



The **UNIVERSITY** *of* **OKLAHOMA**
Environmental Concerns Committee

Minutes

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE MEETING

Call To Order

A meeting of the Environmental Concerns Committee was held in Gould Hall on May 3rd, 2018. It began at 9:03 AM and was presided by Burr Millsap, with Alex Nongard as secretary.

Attendees

Voting Members in Attendance: Alex Nongard, Sara Mata, Kolt Vaughn, Jeff Widener

Ex-Officio Members in Attendance: Dave Hambright, Kat Mills, Sarah Ballew, Jason Hancock, Jeff Kelly, Bob Nairn, Chris Kobza, Lara Souza, Burr Millsap

Agenda Items

Burr: Thank you all for coming. This is the last meeting this year, and it's great to see you all here. At today's meeting we will present the Environmental Stewardship Recognition awards to their recipients. We were unable to present them during Green Week / Earth Month festivities earlier.

I. Presentation of Awards

Burr: The Environmental Stewardship award for an individual faculty or staff member goes to Dr. Bob Nairn. From his nomination:

"Dr. Nairn and CREW recently completed installation of their second abandoned mine water passive treatment system at the Tar Creek Superfund site in northeast Oklahoma. In short, the CREW system captures upwelling low quality water from abandoned lead and zinc mines, then sends the mine water through a series of treatment units to remove the heavy metals and other constituents using "totally passive" technologies. The treatment system requires no added chemicals (other than an original load of mushroom compost) and uses only solar powered or wind energy to drive the treatment units. The raw upwelling mine water previously devastated the water quality and bio-habitat of a unnamed tributary to Tar Creek (the Superfund site namesake), i.e., nothing lived in the tributary. The passive treatment system effluent now produces water with heavy metal levels "below detectable levels". The stream habitat has started to recover and now shows 14 different species of fish and, amazingly, the return of (three) beaver dams along the tributary. Can there be any better example of environmental stewardship?"

The Environmental Stewardship award for a student organization goes to the Environmental Science Student Association, represented today by Kat Mills. From their nomination:

"The Environmental Science Student Association (ESSA) was contacted by the Hall Park Homeowners Association (HOA) about the degraded quality of Tranquility Lake, a small reservoir in the neighborhood. ESSA

students, with help from CEES professors, conducted water sampling and analyses, vegetation identification, and spatial modelling to determine likely causes of impairment and to develop recommendations to the HOA. They found that, although the lake likely received elevated nutrient concentrations, recent state-required dam refurbishment had decreased the static water level of the lake and allowed sunlight to penetrate to the sediment, allowing excess vegetation growth. They recommended a fish stocking program, coupled with public education about fertilizer use and stormwater runoff. They presented results at a public meeting of the HOA. ESSA students put 100s of man-hours into this successful volunteer effort and deserve to be recognized as Environmental Stewards."

The Environmental Stewardship award for an OU department is being dually awarded to the OU IT Learning Spaces Team and the OU Biological Survey. The OU IT Learning Spaces Team is represented today by Chris Kobza. From their nomination:

"The IT Learning Spaces team manages 40 computer labs on campus that have served as "printing meccas" for OU students for almost two decades. Student printing quickly grew out of control, and in 2012 alone, students printed more than 6.3 million pages in IT's computer labs. According to Conservatree.org, that's over 750 trees worth of paper - something had to be done! Over the next several years, the Learning Spaces team worked tirelessly to implement a series of printing changes that were both student and environmentally friendly.

After several in depth analyses, the team determined that the incredibly high volume of prints was due to two primary things: low-to-no cost of printing, and a "print-then-inspect" model. It was determined that the free \$10 print credit that OU provided students contributed to 65% of all printing. IT hypothesized that many students were printing simply because they could, not because they needed to. Aiming to reduce print demand, IT launched a major effort to inform students and faculty of printing alternatives while simultaneously phasing out the \$10 printing credits. Meanwhile, the IT Learning Spaces team began implementing an innovative printing kiosk solution across campus. There are many benefits of a kiosk-based solution, one being that students must visually inspect their prints on the kiosk's screen prior to releasing the print job. IT hoped that this basic functionality alone would save thousands of sheets of paper lost each semester due to user error.

After five years of hard work, things are in much better shape! As of January 2018, all of IT's student printing has been transitioned to cloud printing kiosks. Thanks to these new kiosks, years of campus outreach, and the reduction in free printing, and IT's campus printing demand has decreased."

The OU Biological Survey is represented by Lara Souza and Jeff Kelly. From their nomination:

"The faculty and staff are committed to providing the best available information on biodiversity in the state of Oklahoma, including how humans impact their environment. Currently, some members of the Bio Survey are working with the state to show the negative environmental impact of damming lakes in southeastern Oklahoma."

Awards were presented, and photos taken.

II. Discussion of next year

Burr: We should talk about the future of this committee next year. We will do elections in the fall again as we've done in the past, but I'd like to put my name in the hat to be chair again.

Dave: We should consider 2-year appointments for the executive committee (chair, vice chair, secretary/treasurer), because we lack consistency in attendance and having a core group that comes back every time would benefit the committee.

Sarah: We could make documentation for new members as they join.

Dave: The other thing we should talk about is timing. I am not sure this is the best time to have a meeting.

Jeff: This comes up every year, we do a poll, and it really is the best time. Yes, some people who really want to be here can't make it consistently, but we get the most people who do show up regularly at this time.

Alex: Shifting gears. How do we see the role of this committee changing with a new administration?

Burr: I do not know. I do not think anyone knows, but it will be up to us to make ourselves useful.

Kolt: I think it's important to know what the ECC role in a new administration is.

Dave: I think we should just tell them what we do. We've been doing what we do for years, and we'll continue doing it.

Alex: I would like to see a return to the idea of a University Sustainability Strategic Plan. We tried it several years ago, but it has not been continued.

Burr: I will take that very seriously in the next year.

Dave: Can we tie that into our signing of the Second Nature Climate Commitment?

Burr: This could also fit into our 20x2020 program.

Sarah: That's a state mandate for all state agencies to reduce energy use by 20% by 2020, using 2012 as a baseline. It has emission and conservation goals baked in. I also know that part of the Second Nature Climate Commitment requires an advisory committee to the President, which we fulfill.

Alex: What level of communication have we had with the President's office, which is our mandate?

Burr: We send copies of the awards/recognition we granted to the Provost / Vice President Hathaway.

Dave: Well, if we want to do the Sustainability plan, what about using those winners / administrators as a part of the committee? Invite Nick Hathaway or whomever to serve on an ad-hoc committee for the plan. This gets people who can't meet at this time still involved, if they meet at another time/place.

Burr: I like that idea. Facilities Management is already committed to the 20x2020 Commitment, but the question is how we can contribute to that as the ECC.

Sarah: That's what the point of an open dialogue with our FM and other stakeholders is. When we met as a strategic plan committee originally, we planned on doing some research and then having an open dialogue with them. We must continue that in the future.

III. Final Earth Month wrap up

Dave: Some updates on Earth Month. Earth Month doubled its enrollment for the second time, on this third year. We had a lot of great events that brought students in for so many great things. We'd like to work with everyone to start planning on '19 right now too. We already have 2 speakers lined up. Next year, I would like to have an event/day that is directly tied to the ECC. Our job is to be the official voice for concerns, so we should be involved in presenting that information and opportunity at an event like Earth Month. If you have any ideas for additions to Earth Month, please let me know.

We would like to have a staff event, too, to show appreciation and to show the university what staff do to be sustainable. How do we best reach out to them? It's so difficult to get them involved because of their schedules. Do any of you have ideas for a staff event?

The other thing is that I don't think we're doing a great job of highlighting what the University does or could do sustainability wise.

Jeff: I learn a lot from the presentations we have here from different organizations.

Dave: Yes, but how do we scale that up and get that word out to everyone? We'll have to think about it and figure something out for next year.

Kolt: Speaking for Green Week, I think we are open to collaborate with Earth Month to do some sort of presentations/panel/event next year with the ECC.

Dave: If we can get the word out to more people, this can be an actual draw for people to come to the university – making OU a real center for sustainability here.

Kolt: How many people showed up to the earth month Corix event? We hosted the State of Sustainability event and we thought it was successful, but we think we could have reached more members.

Dave: That's why we started the raffle this year, because previously we felt we were preaching to the choir. Prizes to get people out really worked. We got about 60-75 people per event. Early advertisement and incentives really helped.

Kolt: What I'm worried about is starting something like that with the ECC and only having a few people show up.

Dave: We can only try.

Meeting ended at 9:48am.