

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Monday, September 8, 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 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 1:00 p.m. Thursday, September 4, 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:

Robert Priess, Chair, Area 2 Member  
Grant Victor, Vice-Chair, Area 3 Member  
Joshua Haven, Secretary, Area 4 Member  
Gary Crawley, Area 5 Member

Absent:

Dan Herald, Area 1 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, Assistant General Counsel  
Justine Anderson, Public Information Manager  
Mike Sharp, Office of Geographic Information and Technical Services Division Director  
Tammy Sawatzky, Conservation Programs Director  
Moriah Manuel, Conservation Programs Administrative Assistant  
Tom Goode, Conservation Programs Field Operations Manager  
TJ Hathcock, Conservation Programs Division GIS Specialist II  
Tony Harrison, Conservation Programs Watershed Technician  
Paige Porter, Conservation Programs Administrative Programs Officer II  
Clancy Green, District Services Director  
Brandon Welborn, District Services Administrative Programs Officer  
Maryanne Dantzler-Kyer, Water Quality Environmental Projects Coordinator  
Rebecca Bond, Blue Thumb Director  
Dan Dvoretz, Water Quality Division Environmental Programs Manager III  
Trampas Tripp, Land Management Division Director  
Bryce Boyer, ODAFF Director of Communications  
Jean Lam, OACD Executive Director

approve completion of all District Joint Plans of Operation. Those voting aye were: Crawley, Victor, Haven and Priess. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **INVASIVE WOODY SPECIES REMOVAL COST SHARE PROGRAM**

Mr. Tripp requested approval for the District Guide to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Invasive Woody Species Removal Cost Share Program, as outlined in Exhibit #5. Five areas will be selected across the state, each with specific requirements related to water concerns in the designated regions. The application process is set to begin on October 1, 2025, and contracts will be approved by January 1, 2026. A total of \$3 million will be allocated for the cost-sharing program, covering 90% of costs based on eligibility. The Land Management Division will be responsible for determining eligibility. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the district guide of the cost share program as presented. Those voting aye were: Crawley, Victor, Haven and Priess. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **MEETING SPONSORSHIPS**

Mr. Lam requested approval for sponsoring the Advancing Food as Medicine 2025 Conference and to continue sponsorship with the Oklahoma Compost Conference in collaboration with Rose State College. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Victor and seconded by Mr. Crawley to approve the meeting sponsorships as presented. Those voting aye were: Crawley, Victor, Haven and Priess.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments

### **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business

### **CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP REPORTS**

*Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF):* Director Communication Bryce Boyer represented the Department in place of Deputy Commissioner JanLee Rowlett, Mr. Boyer provided updates on monitoring the new world species known as screw worms, which are inching closer to the U.S. The nearest reported case is located 400 miles south of Texas. With winter weather approaching, it seems unlikely that screw worms will reach the U.S. by the end of the year. The team is working closely with Secretary Rollins to monitor the movement of the species. There has been one isolated case of a human in Maryland, but there is no cause for concern. The "AgHERculture" event was a remarkable success, with about 200 high school girls and 200 college women in attendance. This event provided invaluable networking opportunities and opened doors to a wide range of career paths, empowering young women to envision their futures in agriculture and related fields. The "Read an Accurate Ag Book" week involved 30 legislators and included 600 schools from all 77 counties, teaching agricultural topics through accurate Ag books, from kindergarten to high school. Lastly, Mr. Boyer wanted to highlight the MIO (Made in Oklahoma) Store that will be at the state fair that is kicking off this week, introducing new products and state fair exclusive products.

*USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):* State Conservationist Jeanne Jasper provided an update on the agency that is working on transition from the FY 2025 to FY 2026 budgets. The Nation-to-Nation Event was successful, with 80 attendees including 12 tribal nations. She shared updates about staff members who are actively preparing for upcoming fairs

Mr. Crawley- reported his area is good and green with hay everywhere.

## **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Executive Director:* Trey Lam reported on his involvement with soil health initiatives in Lubbock, Texas, as part of a multi-state grant focused on regenerative agriculture and cotton production. He met with the Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) to discuss the new customer service model and establish contacts for legislative outreach and lobbying efforts. Mr. Lam expressed his gratitude to Jeanne Jasper with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for hosting the Nation to Nation Conference, where he was pleased to attend and strengthen partnerships. He also mentioned his participation in the Leopold Award program, where he met some of the strongest applicants this year. Additionally, there were interim studies at the Capitol addressing the interactions between solar farms and agriculture, with connections in Colorado, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. Another interim study focused on the use of biosolids as fertilizer, which has generated controversy over past bills that were not approved but might be reconsidered this year. Water Quality Director Shanon Phillips and her team are working on interim studies related to scenic rivers, particularly in Choctaw County. There are also studies being conducted by Representative Grego on addressing feral hog issues. Senator Newton requested a presentation on water use concerning the effects of cedar and brush removal. Finally, he mentioned attending a locally led meeting with Lisa Knauf Owen that took place in Garfield County to discuss their resource concerns and set their priorities for the year.

*Water Quality Program:* Blue Thumb Director Rebecca Bond and Technical Programs Director Dan Dvoretz represented in place of Director Shanon Phillips to present updates on the division's water quality efforts. Ms. Bond indicated that she would highlight information regarding the Blue Thumb Division and the Soil Health Division. The fish collections were finally completed at the end of August. In October, preparations will begin for Natural Resource Days and Outdoor Classroom events. Blue Thumb Environmental Educator Coordinator Jack Hilgert has been invited to provide afterschool programs at three Oklahoma City public schools using the Project WILD curriculum. Additionally, the Blue Thumb 2026 calendar will be ready by the end of September. There is significant work to be done in the Tar Creek watershed, and partnerships are being sought for that project. The Soil Health Division continues its efforts in conservation planning for continued support for the SHIP program, the Yard-by-Yard program, and CARE program with outreach participation and educational events. The second round of the SHIP program has commenced, and the team will present the refined program at the upcoming Area Meetings. Lastly, the draft plan for the Grow Local Support Fund, in collaboration with the Urban Hub, has been completed. This initiative will support selected urban and small farmers with grants of \$8,000. Mr. Dvoretz provided updates on the Rotating Basin Program, focusing on the completion of water, fish, and macroinvertebrate collections between Basins 4 and 5. The technical program is being utilized in Basin 2 to gather the collection data to generate reports and will be accessible through a companion web application on the website for the first time. Additionally, the equipment for the Terry Peach Project is fully operational, with updates being uploaded to the database regarding water savings and soil response from the cedar removal project. Mr. Dvoretz also provided an update on the Kiamichi Basin Project, focusing on stream barriers to support fish communities and the necessary structural repairs for fish barriers. He mentioned the resignation of Wetlands Conservation Coordinator Jeff Tibbits and the ongoing efforts to organize staff to assist in continuing his projects and cost-sharing programs, which are currently in the process of drafting

*Conservation Programs:* Director Tammy Sawatzky provided an update on the completion of the PY26 cost-share program, indicating that the report will be ready in October. The allocation for PY27 has concluded, and the deadline for additional allocation requests is September 8, 2025. The team will be reviewing the allocations this week. The Emergency Drought Program have also concluded, with a deadline of September 15, 2025, for processing claims. The NRCS has approved five watershed dams for EWP funding, and there is additional funding for the rehabilitation of Sallisaw 33, which will be in preparation for construction. Additionally, Ms. Sawatzky announced that Tony Harrison has been selected as the new watershed technician. He will be joining the conservation programs team to cover the western part of the state. Mr. Harrison previously served as a watershed aide in Kiowa County and is excited to take on a similar role with many experiences. He stated the report is in the packet and would be happy to answer any other questions.

*Assistant Director:* Lisa Knauf Owen reported that the agency will transition to a biweekly payroll system in March 2026. The finance/HR team has been disseminating information and providing training for the staff about this change. Lisa attended three board meetings alongside Janet and Trey at different times in Kiamichi, Adair, and Garfield Counties, where they reminded the board members that they are public officials, not volunteers, and emphasized the importance of adhering to the oaths they took. The budget request for FY27 is due on October 1, 2025. One inquiry came from the legislature regarding badge data and the reason for our agency's increase in FTEs since 2019. Lisa explained that this growth is attributed to the expansion of programs. Additionally, she mentioned that Ms. Stewart and Mr. Sharp are working on Senate Bill 940, which addresses invasive species on state land, and are tasked with submitting consistent reports from 2025 to 2026. The team has finalized expenditures for FY25, along with the district claims. The shared staff service agreement ended on September 1, 2025, but was approved to begin again on September 2, 2025. Justine has been selected for the 2026 Soil and Water Conservation Society's Emerging Leaders Program, along with Maggie Woods. The proposal request for NACD Technical Assistance Grants is currently under review. Meanwhile, Stephanie Acquario continues to work on budget submissions for the Ardmore project.

#### **NEXT MEETING**


After discussion, the Commissioners next scheduled meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that was set for Monday, October 6, 2025, at the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Lab 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 10:56 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on October 6, 2025.

  
Chair