

MINUTES
EMERGENCY DROUGHT COMMISSION MEETING
January 9, 2014

NOTICE WAS FILED OF THIS MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON JANUARY 7, 2014.

The Emergency Drought Commission met at 4:00 p.m., on Thursday, January 9, 2014, in the Board Room of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, 2800 N Lincoln Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. A notice of the meeting was filed with the Secretary of State and at the Agriculture Building 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Members present: Jim Reese, Secretary of Agriculture; Mike Thralls, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission; and J. D. Strong, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

Absent: None.

Others present: Robert Toole, Conservation Commission, and Kirby Smith.

A quorum of the Commission was present.

A motion was made by Mr. Strong, seconded by Mr. Thralls, to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2013, as presented.

Those voting Aye: Mr. Reese, Mr. Strong, Mr. Thralls. No: None
Abstentions: None. The motion passed.

Status Update on Applications to the Water Resources Board

Mr. Strong reported that his staff has been working with the five (5) eligible applicants, Altus, Tipton, Blair, Guymon and Hollis, who have until January 15th to submit their completed applications. This is in addition to the preliminary information that was sent in to determine who might qualify and how much money they were requesting. He stated that they were now going through a more formal application process, which includes submitting their engineering work. To date, final applications have been received from Altus, Tipton and Hollis.

He noted that the dollar amounts seem to be coming down as people submit the more formal applications and they are able to identify what might be able to be financed through low interest loans. Altus' final application is a request for \$900,000.00 from the Emergency Drought Relief fund and a \$5.1 million loan from the Water Board to do the entire project. Mr. Strong was hopeful that a month after the final applications had been received they would have worked out what could be financed. Mr. Reese asked Mr. Strong if he would send everyone the results from Altus' water quality test.

Mr. Reese pointed out that although the projects don't have to be complete, the Commission's work needs to be done by Declaration's initial timeline of six (6) months (dated November 18, 2013).

Status Update on Emergency Drought Cost-share Program for Conservation Districts

Mr. Thralls reported they have allocated \$240,000.00 to five (5) districts: Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Texas and Tillman. They have held \$60,000.00 in reserve to give them flexibility to meet additional requests. Districts in Greer, Harmon and Texas have closed their application process and Jackson and Tillman close tomorrow. To date eighty-three (83) applications have been received with requests exceeding the allocation by \$100,000.00.

Final figures will be available next week after Tillman and Jackson close, but it looks like they will be asking for additional funds, too. Mr. Thralls said there is a possibility they could be asking for another \$150,000.00-\$200,000.00 in order to fill all the requests. These requests are 75% cost-share with the landowner putting in 25%.

Mr. Thralls asked if the Emergency Drought Commission would be willing to add additional funds above the initial \$300,000.00 pending solid figures from OWRB.

Mr. Reese asked how the applications were ranked and if there were a need to fully fund each and every one of them.

Mr. Toole noted that the formula used for ranking is determined by each Conservation district individually. Each district determines their priorities and then the criteria for ranking, so the formula probably varies from district to district.

Mr. Reese asked if would be agreeable to delay considering additional funds until the Commission met in mid-February and Mr. Thralls said he would prefer that, as any action would be premature without knowing the results from the OWRB.

New Business

Mr. Reese asked if it would be a good idea and serve a public purpose to drill water wells on School Land Commission land and make it available for cattle and or for fires during drought conditions only.

Mr. Strong stated that if they don't need funding they could possibly work through the OWRB to get permitted. One problem might be if everybody comes to the well and they use more water than they were allocated, then it starts lowering neighbors' wells. But if they worked through OWREB to get permitted then it all falls under regulation. The Commission felt it was an idea that was worth exploring.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 13, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Thralls moved, Mr. Strong seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 4:32 p.m.

Those voting Aye: Mr. Reese, Mr. Strong, Mr. Thralls. No: None
Abstentions: None. The motion passed.

By _____
Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Executive Secretary