

SPARTA GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
MINUTES OF MEETING November 8, 2007

The Sparta Groundwater Conservation District met on Thursday, November 8, 2007 at 3:15 P.M in the Claiborne Parish Police Jury Building, 507 W. Main St., Homer LA 71040.

Attendance: Members Present: Herbert Byars, Gene Coleman, Billy Don Perritt, Jackie Perritt, Edward Dayton, Leslie Thompson, Dan Morgan, John Van Bennett, Alice Stewart, and Dennis E. Woodward. Members Absent: Mack Calhoun, Gary Carlisle, Kim L. Brantley, Todd Culpepper, Samuel P. Little, Olevia McDonald, George Rolfe, Jr., and Bobby E. Price. Attendance Sheets (Attachment VII)

Call to Order, Agenda (Attachment I) Approval, and Minutes Approval

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gene Coleman, who led an invocation and Pledge of Allegiance. After motion by Dennis Woodward and second by Leslie Thompson, the agenda was approved unanimously. After motion by Van Bennett and second by Jackie Perritt, the Sept. 13 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Welcome and Announcements

To New Sparta Commission Member

Gene Coleman welcomed Leslie Thompson, who is replacing Don Essmeier as representative of Jonesboro on the Sparta Commission. Mayor Thompson said he looks forward to working with the Commission on Sparta issues.

To Guests from the Union County (Arkansas) Water Conservation Board (UCWCB)

Gene Coleman welcomed UCWCB guests: Robert Reynolds, board president, Sherrel Johnson, grants administrator, and Cindy Woolsey, administrative assistant.

To Claiborne Parish Police Jury Sec.-Treasurer Dwayne Woodard. Mr. Woodard presented a C.P.P.J. check for \$3000 for the parish's annual \$2000 contribution plus extra to help fund a shared position with LSU Agcenter.

To Leslie Quinn, Senator Vitter's aide. Ms. Quinn said that Senator Vitter is supportive of the Sparta Commission's effort and aware of the need for Federal resources.

Address by Director of the Office of Conservation (OC) Water Resources Division, Tony Duplechin

1) *OC plans to fund Real Time Water Well Monitors*, a USGS project directed by Ben McGee. Arrangements are expected to be completed by the end of November.

2) *OC has been restructured.* Mr. Duplechin read a memorandum of November 7, 2007 (*Attachment II*):

a) *A new 'Environmental Division' will be directed by Gary Snellgrove garys@dnr.state.la.us;*

b) *within this division, Mr. Duplechin will become Geologist Administrator tonyd@dnr.state.la.us;*

c) *the division will 'oversee and manage abandoned oilfield sites' and 'have a strong presence in providing ground water and aquifer conservation, management, and environmental protection, including protection from contamination due to oil and gas activities and operations.'*

Rick Hohlt asked, "Will consolidation mean reduced staff?" Tony Duplechin replied that consolidation enables sharing of resources. In a Legacy Law vs SW LA Corbell (sp?) case, landowners received \$33 million for oil spill damages but the funds were not used for clean-up. Changes can assure funds are spent appropriately. Noting that language of the memorandum concentrates on petroleum resources, Rick Hohlt asked whether that field will be the bulk of the new division's work. Tony Duplechin suggested that the Commissioner of Conservation be asked.

3) *Reporting of well water use in areas designated 'of concern' is complete except for one water company in West Monroe.* The most recent notice was sent in August. OC is not authorized to penalize for noncompliance.

Address by Louisiana Legislator Rick Gallot

Rep. Gallot said that he will work on legislation, for the coming session, to provide possibly \$250,000 annually to enable the Sparta Commission to fulfill its Sparta conservation purposes. He said he had spoken to Governor Elect Jindal about this. He agreed that, after the 2007 legislative session, he and Sen. Elect Wallsworth had told the Sparta Commission that they would work together to accomplish this funding goal. Comments followed, to wit:

1) The Sparta Commission's lack of authority. Someone said, as DNR OC restructures, Sparta management from the local perspective needs attention, following successful models, the UCWCB and the Capital Area program.

2) User fees. Herb Byars said the Webster Parish Watershed District was prevented from imposing a water user fee, which would have helped address problems related to the parish's 35 water systems (the states record for number of

water systems in a parish). He said legislation authorizing the imposition of user fees is needed.

3) Need for a full-time Sparta Director, following the Capital Area model. Someone remarked that a small user fee for Sparta conservation spread over 16 parishes could generate the required approximately \$200,000.

Other Business

Offer by LSU AgCenter to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (COA) for a Sparta-dedicated Position.

Gene Coleman asked that, to begin discussion, a motion be made to accept the offer for two years (legislation may provide funds thereafter); each party would pay half of the salary and expenses (~\$35,000 each) associated with the new position. Herb Byars so moved, and Jackie Perritt seconded. Discussion followed.

1) Dr. Nipper said the AgCenter has been trying to establish such a position for three or four years; now a COA with the Louisiana Rice Research Board provides a model. The employee would report to the AgCenter; the Sparta Commission could be part of a hire/fire team; the COA would specify duties required by the Sparta Commission (to include educating, but not lobbying, legislators). Alice Stewart handed out background information (*Attachment III*)

2) There was concern that the Sparta Commission might not have the required funds (current annual revenue is below the amount required, and the Commission funds an on-going USGS study). Gene Coleman suggested that OC be asked to pick up the USGS study expense as it pays for Real Time Monitoring. Mr. Duplechin agreed to ask. Ben McGee thanked the Commission for funding the study and agreed to continue to seek other funding avenues.

The motion for the Commission to enter into a COA with the AgCenter was modified by Herb Byars to make it contingent upon arranging for adequate funding for two years. Billy Perritt seconded, and this modified motion carried unanimously. The Long Term Planning Committee is to present a draft COA at the Commission's Feb. meeting.

Treasurer/Finance Committee Report

Dennis Woodward distributed a financial statement (*Attachment IV*): the major expense was a payment for the USGS well monitoring study, leaving \$14,200 (a rounded figure) on hand. Upon motion by Dan Morgan, seconded by Dennis Woodward, the treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

Other Committee Reports

Public Relation/ Education and Finance Jackie Perritt requested all in attendance to *provide information about area festivals, which can serve as Sparta education opportunities*. Rick Hohlt is helping produce a *Sparta DVD* for schools [Trailblazer projects are funded by Entergy-Customer Relations Dir. Jim Pesnell and NRCS].

Long-term Planning (LTP) 1) Alice Stewart reported on the *Arkansas-Louisiana 10th Anniversary meeting on October 25 (Attachment V)*: The UCWCB provided lunch, then a tour of the widely recognized new surface water source that makes Union County economically competitive for years to come. Paid studies and paid recruitment of broad-based participation and a 'critical area' designation were required.

2) *Recommendations (Attachment V): 1) Continue to work with legislators for an effective local voice; 2) Develop details of the AgCenter -COA; 3) ask Sparta Commission nominating bodies to help fund the position.* Upon motion by Dan Morgan, seconded by Dennis Woodward, the reports were approved unanimously.

Presentation

Larry LaBorde of Continental Drilling and Services, by slide show, told about the Sparta aquifer, its declining water levels, the public consumption fraction's outpacing that of industries, the Capital Area management model, and the importance of plugging abandoned wells. In response to questions, he said Martin Gas Co. in Arcadia is considering a temporary project to use Sparta water to excavate salt from a salt dome to prepare for gas storage.

Next Meeting

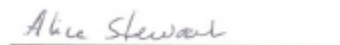
The year-end meeting will be held on December 13, 2007 at 3 p.m. at a place in Minden to be announced. Gene Coleman appointed a nominating committee (Dan Morgan, Edward Dayton, and Herb Byars) and asked Dennis Woodward through the Finance Committee to present a budget to be considered at the meeting.

Public Comments

Charles Doherty, D'Arbonne Rural Water District, stressed the need to model after UCWCB and for a 'critical area' designation. Kathryn Vaughn, Dubach area Vista Volunteer, emphasized need for conservation measures.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chairperson.


Gene Coleman, Chairman


Alice Stewart, Assistant Secretary