

## MINUTES

### CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met February 1, 2005, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair J.T. Winters Jr. He stated this was a regularly scheduled meeting in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Title 25, Sections 301 and following as amended. The agenda for this meeting was posted at 9:05 a.m. on January 31, 2005, at the front entrance of the building.

### ROLL CALL

Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, took roll call and the following members were in attendance:

J.T. Winters Jr., Chair  
Rick Jeans, Vice Chair  
George Stunkard, Secretary  
Dan Lowrance, Member  
Virginia Kidd, Member

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director  
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director  
Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director  
Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director  
Larry Edmison, Water Quality Program Director  
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director  
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director  
Lisa Knauf, District Services Director  
Mark Harrison, Information Representative  
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Senior Technical Writer/QA Officer  
Dan Butler, Water Quality Program Assistant Director  
Joann Stevenson, Assistant Attorney General  
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director  
Darrel Dominick, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist  
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency Conservation Program Chief  
Buck LeGrand, Farm Service Agency  
R.J. Gray, Legislative Intern  
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Winters led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2005, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **DISTRICT DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS**

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve district director appointments as listed below with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

\*Atoka County - Term to Expire December 10, 2006 - Troy Gammon  
Atoka County - Term to Expire February 11, 2007 - Roger Richardson  
Garfield County - Term to Expire February 10, 2007 - Richard Wuerflein  
\*Garfield County - Term to Expire March 31, 2007 - Kim Farber  
Love County - Term to Expire February 11, 2007 - Richard Taliaferro  
Major County - Term to Expire February 11, 2007 - Trent Martens  
North Fork of Red River - Term to Expire September 10, 2006 - Kathy Carter  
Pawnee County - Term to Expire February 11, 2007 - Allen Fulton  
Upper Washita - Term to Expire February 11, 2007 - E.F. Fowler Jr.

\*New Director

## **ELECTED POSITION #1**

A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Ms. Kidd to authorize the Executive Director to certify eligibility of candidates for District Director Elected Position #1 and approve polling places in those conservation districts holding elections for District Director Elected Position #1. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

## **OACD REPORT**

Chairman Winters moved this item up on the agenda due to a meeting conflict for Clay Pope, Executive Director. Mr. Pope stated that he will be attending an environmental legislative committee meeting this morning.

Preparations for the state meeting are in full swing. Speakers confirmed are NRCS Chief Bruce Knight, NACD Chief Executive Officer Krysta Harden, NACD President Bill Wilson, Congressman Frank Lucas, Secretary of Environment Miles Tolbert and hopefully Secretary of Agriculture Terry Peach.

Mr. Pope stated that Representative Armes has filed a bill regarding an environmental bond in the House and that Senator Gumm has filed a bill for the bond in the Senate. This bill would deal with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the rehabilitation of upstream flood control structures and the control of invasive species. Mr. Pope has met with Representative Curt Roggow and he is interested in the concept of a bond.

Mr. Pope stated that work continues with new partners. Chesapeake Energy may sponsor some of OACD's awards during Conservation Day at the Capitol on March 29.

Mr. Pope stated that the *Daily Oklahoman* newspaper printed an article by Tom Lindley regarding the CREP. The Historical Society bought and has sold some of the Out of Dust books.

President Royce Casey has organized an Oklahoma night for incoming NACD President Bill Wilson during the upcoming NACD annual meeting.

Mr. Pope left the meeting.

#### **PRESENTATION OF COMMISSION AGREEMENTS**

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve the following new agreements. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

- a. Love County Conservation District to assist NRCS with delivery of Farm Bill Programs by allowing district staff to provide direct technical assistance.
- b. The Nature Conservancy to create a statewide portfolio of biologically significant streams by compiling the aquatic portion of all eco-regional plans into a single product within a statewide ranking system.

Mr. Pollard stated that staff had spoken with Chairman Winters and Vice Chair Jeans about the following agreements and received approval. He requested ratification of these agreements. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Jeans to ratify the agreements. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

- c. NRCS No. 69-7335-4-40, Amendment 1, for native grassland demonstration and reclamation in the Tar Creek area of Ottawa County.
- d. Office of Surface Mining, 2004 AML Simplified Grant, Amendment #3 to add \$55,000 to cover cost for grout work on Spears House/Coy Subsidence Emergency.

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

A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Jeans to approve out of state travel requests as listed in Exhibit #4. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

#### **COMMISSION GRANTS**

Larry Edmison, Water Quality Program Director, presented grants for approval as listed in Exhibit #5. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jeans to

approve the grants as listed. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **CO-SPONSOR THE OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (OACD) STATE MEETING**

The OACD State Meeting will be held February 27-March 1, 2005, at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to co-sponsor this meeting. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **NEW BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE FOR WISTER LAKE PRIORITY WATERSHED PROJECT**

A motion was made by Mr. Jeans and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve a new Best Management Practice for Wister Lake Priority Watershed Project to allow cost-share for poultry litter export. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Ms. Kidd reported on attending a meeting called by Senator Corn and environmental agency personnel to discuss Wister Lake.

Mr. Jeans attended the retirement party for NRCS employee Les Conner and commended the NRCS for a good event.

Mr. Stunkard stated that Wagoner County's conservation district, farm bureau, farmers union and cattlemen's association are co-hosting a legislative breakfast on March 11 in Coweta and invited all members to attend.

Mr. Lowrance wrote a letter on behalf of the National Watershed Coalition to the new Secretary of Agriculture and received a response within a week of sending the letter.

Mr. Winters thanked members and staff for assisting during his recent absences. He stated that a no-till alliance is getting started in the western area.

### **OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF**

*Administration:* Mike Thralls, Executive Director, reported that staff is in the process of preparing a pre-proposal for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) which will be included in an environmental bond proposal. This proposal is being endorsed by Secretary of Environment Tolbert. There is interest in an invasive species component being included in the bond.

Staff may ask for an amendment to the Commission's budget request to include red cedar, some salt cedar and musk thistle. Mr. Thralls met with Speaker Hiatt to go over these issues.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee will begin agency performance reviews today. The Commission's review will be scheduled in the future.

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, attended the first meeting of the Senate Subcommittee on Appropriations which is chaired by Senator Jeff Rabon. These meetings are part of the zero-based budgeting process. During this meeting, staff fielded questions pertaining to watershed operation and maintenance and rehabilitation on upstream flood control structures.

Mr. Pollard and Mr. Coffman met with Risk Management personnel to discuss insurance coverage for conservation districts for the current year. He reported that since the districts have a clean claim history rates should not be raised significantly.

Mr. Pollard stated that a full staff meeting will be held on February 23 from 10:30 to 2:30, with water quality hosting the meeting and a chili luncheon. He invited all members to attend.

Mr. Pollard shared a copy of the resource guide which has been distributed to all newspapers in Oklahoma. He also shared a copy of the *High Plains Journal* magazine which has an article by OACD Executive Director Clay Pope.

Mr. Pollard welcomed Joann Stevenson, the Assistant Attorney General assigned to our agency.

*Financial Management and Human Resources:* Steve Coffman, Director, reported on attending a meeting with risk management to discuss the Commission's coverage. Staff has provided information on the Commission to fiscal analysts in the House, Senate and the Governor's office.

Mr. Coffman commended Jana Chicoine, Administrative Officer, and Eldon Merklin, Cost-share Program Coordinator, for mailing out over 1,000 1099 tax forms to cost-share program participants.

*Conservation Programs:* Robert Toole, Director highlighted his division's written report as follows:

Conservation education staff developed a soils education program proposal and facilitated a Land and Range Judging Setup workshop involving 12 participants.

Watershed Operation and Maintenance staff processed 24 claims, attended four district board meetings and developed a job description and began the interview process for the Seminole County Conservation District pilot project. Technical assistance was provided to 14 conservation districts and staff conducted watershed site video inspections in three districts.

For watershed rehabilitation responsibilities, staff attended board meetings in three districts.

Cost-share Program staff processed 23 claims for reimbursement and provided assistance to 19 districts. Mr. Toole provided copies of the Program Year 6 final report.

Mr. Thralls provided copies of the Commission's final Strategic Plan and commended Mr. Toole on his work.

*Water Quality:* Larry Edmison, Director, thanked members for their approval and support of the water quality grant applications.

Mr. Edmison reported on the legislative tracking system the Commission's uses to track legislation, committee hearings, and numerous other activities related to the legislative session. He provided a printout of bills being tracked.

*Abandoned Mine Land:* Mike Kastl, Director, reported that the program has requested more money from the Office of Surface Mining for the emergency fund.

The program has three active jobs and four contracts are at the Department of Central Services. Mr. Kastl expressed his displeasure with the turn around time of contracts being submitted to DCS.

Mr. Kastl reported that a contractor was awarded the Kingfisher County EWP watersheds totaling \$180,000. The Garfield County watersheds will be the last contracts under the EWP agreement with the NRCS.

*Information Technology:* Mike Sharp, Director, reported on Tar Creek activities and an opening at the surface of shaft in the Enochs project. He stated that DCS awarded a contract to The Benham Group on the West Commerce project. Six exploratory wells are being drilled to determine the elevation of the roof and floor mine workings. Mr. Sharp stated that with the new money the Commission has received for the Tar Creek project, new sites are being identified in the area.

Mr. Sharp stated that staff has been working to get all information migrated to the new server and are upgrading e-mail software.

Mr. Sharp reported that GIS Day at the Capitol is March 8.

*District Services:* Lisa Knauf, Director, reported on attending four board meetings to assist with personnel, tax and payroll issues. She stated that \$87,665 has been obligated under the Contributions Agreement.

Written reports from each division are attached.

## **USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Darrell Dominick, State Conservationist, stated that he is working with National Headquarters on budget deficit issues. Oklahoma did not receive money for watershed planning. The Oklahoma office has a watershed planning staff that helps with 2101 watershed structures in the

state. He has implemented a deficit reduction plan which bans out of state travel and involves being more conservative.

Mr. Dominick has been working on the Stamper Project and has had some requests for specific types of work.

A summary of activities for the NRCS is attached.

#### **USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY**

Rod Wanger, Conservation Program Chief, stated that the Direct and Countercyclical Program sign-up continued until June 1.

A 164 acre Playa Lake in Harper County was the first enrolled in the President's new initiative program on restoring wetlands out of floodplain areas in the Conservation Reserve Program.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on March 1, 2005, at the Biltmore Hotel, I-40 and Meridian Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 8:00 a.m.

Mr. Jeans introduced R.J. Gray, a Tonkawa native that is now working as an intern during the legislative session.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business a motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Jeans to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Winters, Jeans, Stunkard, Lowrance, and Kidd. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

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Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on March 1, 2005.

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CHAIR