

## MINUTES OF THE STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

1. The State Conservation Commission meeting was called to order by Rod Vorhees, Chairman and Area V Commissioner, at 9:24 a.m., Thursday, September 12, 2019, at the Cottonwood Court Building, Kansas State Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Kansas.

2. **ATTENDANCE:**

**Elected Commissioners:**

Ted Nighswonger, Area I Commissioner  
Andy Larson, Area II Commissioner  
Brad Shogren, Area III Commissioner  
John Wunder, Area IV Commissioner  
Rod Vorhees, Area V Commissioner

**Ex-Officio & Appointed Members:**

Peter Tomlinson, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Extension Specialist for Environmental Quality Agronomy Department, Kansas State University (left at 1:00 p.m.)  
Dan Devlin, Director, Kansas Center for Agricultural Resources and the Environment (KCARE), K-State Research and Extension  
Troy Munsch, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships, Natural Resources Conservation Service in place of Karen Woodrich, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture Staff:**

Rob Reschke, Executive Director  
Scott Carlson, Assistant Director  
Steve Frost, Administrative Manager  
Dave Jones, Water Quality Program Manager

**Guests:**

Herb Graves, Executive Director, State Association of Kansas Watersheds (SAKW)  
Larry Biles, Kansas Forest Service (KFS)  
Kelsey Olson, Assistant Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture (Arrived at 11:10, Left at 11:45)

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### 3. ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Addition to the agenda:

- Add agenda item 8. d. Governors Water Conference - Reschke

A motion was made by Brad Shogren to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Andy Larson. Motion carried.

### 4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

John Wunder wished to correct the July 29, 2019, teleconference minutes. The requested correction was to change the wording from “recommend the approval of” to “approve” on the motion under item 6a. Brad Shogren also wanted the same correction on the motion under item 6b. Rod Vorhees, Chairman declared the July 29, 2019, teleconference minutes as corrected consistent with Roberts Rules of Order.

### 5. COMMENTS FROM GUESTS:

- a. Larry Biles, Kansas Forest Service – **See Attachment A.**
- b. Herb Graves, SAKW – SAKW is looking forward to working with NRCS on the 566 Dam Watch agreement.
- c. Kelsey Olson, Assistant Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture – After a short introduction Assistant Secretary Olsen informed the commissioners that she has been working on a rural mental health initiative. There is currently \$500,000 for the initiative that will include a hotline as well as a website. Current agriculture issues including irrigation were also discussed with the commission.

### 6. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Conservation District employee update

#### Area II

**Edwards County CD:** Shala Miller, new District Manager, effective August 19, 2019. Cassie Burkhart, previous District Manager, resigned effective August 23, 2019.

**Grant County CD:** Miranda Bowen, new District Manager, effective July 1, 2019. Brittney Seger, previous District Manager, resigned effective June 28, 2019.

**Kiowa County CD:** Victoria Yohn, new District Manager, effective June 3, 2019. Donna Greenleaf, previous District Manager, retired effective June 28, 2019.

#### Area III

**Jewell County CD:** Monte Imler retired effective May 31, 2019. The position is currently vacant.

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**McPherson County CD:** Barbara Rush, new District Manager, effective July 1, 2019. Susan Buffington, previous District Manager, retired effective July 31, 2019.

### Area IV

**Morris County CD:** Tisha Richardson, new District Manager, effective August 5, 2019. Jo Bea Titus-Hutchinson will be retiring on September 27, 2019.

### Area V

**Allen County CD:** Barbara Smith, new District Manager, effective July 16, 2019. Colleen Riebel, previous District Manager, retired effective July 25, 2019.

**Labette County CD:** Erin Hibbs, new District Manager, effective August 1, 2019. Joyce Kramer, previous District Manager, resigned effective July 19, 2019.

**Neosho County CD:** Joyce Kramer, new District Manager, effective July 22, 2019. Abby Carpenter, previous District Manager, retired effective June 28, 2019.

The DOC and commissioners had a lengthy discussion concerning the amount of conservation district employee turnover.

- The DOC and commissioners noted that this has been an ongoing concern for many years.
- The commissioners were all in agreement that they needed to be proactive in looking for solutions.
- The discussion included district manager wages as well as current and future expectations for the position.
- All partners in attendance noted that district managers are a valued partner in the conservation effort.
- Chairman Vorhees provided written comments about this discussion for the minutes - **See Attachment B.**

- b. Ag Appreciation Luncheon at the State Fair – The agenda stated that the luncheon begins at 12:00 p.m.

## 7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- a. Watershed Dam Construction Program funding update for Dam Rehabilitation for FY 2020
- Rob Reschke updated the commissioners on the FY 2020 Watershed Dam Construction Program funding for Dam Rehabilitation - **See Attachment C.**

**A motion was made by John Wunder to approve the Division of Conservation FY 2020 Watershed Dam Construction Program funding for Dam Rehabilitation. The motion was seconded by Peter Tomlinson. Motion carried.**

- b. Budget updates for the 2021 fiscal year
- Rob Reschke and Steve Frost gave a brief FY 2021 budget update

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c. Water Resources and Non-Point Source carryover reallocation update

- Dave Jones updated that the DOC has extended the NPS carryforward sign-up period until October 31, 2019. The Irrigation Technology Initiative that will use WR funds will be launched in December.

### 8. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Review KACD Annual Convention Agenda, discuss/finalize SCC luncheon speaker and assign Commissioner duties.

- The commissioners discussed and assigned the SCC luncheon duties for commissioners, it was noted that Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam would be this year's luncheon speaker.
  - i. Preside at Monday SCC luncheon: Rod Vorhees.
  - ii. Give invocation at Monday luncheon: Andy Larson.
  - iii. Guest luncheon speaker introduction: Rod Vorhees.
  - iv. Governor's Recognition award winners during banquet: John Wunder, Brad Shogren and Ted Nighswonger.
  - v. Presentation of 20-year awards during banquet: To be determined at the November SCC meeting.
  - vi. Hold elections at area meetings for the following:
    - a) SCC areas I, III, and V.
    - b) KACD areas II and IV.

b. Discuss NACD Convention, February 8-12, 2020, Bally's Las Vegas, Nevada.

- Rob Reschke informed the commissioners that the DOC will pay for the equivalent of one commissioner to attend the NACD convention and that two DOC employees were going to attend the convention. He also informed the commissioners that the registration deadline is December 13, 2019.

c. SCC/KACD joint meeting overview

- The commissioners had a brief discussion about the SCC/KACD joint meeting, all agreed that it was a good meeting.

d. Governors Water Conference

- Rob Reschke passed out the information about this year's Governors Water Conference to be held in Wichita. He noted that the registration deadline is November 1, 2019.

### 9. UPDATES:

a. KDA Division of Conservation Updates:

- Dave Jones informed the commissioners that the first CSIMS webinar was a success.

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b. Ex-Officio and Appointed Member Updates:

- Karen Woodrich (USDA, NRCS): Troy Munsch attended the meeting for Karen. **See Attachment D.** Troy informed the commissioners that the signup for RCPP is currently open and that he is the current state RCPP contact. He will also be doing a breakout session at the KACD convention in November.
- Dan Devlin, (KCARE, KSU Research & Extension): No report.
- Peter Tomlinson (KSU Research & Extension): The search for a new Agronomy Department head will begin soon. The search for a SE Kansas agronomist will begin soon. The search for the SW Kansas agronomist position was unsuccessful. Peter has been working with Tom Roth on a nutrient management/precision ag training program.

c. Elected Commissioner Area Updates:

- Ted Nighswonger (Area I): The water authority is going well with many new members. The GMD 4 board had a discussion with Chief Engineer David Barfield.
- Andy Larson (Area II): There is a decline in full no-till farming in his area because of the economy and herbicide resistant weeds. The river is no longer flowing at Garden City and the rain has quit in his area.
- Brad Shogren (Area III): Attended the Ray Flickner demo days, where 150 people were in attendance. The demo days seemed to be well received.
- John Wunder (Area IV): Attended the Ag Summit; there was a huge diversity of people in attendance. Also attended the corn growers listening tour. There are many crop tours going on in his area. Has had three rains of more than 4 inches.
- Rod Vorhees (Area V): Chairman Vorhees thanked everyone and had no additional report.

## 10. ADJOURN:

**A motion was made by Ted Nighswonger to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Andy Larson. Motion carried.**

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for Sunday, November 24, 2019.

**The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.**



Rob Reschke  
Executive Director

**Kansas Forest Service Report  
to  
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts  
and  
Kansas Department of Agriculture's State Conservation Commissioners  
September 12, 2019**

**Forestry Awards:**

State Forester Award for Community Forestry – George Eib, Posthumously: Retired US Air Force Major: 35 Yrs. Kansas City Parks and Rec.: Bidder -Two Tree Services, and Arborist for Mission Hills.

Arbor Day Poster Contest Winner: Ashley Picazo, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Student, Junction City

Forest Stewardship Tree Farmer of the Year: Jerry Botts, Atchison CO.: 7 acre; 21 yr. old Black Walnut Plantation

Agro Forestry Tree Farmer of the Year: Steve Haas, Riley Co.: .8 ac Windbreak – 13 years old, 3.9 acre, 14-year-old Riparian Forest Buffer, and 2.8 acres' native grass.

**Fall Forestry Field Day**

October 9:00: Geyer Forestry Research Center, Manhattan

**Southern Plains Climate Hub:**

Managing Carbon Through Healthy Forest and Forest Products in the Southern Great Plains:  
A Workshop for Resilient Ecosystems and Economies in a Changing Climate

**Tree Distribution: Sept 3 – October 11**

All Containerized – Quantities of 25

**Fire Program:**

2020 Line Item Budget: \$650,000. First line item for Forestry since 1909

Staffing: Dennis Carlson – SC Dist. Forester moved to Fire

Successor District Forester, Chris Mullins reports on Oct. 6

Eastern District Fire Management Officer: Bryce Haverkamp, Seneca

North West District Fire Management Officer: Chris Hanson (10/06/2019)

Fire Program Business and Finance: Tim Flanary (10/20/2019)

**State Forester Position:**

Biles, retires on December 28

Screening Committee to have replacement recommendation to Campus (12/16/2019)

Notable discussion was held by partners in attendance about the vital role of Conservation District Managers. It was recognized that they are the face of Conservation at the local level and key to long standing relationships with local landowners and operators, citizens, businesses, land improvement contractors, technical service providers and the many cooperating local partners.

Other important issues included an emphasis on how maintaining the local presence was of paramount importance in the ongoing conservation efforts, delivery of local, state and federal programs.

Continuation of an ongoing concern was that the role of a District employee has changed over time and their responsibilities are much more than that of a receptionist or secretary. Employee turnover was addressed, with some pointing out lack of adequate benefits for many District Managers, inequities in salary between local employees compared to other state or federal employees with similar duties. It was pointed out that in recent years there has been an increase in what is considered a livable wage and concern was expressed about the frequency of employee evaluations at the district level by supervisors.

Further discussion occurred about potential new expectations for District Managers and the time requirements for USDA programs in the future. How do we determine or account for delivered services (deliverables) provided by District Managers was another question that was asked. It was recognized that District Managers are a key partner in the delivery of Conservation in all counties in Kansas.

## KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



## DIVISION OF CONSERVATION

## WATERSHED DAM CONSTRUCTION: REHABILITATION

12-Sep-19

FY 2020

	Watershed District	Site	RAC	WSI	Cost-share		
					Requested	Approved	Cumulative
1	Pawnee WJD 81 (*)	2-35	GB	DNS-0110	\$33,897.40	\$33,897.40	\$33,897.40
2	Vermillion Creek WD 70, Revised	1-11	KS	DMS-0123	\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$153,897.40
3	Nemaha-Brown WJD 7	31-13	KS	DNM-0329	\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$273,897.40
4	Delaware WJD 10	C-59	KS	DJA-0160	\$52,000.00	\$52,000.00	\$325,897.40
5	Wet Walnut WJD 58	111	GB	DRH-0043	\$55,400.00	\$55,400.00	\$381,297.40
6	Pawnee WJD 81	1-23C	GB	DPN-0023	\$104,532.00	\$104,532.00	\$485,829.40
7	Spillman WJD 43	C-1	SS	DLC-0079	\$5,040.00	\$5,040.00	\$490,869.40
8	Delaware WJD 10	B-55	KS	DAT-0231	\$44,000.00	\$44,000.00	\$534,869.40
9	Long-Scott WD 93 (**)	5-8	NE	DCF-0082	\$41,036.00	\$15,130.60	\$550,000.00

<b>FY 2020 Funding Available:</b>	<b>\$550,000.00</b>
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<b>Total Requested =</b>	<b>\$815,905.40</b>
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<b>Total Funded =</b>	<b>\$550,000.00</b>
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<b>% Funded:</b>	<b>67%</b>
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<b>(*) Partially Funded in 2019:</b>	<b>\$40,246.36</b>
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<b>(**) To be Supplemented in 2021:</b>	<b>\$25,905.40</b>
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**NRCS HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES  
for the joint meeting of the  
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
and the  
KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS  
HUTCHINSON, KANSAS  
September 11, 2019**

**MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY**

- NRCS is in the middle of Phase 3 of the Field Workload Cycle Time Study (WCTS). Phase 1 of the State, Area, and Team (SAT) WCTS began on August 19 and runs through November 10, 2019. The SAT WCTS will allow NRCS to capture the amount of time per work product that State, Area, and Team staff spend in support of field staff, or performing field level work
- NRCS is in the process of working with several partners on accepted Conservation Collaboration Grants or Agreements (CCGA) proposals that will bring additional technical assistance to the field. Partner employees will be starting across the State assisting with soil health, grazing lands, wetlands, and easements later this year.
- Implementing the STC's commitment to safety and to keep Kansas at the forefront of technology, we purchased iPhones for all NRCS field employees and partner technicians. These have just been received and will be deployed this fall.
- During this calendar year, we have advertised 35 positions, and to date 20 of those positions have been filled. We are in the process of advertising at least 8 more.
- NRCS will be participating at the career fair at Fort Hays State University on September 18 in Hays, Kansas, as well as the All-University Career Fair at Kansas State University on September 24, 2019 in Manhattan, Kansas.
- There was a total of 12 students this summer comprised of: 4 new, 3 returning, 2 through Texas A&M's Natural Resource Career Development Program (NRCDP), 1 OneUSDA, and 2 MLRA/Soils.
- Retirements:
  - David Jacobson, Soil Conservation Technician, Effingham
  - Erin Batman, Supervisory District Conservationist, Pratt
  - Kevin Buntin, Engineering Technician (Civil), Emporia
  - Chris Wilson, Soil Conservation Technician, Lyons
  - Bob Fisher, Soil Conservation Technician, Seneca
  - David Weishaar, Civil Engineering Technician, Wichita
  - Sharla Schwien, Resource Conservationist, Ness City

**PROGRAMS**

- NRCS will have a Kansas Technical Committee (KTC) Source Water Protection subcommittee meeting September 19 to select priority practices in relation to water quality and water quantity.
- NRCS will be requesting input from the KTC to review practice payment caps and to submit 10 priority practices to be considered for up to 90% cost-share.

- NRCS is looking into FY2020 to determine how to setup funding pools in our new Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI)/Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) that will be released in October.
- NRCS received 7 proposals under the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, with 6 selected for funding. The grants agreements are currently in the process of being developed, and once the agreements are complete and fully executed, the projects will be announced on the Kansas NRCS website.
- The schedule and location of the NRCS Farm Bill Rollout Training from Headquarters is still to be determined.
- NRCS is working on finishing up the last few obligations for EQIP and CSP for FY 2019. The obligation deadline is September 20, 2019. Below is a status of our obligations.

Sub Account	FY2019 Allocation Received	Applications Received	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount
EQIP General	\$33,137,470.87	2,411	1,110	\$31,712,351.99
EQIP Disaster (Flood Recovery Initiative)	\$1,250,000.00	148	49	\$425,000.60
CSP-GCI	\$6,646,000.00	747	622	\$3,087,135.00
CSP Classic	\$12,870,000.00	283	92	\$9,251,652.00

*\*As of 9/10/2019*

**Agricultural Conservation Easement Program**

- Easement staff are processing FY2019 Agricultural Conservation Easement Applications (ACEP). 23 applications have been submitted.
- FY 2018 ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) enrollments have boundary surveys and title commitments completed.
- All FY 2017 ACEP-WRE have been acquired and restoration has begun in some of the drier areas of the State.
- One ACEP-Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) application was submitted by a land trust for funding in FY 2019 on a 642-acre parcel of grassland with special environmental significance.

**RESOURCES**

**GIS**

- NRCS will be making a transition from Customer Service Toolkit to CDSI Conservation Desktop as the centric planning tool for all NRCS activities this fall. Field training has recently been completed.
- CART is set for deployment this fall as well. CART will enable planners to assess and document resource concerns using geospatial and in-field assessments, assist the planner develop alternatives based on producer objectives, and quickly screen and rank applications for NRCS programs.

**ECS**

- Staff continues to work with KSU to develop and improve nutrient management strategies and develop a framework using precision ag for conservation purposes.

- National NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines have been revised to include cover crops as good agricultural practice, guidelines will be in place soon.
- NRCS continues to work with critical partners to evaluate and re-design the Working Lands for Wildlife Program, Lesser-Prairie Chicken Initiative.
- With the release of the 2018 Farm Bill, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) opened to accept applications for Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). NRCS provides critical technical assistance to plan for all CRP, as such, field staff are working to service applications and will continue through the remainder of the summer.

### **PMC**

- The Plant Materials Center (PMC) Open House is on Thursday, October 17, 2019 from 9:30AM to 3:30PM.

### **SOILS**

- Data collection from the Grazing Lands On-Site Survey portion of the National Resources Inventory (NRI) is now complete. Field data collection was completed by contractors from SES, Inc. and the data are now being reviewed by NRCS.
- Soils staff are in the process of validating and updating soil survey information as part of the annual Web Soil Survey “refresh.” This effort takes place at the end of each fiscal year and incorporates all of the updates that the MLRA soil survey offices work on throughout the year. Anticipated date for release of the updated soils information to the public is October 1, 2019.
- Kansas is in the final stages of completing State Off-Site Methods (SOSM) for wetland determinations. Final revisions by the wetland team are underway and the final document will then be presented to partners and cooperators at the State Technical Committee with a planned meeting later this fall. The SOSM will then be posted to the Federal Register for 30 days of public comment. Once implemented, the SOSM will improve efficiency and consistency across the State. Using the SOSM preliminary technical determinations will be completed without a trip to the field by taking full advantage of geospatial tools and new technology like LiDAR. Field visits will still take place on all requests for reconsideration, and before certifying any determination that affects compliance.

### **ENGINEERING**

#### **Watershed Operations**

- Watershed districts and local NRCS field offices are working together on annual inspections for all NRCS-assisted flood control structures. For calendar year (CY) 2019, 552 of 830 dams remain under active operation and maintenance (O&M) agreements. To date for CY2019, 47 have been received for review and filing at the State office.
- NRCS is currently accepting proposals for FY2019 watershed operation project funding. Deadline for applications is July 24, 2019. Proposals can be for backlog/existing projects or new projects through PL-566.

#### **Watershed Rehabilitation**

- Kansas continues work on 5 watershed rehabilitation projects. Planning has been completed on all 5 sites (4 work plans). Three of the sites are now in design phase and

the two supplemental plans finalized this spring are currently being routed for NRCS Chief authorization.

- Kansas NRCS received FY19 funding approval for 12 dam assessments for existing PL-566 flood control dams. Assessments will be completed over the next 12 months.

### **Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP)**

- NRCS continues its work with the City of Manhattan relating to flood damages from September of 2018. The project agreement has been executed and designs are nearly completed with permitting and construction to occur later this summer.
- May 2019 storm events have NRCS staff working with local public sponsors to evaluate damages eligible through EWPP. Currently, there are 42 potential sites with rough cost estimates of \$5.5 million.

### **OUTREACH**

- NRCS participated at the Cattle U and Trade Show on July 31 to August 1, 2019 in Dodge City, as well as Sorghum U and Wheat U on August 14, 2019 in Mulvane, Kansas.
- NRCS presented at the Fire Influence on Regional to Global Environments and Air Quality (FIREX-AQ) (a NOAA/NASA interagency intensive study of North American fires) open house at the Salina airport recently with Senator Roberts and Senator Moran in attendance. The presentation gave a local perspective on agricultural prescribed burning and the role of NRCS in education and landowner assistance to use conservation tools responsibly.
- NRCS is currently participating at the Kansas State Fair at the OneUSDA booth. We also have a few NRCS employees that are filling in for some of the Conservation District shifts at Agriland.

### **EVENTS**

- Senator Moran hosted his 14th Annual Conservation Tour on September 4, 2019. NRCS Chief Matt Lohr was in attendance. The sites focused on conservation issues that included:
  - Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) at Noharts Creek
  - Iowa Tribe Tribal Soil Climate Analysis Network (TSCAN)
  - Emergency Conservation Program at HBJ Farms Inc
  - Kansas Commodities Conservation
  - KDWPT management of Benedictine Bottoms
  - Kansas City Metro Area River Ways and Watersheds at KAW Point

### **NEWS RELEASES**

#### **[NRCS, UC Davis Announce Release of SoilWeb 2.0 App Update](#)**

*SoilWeb* brings valuable Soil Survey information to the 21st century and makes it available at your fingertips on your mobile device for any location you chose in the United States. *SoilWeb* is available as a free app available for download from GooglePlay (Android) and the Apple App Store (iOS).

With its embedded GPS system, *SoilWeb* provides convenient, instantaneous soil information from the exact soil the user is standing on. The app gives users greater accessibility to NRCS' soil survey information that has been collected across the United States since the late 1890s. The app presents the data in mobile form, helping users make better-informed decisions about the location they are researching.