program for year 26, there were claims processed for 96 participants across 34 districts. For cost-share program year 27, there were claims processed for 20 participants from 8 districts. The drought program had payments made to 278 participants across 65 districts. This past fiscal year, there were 239 watershed projects for fiscal year 25, covering 37 districts; however, some projects remain incomplete due to rainfall. The watershed projects will continue during the drier days. He stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

Assistant Director: Lisa Knauf Owen mentioned the budget submission on July 1, 2025, pending commission approval and pending purchase orders to complete. The FY27 budget submission will be due on October 1, 2025. Additionally, she noted that the state auditor's office is concluding an audit for the FY21-FY24 period for the conservation commission, which will be presented at the August commission meeting. There were no significant findings, but the auditor made some recommendations for the agency. The monthly Commission meetings for August and September will be moved to a new location—the Agriculture Lab Conference Room—due to construction taking place on the first floor near the Agriculture Board Conference Room. She congratulated Clancy Green on being selected to participate in the upcoming 2025/2026 Ag Leadership Class.

NEXT MEETING

After discussion, the Commissioners next scheduled meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that was set for Monday, August 4, 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. Priess declared the meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on August 4, 2025.


Chair