

Minutes of the Sparta Groundwater Conservation District Commission meeting on April 21, 2011

The Sparta Groundwater Conservation District Commission met on April 21, 2011 at 3:00 PM in Lomax Hall, La Tech University Campus, Ruston, LA 71272.

Commission Members Present: Billy Don Perritt, Ben Lowery, Todd Culpepper, Rick Hohlt, Steve Lemmons, Ted McKinney, Olevia McDonald, Jackie Perritt, Alice Stewart, Mack Calhoun, Dan Morgan, Charles Braddock, Terry Emory, John Van Bennett. Also Present: Bill Chaumont, Gary Hanson, Dr. Gary Kennedy [ex-officio members]; Lindsay Gouedy [educator]. **Commission Members Absent:** Chris Smith, Rep. Samuel Little, Willie Doherty, George Rolfe. (*Attachment 2*)

Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Agenda Approval, Welcome, Public Comments

The meeting was officially called to order by Chairman Todd Culpepper. Billy Perritt led the invocation and McKinney the pledge of allegiance. Hohlt moved to approve the published agenda; McKinney seconded; all approved. (*Attachment 1*)

Elected officials were introduced: Michael Jackson from Senator Landrieu's office; Tiffany Clason from Senator Vitter's office; Arcadia Mayor Eugene Smith; and Lincoln Parish Police Juror Roy Glover.

Culpepper invited Public Comments. Kathy Towns reported on an Arcadia meeting of citizens concerned about Arcadia Gas Storage's large volume Sparta withdrawals to leach salt dome caverns for natural gas storage. She reported that 65 citizens had attended the meeting on April 19, and hydrologist Ben McGee had presented information on well level trends in two area wells as well as general information about aquifers and specific information about the Sparta.

Minutes of last meeting

Culpepper called for approval of the January 20, 2011 meeting minutes, which had been distributed to members prior to the meeting. Billy Perritt moved to accept the minutes as distributed; Hohlt seconded; all approved. (*Attachment 3*)

Treasurer Report

Billy Perritt distributed and discussed a Balance sheet as of Apr. 20, 2011, a Jan. 1-Apr. 20, 2011 Profit & Loss sheet, and a comparison with Jan. 1-Apr. 20, 2010 profits and losses. He said donations were lower this year than last but so were expenditures. (*Attachment 4*) McKinney moved to approve the report, Calhoun seconded; all approved.

Sparta Foundation and Marketing Report – Rick Hohlt

- reported that USDA Water and Environmental Programs Director Richard Hoffpauir had favorably received his and Gouedy's request for Rural Development funds for Sparta education. Gouedy submitted to USDA grants reviewers educational aids to demonstrate the ongoing Sparta education program and how new funds would be used.
- reported on a presentation that he and Gouedy had made to the Caddo Council at which they requested a donation to the Sparta Commission. He said the presentation was well received and had prompted constructive questions and discussion. Last year's rotating Commissioner representing Caddo Parish, Phillip Lane, arranged the meeting.
- showed a 45 second Sparta PSA being broadcast on TV and radio and at area theaters. The spot is an excerpt of the educational video 'Sparta Aquifer: Our Lives, Our Water', produced by Trailblazers with Sparta Commission input.
- urged Sparta Commission members to seek contributions from nominating bodies

Presentations

- 1) 'Grand Prairie Irrigation Project: Arkansas, Prairie, Lonoke, and Monroe Counties' was the topic of a PowerPoint presentation by Dennis Carman, Chief Eng. and Dir. of the White River Irrigation District in Hazen, Arkansas. (*Attachment 5: bio.*) McKinney introduced Mr. Carman. By its end, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer-designed aquifer-to-surface-water conversion project to irrigate rice farms is projected to cost \$300 million for project items and \$100 million for 'on-farm' costs, shared 65% Federal and 35 % local farmers. Mr. Carman focused on requirements to achieve such a project. Responding to Hohlt's question, he said that a 'critical area' designation was crucial. It identified the scientifically-established problem; brought attention to the need for solution, saying, in essence, 'if you want a solution, this is a way to get there'; funds followed. The designation was important, too, for residents to receive tax credits up to 50% for conservation measures. And the local population was reassured, discovering there were no negatives to the 'critical area' designation, i.e. the designation did not lead to restrictions but encouraged ways to arrive at solutions. Last year's rotating Sparta Commissioner, Phillip Lane, asked the cost of a pipeline. Mr. Carman estimated an average \$20/foot for a 12" pipeline installed but mentioned a number of qualifiers.
- 2) 'Arcadia Gas Storage Summary and Freshwater Strategy' was the topic of a PowerPoint presentation by Jeff Ballew, President and CEO of Cardinal Gas Storage Partners. At the completion in mid-2013 of the \$250 to \$275 million project, Arcadia salt dome caverns will have the capacity to store 13.8 Bcf of working gas. Proportionally less Sparta water will be used as the project proceeds and conservation measures are added, including use of creek water, Raeford poultry processing plant effluent, and treated waste water from Arcadia. At the height of water use, in 2012, the Sparta is expected to supply somewhat less than 50% of water use. Mr. Ballew said natural gas, cheaper and more environmentally-friendly than coal, is

being produced and piped west-to-east across north Louisiana. Storage is needed, not to manipulate prices, but to ensure that supplies are adequate to meet seasonal and other changes in demand for natural gas. He said that Cardinal Gas would be voluntarily reporting pumpage to DNR quarterly. In response to Morgan's question, Mr. DeWare of the AGS plant estimated \$30 million for the first 15 miles of pipeline, and Mr. Ballew added there are less recognized costs of surface water use--time to obtain permissions, treatment of silt and impurity-laden water, and, for long-term operations, replacement of equipment more likely to be eroded by surface water than Sparta water. In response to Billy Perritt's question, Mr. Ballew explained that Cardinal Gas arranged to construct a well for AGS's brief use, which well would then be donated to the Town of Arcadia. (*Attachment 6: Report of 2/11/2011 Sparta Commission ad hoc committee meeting with Cardinal Gas Storage officials*)

3) Students from Dubach, Grambling, and Ruston high schools in Lincoln Parish told about their Learn and Serve **'Project Invest'**. Gouedy introduced the students and teacher Lindsey Keigh-Vincente. Two students reported on a Sparta Foundation funded Atlanta trip, at which they received national recognition for Sparta conservation work funded by a \$5000 Project Invest grant for Sparta education, which included PSA ads on radio, TV and at theaters. A third student reported on his presentation at Sci Port about the Sparta and conservation. The students spoke of educational and educating opportunities the project had provided. They showed a metal water drop sculpture and described their role in its production and distribution to schools.

4) **'Report of Water Levels, Water Usage, and Water Movement in, from, and through the Sparta Aquifer in and around Arcadia, Louisiana'** was the topic of a PowerPoint presentation by USGS hydrologist Ben McGee. McGee said he'd recently received questions about water use and well water levels in Arcadia. He showed that the water level in a well in the area of the Arcadia pumping center had dropped 60 feet in recent months, then, from March 30 to April 20, had risen 30 feet. The water level in USGS observation well Bi-144, three miles northeast of Arcadia, had risen 5 feet in April after a recent 15 foot decline. He said these changes in water level were the result of fluctuations in pumping. An AGS spokesman reported that AGS had ceased pumping in April, between cavern constructions. McGee showed an AGS-provided summary of AGS water sources, showing a decrease in groundwater use over time corresponding to changes in total use and to increased use from other sources. McGee said drought does not directly influence Arcadia well water levels (it takes 36 to 144 years/mile times 10 miles for Sparta water to arrive at the Arcadia area from the recharge area), but water use, thus pumping, typically increases during drought. In response to a question by Hohlt, McGee said that pumping can cause problems for nearby wells, for example a large irrigation well in East Ouachita Parish (Froggy Bottom) resulted in need to truck in water for area residents. (*Attachment 7: Sparta Water Levels with Arcadia Area Well Details-4/12/2011*)

Reports

Conservation Educator Report (*Attachment 8*)

Gouedy spoke of several well-received presentations that had resulted in funds and funding offers for the Sparta education campaign, including an offer from the Ouachita Parish School Board. She is writing an EPA grant to help fund a water festival program. She spoke of work to extend Waterfests, which have now been held in Claiborne, Ouachita, and Lincoln parishes, to Union County, Arkansas and elsewhere. She has represented the Sparta Commission at meetings, including the Mississippi River Commission Meeting on April 13. For more details, Gouedy referred commissioners and others to a written activity report that she had distributed earlier by email.

Report of Sparta Commission's Representative on Groundwater Resources Commission (GWRC) (McKinney)

A four hour GWRC meeting was held March 14 in Baton Rouge. DNR Office of Conservation's 'Groundwater Program' report included a Sparta Aquifer update, and there was announcement that the Statewide Water Resource Management Plan is on track for public hearings in late summer. Several reports addressed surface water law and the sale of surface water. McKinney reported on one Attorney General Opinion, #10-0173: 'A landowner on one side of the bayou witnessed the withdrawal of nearly all of the running water from the bayou via a pump. Under the Civil Code, running water is not allowed to be taken out of a channel in a volume that would impair the rights of any riparian owners. A riparian owner may access and "use" the running water for his estate, but the water remains a public thing owned by the State under Louisiana law. Riparian owners only have the right to physically access the water for the purposes contemplated by La. R.S. 9:1101 and to use the water for reasonable agricultural, aquacultural, and other riparian uses...Act 955 of 2010 expressly provides the Secretary of DNR with the ability to enter into cooperative endeavor agreements with any person or entity seeking to withdraw running surface water.'

Culpepper announced that the next meeting of the Sparta Commission will be at the Convention Center, 901 Ridge Ave., West Monroe, on July 21 at 3:00 p.m., with the usual pre-meeting informal gathering beginning at 2:00 p.m.

There being no further business, Morgan moved to adjourn; Hohlt seconded; all approved.

William 'Todd' Culpepper, Chairman

Other-*Attachment 9: Information and Resources*

Attachments are filed with the minutes in the Sparta Commission office.

Alice Stewart, Secretary