

Minutes of the Sparta Groundwater Conservation District Commission meeting on April 19, 2012

The Sparta Groundwater Conservation District Commission met on April 19, 2012 at 2:00 PM in the Union Parish Courthouse Annex, 303 East Water Street, Farmerville, LA 71241.

Commission Members Present: Billy Don Perritt, Ben Lowery, Rick Hohlt, Mack Calhoun, Ted W. McKinney, Jackie Perritt, Alice Stewart, George W. Rolfe, Jr., Terry Emory. **Also Present:** Dr. Gary Kennedy and Gary Hanson [ex-officio members]; Lindsay Gouedy [educator]. **Commission Members Absent:** Todd Culpepper, Willie Doherty, Joe Stevens, The Hon. Samuel Little, Dan Morgan, Steve Lemmons, Chris Smith, and John Van Bennett. Without a quorum, there was no voting at this meeting.

Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Agenda (Attachment 1) Welcome, Public Comments, Minutes of last meeting (Attachment 2). The meeting was officially called to order by Vice Chairman Mack Calhoun. Billy Perritt led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance. Calhoun welcomed everyone and acknowledged elected officials: A.J. Smith, who introduced other Union Parish Police Jurors including Charles Sawyer and citizens, and Lincoln Parish Police Juror Hazel Hunter. There were no public comments.

Treasurer Report. Billy Perritt presented a Summary Balance sheet as of Apr. 18, 2012; a Jan. 1–April 18, 2012 Profit and Loss sheet, and a Profit and Loss Comparison with the Previous Year. First quarter income: \$1500 Bossier PJ, \$5000 Ouachita PJ, \$3000 Claiborne PJ (Lowery presented check), \$5000 Ouachita P. School Board for Gouedy’s teaching. Hohlt and Gouedy sent solicitation letters to nominating bodies and will send report of contributions. Hohlt asked members to follow up. (Attachment 3)

Groundwater Resources Commission (GWRC) Report by Ted McKinney, Sparta Commission Representative on GWRC.

1) Ted showed Managing Louisiana’s Groundwater Resources (produced pursuant to a 2010 House Resolution; available at DNR website), which he had received ten days prior to its presentation to the 2012 legislature. 2) In response to Ted’s request to clarify SB 502 (requires Sparta Commission annual report), Sec. Angelle acknowledged that the commission has no dedicated funding and said that only a short annual report would be required; Ted read passages that seem to require substantial data collection. 3) In response to Ted’s question, Gary Snellgrove said he considers the most significant issue arising from the groundwater report is need for improved data; since 1980s, the number of monitoring wells has declined 78% and of gauging stations 68%. 4) LSU Professor Tsai obtained Board of Regents funding for aquifer studies to start June 1; he had requested information, which was provided, including the 2002 MMLH Sparta Groundwater Study. Topics include Sparta’s impact on economic development, Sparta groundwater modeling and management, climate change and the Sparta aquifer. The researchers will report to the Sparta Commission when the studies are completed.

Discussion followed. Hohlt observed the absence of ‘Plan’ in the GWRC report’s title. McKinney said there would be regular updates. Hohlt sought (Hanson gave supporting information) more rapid progress toward a detailed plan. Hohlt noted: Sparta continues to be overdrawn; 35 years of declining levels is unchanged, except closest to the So. Ark. alternative supply project. If Gouedy’s and Hohlt’s USDA proposal is successful, some funds might be used for research needed to support a long term Sparta conservation plan.

LTP Report Stewart. 1. Ouachita River Concerns a) In ‘Managing Louisiana’s Groundwater Resources’: *Surface water quality must be protected to provide alternatives to groundwater use. Extreme drought in 2011* led the Army Corps of Engineers to reduce flow through a Ouachita River lock, reducing the river’s capacity to receive discharges, potentially impacting 67 water discharge facilities, including Graphic Packaging, a major employer and purchaser of La. products. Emory said the reported impact on City of West Monroe waste discharge was overstated. b) At recent *public meetings on the Corps’ proposed reduction in Ouachita R. operations, many supported full Federal funding for current services*, including 4 Ark. and La. U.S. Congressmen and Union Co. Water Conservation Board (UCWCB), who stressed that the \$65+ million Alternative-to-Sparta Use project is dependent on adequate Ouachita R. volume. Water levels, which had declined as much as 7 ft/year have risen as much as 62 ft; the project is vital to industries that make possible some 3000 jobs. Others in Arkansas and the Sparta Commission have joined UCWCB in requesting an updated Ouachita River study that assigns economic value to commercial river use but also to the river’s volume and flow and to the positive environmental and public health impacts on Sparta drinking water made possible through alternative Ouachita River use for some purposes. 2. A forwarded DOE study estimates the hydroelectric potential of several Sparta area reservoirs– not sure the purpose but a *reminder that there will always be new demand for freshwater*; all users must share in the investment to make the best use of our resources. 3. ‘Managing Louisiana’s Groundwater Resources.’ DNR website quotes McKinney appreciating the historical information and that the report serves as a genesis document for future plans. Report includes (1) *Sparta Commission should serve as a regional advisory panel*, possibly consistent with a request in the commission’s Jan. letter to Sec. Angelle (the second request for appropriate authority and dedicated funding was not addressed). (2) *Sustainability is a La. Constitutional mandate*. (3) *Loyola Law Review: La.’s water will be a scarce resource*; there’s a pressing need for good stewardship that balances the different uses. (4) Among ‘*Current Major Issues*’ listed: saltwater intrusion, Sparta Areas of Ground Water Concern, and surface water withdrawal management. (5) UCWCB letter to LDNR appreciates *bi-state cooperation in monitoring for the Sparta Aquifer Recovery Initiative* (requested of LDNR by the Sparta Commission). LDNR also funds monitoring by USGS. (6) Information about the “*Brown Dense*” and the *W. Monroe-Graphic Packaging Sparta Reuse ‘Demonstration’ Project*. (7) *Report is only a first step in developing water resources management*. (8) App. K, 2011 LDNR survey: *Price/1000 gallons of running water in La. varied from \$0 to ~\$12*. (Stewart interpreted La.’s AG opinion & new law: surface water belongs to the state, which must assure a fair market cash value or equivalent in public benefit; interested

purchasers may enter into a cooperative agreement with the state). (9) USGS 2011 graphs: a) *Sparta use 72Mgd in 1995 and 63Mgd in 2010* (Ouachita 22Mgd, Bienville 12 Mgd, Lincoln 9Mgd), b) 2000-11 changes [*Sparta levels rising in north, declining in south*].

4. Arcadia Gas Storage (AGS) voluntary first quarter 2012 Water Use Report: AGS at full leaching rates, conservation approach is priority use of rainfall and treated wastewater; ~2.5 Mgd or 57% of AGS freshwater use was from surface water sources.

5. Webster Parish a) Drinking Water Protection Program Community Meeting in Minden in February was well attended. b) Police Jury Public Hearing in March (Press Release: parish has been developing water use and conservation plans for several years with Camp Minden and area govts.; this public meeting (and others as needed) was to fully inform the public and clear up any confusion.

6. Water Management Bills Before 2012 La. Legislature include a) HB 532 extends sunset date of Act 955 (surface water Coop. End. Agreements); b) SB 498 authorizes Dept. of Ag to administer surface water management; c) SB 502 requires annual reports from certain special districts, including the Sparta Commission, regarding groundwater resources (see McKinney's GWRC report above.)

7. West Monroe/Graphics Packaging water reuse project. Emory reported. Officials have been conducting tests. Delivered wastewater is being increased by 1 Mgd every three days until it reaches 5 Mgd, when there will be a ribbon-cutting. A second wastewater system is negotiating with the first to increase effluent to 10 Mgd, the project's designed capacity.

8. O&G Exploration In Brown Dense/Lower Smackover Formation And Water Use a) Commissioner of Conservation Welsh in a press release at LDNR website: "We are still discouraging new high-volume users from using ground water in that (Sparta) area, and giving guidance on alternative sources for water." b) Conservation's Env. Div. Dir. Gary Snellgrove: During unitization public hearings for Brown Dense development, the Commissioner has informed operators of issues with use of Sparta water and asked operators questions regarding their intentions for water sourcing for frac water supply. c) UCWCB Sherrel Johnson praised coordination of industry and La. and Ark. agencies, exemplified by Southwestern Energy-USGS AR [a familiar association because of Fayetteville Shale drilling] cooperating in testing effect on Sparta of frac wells and LDNR's encouragement of alternative-water use.

Discussion followed. Hanson provided information about industry's option to enter into voluntary Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with LDNR for surface water withdrawal in recognition of the Attorney General's opinion that running water is state controlled. He said there have been few cases of 're-fracking' in the Haynesville Shale; similar might be expected in the 'Brown Dense' should it prove productive. He emphasized surface water use to keep new use off the aquifer as much as possible.

Sparta Foundation and Marketing Report and hand-outs by Rick Hohlt. The non-profit (for conservation education) Sparta Foundation seeks volunteers and sponsors for the '*Sparta Shoot*' *Sporting Clays Competition* and *Browning Maxus Stalker Shotgun raffle* on June 16 during Lincoln Parish's Peach Festival. To date there are two \$2500 sponsors, a \$1000 co-sponsor, and six \$200 station sponsors. Events will include water conservation education. Hohlt answered questions to help volunteers advertise the events.

Conservation Education Report detailed in writing by Lindsay Gouedy. Among activities: 1) 5th grade conservation education at 19 Ouachita parish schools; 2) arranging (underway) a perhaps school-based Webster Parish program, an annual Sparta 5K Run, and fall Bienville & Lincoln Waterfests; 3) recruiting sponsors and participants for the Sparta Shoot and Shotgun Raffle. Gouedy attended the Monroe Public Hearing on the Corps' plans to reduce Ouachita R. services and, after consulting with McKinney and Hohlt, submitted a letter on behalf of the Sparta Commission seconding Union County Water Conservation statements (LTP Committee report above).

Brown Dense/Lower Smackover Exploration and Water Use. Wayne Shortle (Rick Bartlett also present) of Southwestern Energy Production Co. reported challenges with test frac wells in Columbia Co., Claiborne P., and Union P. (under-way) but some promise of marketable production. Each frac well requires 4 to 8 Mgals of water. SWN, who have worked on environmental impact with USGS-AR in Fayetteville operations, will be shutting down one Sparta well in nine days to test the effect of extraction on the Sparta. In the event of full scale operations, the company plans, as in Marcellus and Fayetteville Shale operations, to use mostly surface water. SWN is investigating recycling, possibly using salt dome and poultry plant waste water, and possibly using Corney and/or D'Arbonne lake water (working with Lake D'Arbonne Watershed District Commission). SWN prefers piping to trucking when possible to avoid wear and tear on roads among other expenses. Questions were unresolved about permission to use surface water. Stewart reported that Claiborne P. Watershed District Commission & DOTD having calculated that 21 Mgals. withdrawn from L. Claiborne would lower the lake less than 1/8" (no new water entering), issued a courtesy letter of no objection to a pipeline company. Hanson gave examples of Cooperative Endeavor Agreements in purchasing water from the state at 15¢/1000 gals. or showing equivalent public benefit. Asked about fluctuating natural gas prices, Mr. Shortle said SWN's 'hope for oil drives drilling in the Brown Dense play.'

Stewart advised Commissioners: 1) financial disclosure due May 15; 2) nominating bodies need to act now on term expirations.

Calhoun announced that the next meeting of the Sparta Commission will be in Jonesboro Community Center on July 19, 2012 at 2:00 p.m., with the usual pre-meeting informal gathering beginning at 1:00. With no further business, Calhoun adjourned the meeting.

Mack Calhoun, Vice Chairman

Alice Stewart, Recorder and Secretary

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