

Spring Creek Coalition Board Meeting  
Minutes – June 22, 2023

Present were members, Beth Rooney, Bill Chambers, Chris Beckwith, David Martinez, Karen Harris, Karen White, Mike Appel, and Travis Fite. Absent was Angela Brazeal and Sandy Whitekiller

Meeting began at 6:02 pm

1. Lawsuit Update:

a. The case is on hold until the lawyers agree on a new hearing date.

2. A motion was made by David Martinez and seconded to approve the May 2023 meeting minutes. The motion passed.

**Committee Reports/Old Business**

3. Treasurer's Report – B. Rooney:

a. last month's beginning balance was \$33,535.80

b. Credits \$24.95 for returning one set of XL vests (for trash pick-up)

c. Debit of \$5.00

d. Ending April balance: \$33,555.75

e. Upcoming expense of \$645.00 for the SCC's D&O liability insurance annual premium.

f. Beth applied for a grant from the Kirkpatrick foundation and the SCC was awarded \$7,147 to pay for water monitoring, education, and overhead.

4. GIS System – David Martinez

a. Brad Rogers, a modeler with the Oklahoma Conservation Coalition (OCC), stated there has been progress made with modeling regarding hydrology – the area modeled is larger and encompasses the entire Neosho basin. Now able to model Spring Creek using a web version of the SWAT model.

a. Board member inquired what factors affect hydrology. Water quantity was mentioned as one.

b. According to the model, the total water output looked good; no change or reduction

c. Multiple board members stated this was not consistent with their observations of water quantity on different sections of Spring Creek.

d. The gauge was removed January 2021. There haven't been actual measurements since.

b. The OCC also reported on macroinvertebrate monitoring. Based on data obtained from the Blue Thumb group, Spring Creek is classified as impaired based on this data.

c. Blue Thumb also performed a fish collection last year.

a. Board members shared their observations, which included fewer fish, no schools of sunfish, no hogsuckers, and presence and absence of otters at different locations.

b. B. Rooney shared that Brandon with the Oklahoma Dept of Water Conservation (ODWC) stated at our annual meeting that Spring Creek was already compromised based on observable fish data.

c. D. Martinez commented on the relationship between algae and fish.

i. Algae – base of food chain

ii. Periphyton is algae attached to stream bottom.

iii. Periphyton is a sensitive indicator of nutrient pollution and there is a protocol to evaluate

iv. 1988 Water Resource Board report on the ecology of Spring Creek

1. Looked at how much chlorophyll was present

2. Assessed stomach content of fish: 70% was solitary & colonial algae; 30% filamentous algae.

3. David speculated that a majority is likely now filamentous algae, which is indicative of a change in trophic structure of the creek ecology. This change is

due to increases in both phosphorous and nitrogen levels in the creek. It is possible an increase in temperature resulted from clearing trees from the stream bank, which could also be a factor.

4. M Appel commented it would be nice to have a current assessment. D Martinez said either the Water Resource Board or the OCC may conduct a survey.
5. Have tech conservation with OCC & encourage more studies.
  - B. Rooney stated rotating basin people came out last year, but results haven't been posted yet. David Martinez will inquire.

5. It has been over a year since the OK Attorney General requested documents from the SCC regarding fund raising. The SCC hasn't received

6. The board revisited the question raised last month by Angela Brazeal – what does the SCC want from the lawsuit? What is considered a “win”?

- a. It was mentioned that we are not pursuing damages in this suit. Rather the suit is pursuing the right to “due process” as the lawyers feel this is the first step and is also a winnable suit. Also, no evidence was provided to seek damages. Our attorney has made it clear we aren't addressing the poultry litter at this time.
- b. SCC has larger hopes – see list below. We need to determine what our next steps will be.
  - I. ability to protest (due process)
  - II. removal of chicken litter from the watershed
  - III. environmental regulation
  - IV. OWRB to assess the quality of the creek
  - V. Classify the poultry houses as CAFOs (the ability to protest is built into CAFO designation)
  - VI. For ODAFF to monitor and enforce the nutrient management plans that are in place.
- c. Bill Chambers will clarify goals with attorney Matt Alison
- d. Beth shared the talking points she prepared for the hoped-for meeting with AG Drummond, as they include the background and goals of the SCC as it relates to the poultry houses.

8. Open for Discussion and New Business

- a. Per an article in the Tulsa World, Brandon Brown has been transferred from ODWC Supervisor of the paddle fish division to supervisor of the ODWC Southeast Region which includes Spring Creek.
- b. Karen Harris received a postcard from the OK Conservation Coalition.
  - i. it was perceived as a PR move on behalf of the poultry industry, advertising a project to protect poultry growers and their neighbors.
  - ii. board members pointed out that OCC cannot protect neighbors while also protecting the poultry industry.
    - a. Can find more information about this online at <https://conservation.ok.gov/neighbors-helping-neighbors/>
    - b. Partners of the program include GRDA and NRCS as well as others.
    - c. Documenting changes in water quality is a listed program available
    - d. Contact information lists Jeri Fleming: [jeri.fleming@grda.com](mailto:jeri.fleming@grda.com)
    - e. Will ask Jeri to attend the July SCC board meeting
    - f. For the OWRB to assess the quality of the creek
    - g. To classify the poultry houses as CAFOs, which have more regulatory hoops
- c. HB 2053 - a bill attempting to restrict frivolous lawsuits against OWRB - passed. However, the language of the original bill was significantly changed making it meaningless (this per comments from freelance reporter Kelly Bostian shared by board member Chris Beckwith).
- d. Upcoming dates
  - 7/20 next board meeting

9/23 water monitoring

9. Beth Rooney motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 pm. Motion was seconded and passed.  
Minutes prepared by Karen White, SCC Secretary