

**Minutes**  
**TEXAS STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD**  
**July 16, 1997**

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board met on July 16, 1997 at 8:00 a.m. in the State Board Hearings Room at 311 North Fifth Street, Temple, Texas.

Board members present were:

Paul Robertson, Chairman  
Charles D. "Buddy" Clark, Vice Chairman  
Clarence F. "Dick" Schendel, Member  
Gene Sollock, Member  
James K. "Rooter" Brite, Member

Staff members present were:

Robert G. "Bob" Buckley, Executive Director  
James M. Moore, Assistant Executive Director  
William C. "Bill" Neiser, Assistant Executive Director  
Mel Davis, Assistant Executive Director  
Leonard Pietzsch, Jr., Chief Accountant  
Victoria Suniga, Human Resources Director  
Cheremie Viator, Director of Programs  
Danna Ryan, Information Specialist  
Melissa Burns, Information Specialist  
Sam Unberhagen, Program Specialist  
Mahendra Mohite, Engineer  
Lois J. Cain, Administrative Technician  
Rex Isom, Program Specialist  
Bob Gruner, Program Specialist  
Johnny Oswald, Program Specialist  
Joe Freeman, Program Specialist  
Adrian Perez, Program Specialist  
Roy Freeman, Program Specialist  
David Powell, Program Specialist  
Joel Clark, Program Specialist  
Dub Crumley, Program Specialist  
Don Brandenberger, Program Specialist  
Charley Rodgers, Hale Center Regional Manager  
Stephen Deiss, Wharton Regional Manager  
Steve Jones, Dublin Regional Manager  
Andy Garza, Harlingen Regional Manager  
John O'Connor, Mt. Pleasant Regional Manager

Others present were:

Comer Tuck, Texas Water Development Board  
Wes Oneth, National Association of Conservation Districts  
Dr. Bill Dugas, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station  
Ed Albrecht, Association of Texas SWCDs  
Guillermo "Memo" Benavides, Association of Texas SWCDs  
Dick Babcock, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Darlene Hicks, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
John Burt, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Bob Ensor, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Freddie Williams, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Chairman Robertson called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

On motion of Gene Sollock, seconded by Dick Schendel, the minutes of the May 28, 1997 board meeting were approved as mailed.

There were no district director appointments to be considered.

James Moore updated the Board on the status of Section 319 activities. He advised that two districts had technical assistance projects in the 1997 fiscal year grant cycle and that two districts are working on technical assistance projects for the 1998 fiscal year grant cycle. He updated the Board on a project at Fort Hood Military Installation and of a proposed meeting between Congressman Chet Edwards and project sponsors.

Mr. Moore then presented standard reports on Senate Bill 503 activities. He advised that 602 plans had been certified this fiscal year making a total of 2,153 certified plans to date since the program began. He said \$1,637,851.51 has been allocated in cost share for fiscal year 1997. He also reported on annual status reviews for fiscal years 1994 and 1995 for certified water quality management projects. Mr. Moore reported that five complaints had been received since the last board meeting, that four had been

investigated and one is currently under investigation. Of the four complaints investigated, three were invalid and one was valid but would be resolved by an existing water quality management plan.

Mr. Moore advised the Board of three requests that had been received since the last board meeting for Senate Bill 503 funds from the statewide allocations. He reported that two of the requests were a result of complaints. He also provided a summary report on allocations from statewide funds as of the Board meeting date as well as a report on regular 503 funds released by districts. Gene Sollock noted there were a number of requests from State Area IV that had been deferred because they were not a result of complaints. Mr. Buckley advised the Board that based on what has been done in previous years all money available for statewide funding should be allocated and should include unused cost share dollars that had been released by districts. Rooter Brite moved to fund the two complaint driven requests first, then fund the deferred requests in the order received as far as available funds allow, and give the Executive Director authority to fund the other requests on the list if additional dollars are released. The motion was seconded by Gene Sollock, Buddy Clark and Dick Schendel, making it unanimous.

James Moore discussed a draft Addendum to the FY 98-99 Performance Partnership Agreement submitted to EPA by the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission regarding use of 319 funds for development of Total Maximum Daily Loads in Texas. Mr. Moore explained that State Board staff had worked with TNRCC to include a description of State Board activities relating to Total Maximum Daily Loads in the Addendum. He noted that the proposal had not been approved by EPA.

Mr. Moore updated the Board on activities related to the North Bosque River. He said the Goose Branch Watershed project, whose best management practices are to be implemented on dairies to identify ways of reducing phosphorous levels in runoff water leaving waste disposal fields is proceeding even though it is behind schedule. He indicated that of the eight dairies in the watershed, six are cooperating and two are undecided.

A notice from the **Federal Register** seeking comments on the American Heritage River Initiative was discussed by Mr. Moore. He and Mel Davis had attended a meeting on the initiative and said a great deal of concern and opposition was expressed. Mr. Moore said the General Land Office is seeking a designation for the Rio Grande River.

Mr. Moore provided the Board a copy of a lawsuit filed by Cross Timbers Concerned Citizens against the Environmental Protection Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service in which the State Board's Senate Bill 503 program and the USDA, North Bosque River project are mentioned. He indicated that the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission is also mentioned in the lawsuit. Mr. Moore stated that the Attorney General's office had been advised and an appointment had been set with the Speaker's office to keep him advised on what is happening.

Mr. Moore provided proposed allocations for Senate Bill 503 cost share funding for fiscal year 1998. He advised the Board that the only change from 1997 was in State District Three where one district had been divided and reorganized into three new districts. He explained that there were six districts requesting to be included in the program that have not been included in the past. Based upon previous discussions with

the Board, staff did not recommend that these districts be added. On motion of Dick Schendel, seconded by Gene Sollock, the allocations were approved as recommended by staff. (Copy attached)

Bob Buckley gave a review of legislation passed during the legislative session that just ended in May.

Mel Davis provided information on district director elections and said elections will be held as in the past. This year elections will be held for Zone Five of each soil and water conservation district during the first two weeks of October.

Dick Babcock reported on activities of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and said they were in the middle of a three week sign up period for EQIP. Rules have been published on EQIP and staff will be trained accordingly. He also said on July 31st the State Technical Committee will meet to work on fiscal year 1998 EQIP program.

Comer Tuck from the Texas Water Development Board said with the passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act Texas will have federal funds for state revolving loans for drinking water supply. He said the 1997 draft of the Texas Water Act has been sent out and the last public hearing will be July 17 at the Texas Water Development Board's board meeting.

Wes Oneth, representing NACD, discussed the NRCS 1998 budget but didn't know exactly where the Grants to Districts program stood.

Dr. Bill Dugas, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, said they are continuing to interact with several districts on Section 319 projects and on the North Bosque River

project. He also discussed the process of connecting the State Board to the internet at the Blackland Research Center in Temple on the Texas A & M System.

Danna Ryan reported on activities of the Information/Education Department in the absence of Clyde Gottschalk. She advised the teacher workshops have been well received and attended. Another workshop they have been involved with again this year is the TNRCC Environmental Workshops. She said the brochure entitled "What Do You Know" has been redone and would soon be available. Ms. Ryan also informed the Board of a District Director Training Workshop to be held on September 3-4 in Temple; Capitol Area Boy Scout Workshop to be held on September 19-21. The brochure "What's the Difference" has been redone in the form of a video and is completed and was shown for the Board's review. Paul Robertson discussed the state FFA meeting he had recently attended and presented the award to the winner of the State FFA Essay contest on NPS pollution. The winner was an FFA student from Florence, Texas. Melissa Burns discussed Section 319 activities and said water quality conferences are being planned for Weslaco and Wharton. She said she is also working on documentaries on dairy composting and poultry composting.

Bill Neiser presented the expenditure report for the ten month period ending June 30, 1997. He discussed each appropriation item and said we were in good shape to finish up the year.

Mr. Neiser then discussed highlights of the proposed operating budget for fiscal year 1998. On motion of Gene Sollock, seconded by Dick Schendel, the proposed operating budget was adopted by the Board.

Bill Neiser then provided proposed allocations for fiscal year 1998 Technical Assistance grant funds and Conservation Assistance grant funds and advised the Board the proposed allocations were the same as fiscal year 1997 except for district #311 that was divided and reorganized to form three new districts. Program Specialists then discussed allocations with their respective Board members.

Chairman Robertson asked Memo Benavides to report on activities of the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Mr. Benavides expressed legislative concerns in Washington, D.C. and said he was trying to keep districts informed. He mentioned the Annual Statewide Meeting of Soil and Water Conservation District Directors and said some districts have concerns with the resolution process. Deadline for resolutions for the State Meeting is August 14th. He advised the Association Board of Directors were meeting on July 17 and invited State Board members to attend. He also expressed appreciation for the help of the Program Specialists in setting up the area association meetings.

Bill Neiser discussed the cooperative agreements with districts that provide staff support for regional offices in Dublin, Harlingen and Hale Center and advised there is a need to renegotiate these contracts for the 1998-1999 biennium. On motion of Dick Schendel, seconded by Rooter Brite the Executive Director was given authority to renegotiate the agreements.

Bill Neiser discussed a letter received from the Chairman of the El Paso-Hudspeth Soil and Water Conservation District #205 stating he felt technical assistance funds from the State Board were not being used as they were intended to be used. Mr. Neiser said he

met with the district to review their records and found nothing incorrect. Bob Buckley provided the background to the problem the district is having and said he will be meeting with the district board on August 12, 1997 to discuss the problem.

Victoria Suniga provided the Board with an update from the Human Resources Department saying the agency currently has 59 employees. She also provided an Affirmative Action update and an Employee Training update.

Mel Davis discussed the Conservation Awards program and provided a financial report for area awards banquets recently held. He said it was now time to consider changes for next year's program. After discussion it was the consensus of the Board to delete "runner-up" in the letter and let each area decide if they want to have a runner up. It was the consensus of the Board to combine the News Media and Business Professional categories and to eliminate the District Conservationist category. There was discussion of a desire to have a state level winner for the poster and essay contest and it was suggested selecting a state winner from the five area first place winners and present the winner of each category a plaque at the state meeting. On motion of Rooter Brite, seconded by Gene Sollock, the Board agreed to select state winners in the poster and essay contests and recognize the winners appropriately.

The Board then returned to the allocation of fiscal year 1998 grant funds. After discussion between Board members and respective program specialists and on motion of Gene Sollock, seconded by Dick Schendel, the allocations for fiscal year 1998 Technical Assistance were approved as attached.



On motion of Buddy Clark, seconded by Gene Sollock, the previously discussed fiscal year 1998 Conservation Assistance funding was approved as attached.

Mel Davis discussed the Lone Star Land Steward Awards and advised the Board that last year's Conservation Awards program wildlife winners will be submitted. Deadline for entry is August 29, 1997.

Mel Davis advised the planning committee for the Annual Statewide Meeting of Soil and Water Conservation District Directors would meet following the State Board meeting in the Hearings Room and would consist of State Board Chairman, Board member from Area III, Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts' President, Association Director from Area III, President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Executive Director and any staff designated by the Executive Director.

John Burt discussed budget problems and restructuring of the Natural Resources Conservation Service into USDA Service Centers. He said on July 25th there will be a satellite down link all over the state and each district chairman has been invited to attend and will receive the information at the same time concerning the restructuring.

The Board was provided a copy of the information sent to districts on co-locating offices of the NRCS, FSA and Rural Development into USDA Service Centers.

The Southeastern/South Central NACD joint meeting to be held in Tunica, Mississippi on July 27-29, 1997 was discussed. The Board was advised of hotel reservations that had been made in their names.

Bill Neiser provided a travel report for Board members showing balances for travel and per diem. Rooter Brite asked for travel approval to attend the National Grazing

Lands Conservation Initiative Steering Committee meeting in Bozeman, Montana on August 7-10, 1997. On motion of Buddy Clark, seconded by Dick Schendel, the Board approved to reimburse Mr. Brite for his travel to Bozeman, Montana.

On motion of Rooter Brite, seconded by Buddy Clark, the Board went into an Executive Session at 4:55 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. At 5:25 p.m. the Board went back into regular session. Gene Sollock, with reference to the discussions in the executive session of salary increases for exempt personnel, moved to increase salaries for exempt personnel by 3% across the board. Dick Schendel seconded the motion and motion carried.

The next Board meeting was set for September 10th, 1997.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Paul E. Robertson  
Chairman

Lois J. Cain  
Secretary

9-10-97  
Date

I certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Board meeting held on July 16, 1997.

9-10-97  
Date

Robert A. Buckley  
Executive Director