

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 60th Legislature (2026)

3 SENATE BILL 2157

By: Bullard

6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to scenic rivers; creating the
8 Southeast Scenic Rivers Act; providing short title;
9 authorizing the Legislature to designate certain
10 rivers as scenic rivers; establishing the Southeast
11 Scenic Rivers Commission; designating the Department
12 of Wildlife Conservation to administer funds as
13 necessary; providing for membership; establishing
14 procedure for the election of certain members;
15 stating appointment terms; prohibiting participation
16 of membership under certain circumstances; subjecting
17 the Commission to the provisions of the Oklahoma Open
18 Meeting Act and Oklahoma Open Records Act; requiring
19 the Commission to establish certain minimum standards
20 for designated areas; establishing powers and duties
of Commission; requiring the establishment of minimum
standards for designated areas; prohibiting the power
of eminent domain by the Commission; authorizing
additional powers; providing for promulgation of
rules; amending 29 O.S. 2021, Section 3-103, as
amended by Section 1, Chapter 6, O.S.L. 2024 (29 O.S.
Supp. 2025, Section 3-103), which relates to
functions, powers, and duties of the Oklahoma
Wildlife Conservation Commission; repealing certain
duty of the Commission; authorizing Commission to
prescribe the manner of cooperating with the
Southeast Scenic Rivers Commission; providing for
codification; and providing an effective date.

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23 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

1 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 898 of Title 82, unless there is
3 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Southeast
5 Scenic Rivers Act".

6 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
7 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 898.1 of Title 82, unless there
8 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

9 The Legislature finds that certain free-flowing streams and
10 rivers of Oklahoma possess such unique natural scenic beauty, water,
11 fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation value of present and future
12 benefit to the people of the state that it is the policy of the
13 Legislature to preserve those areas for the benefit of the people of
14 Oklahoma. For this purpose, the following are hereby designated as
15 southeast scenic rivers:

16 1. The Glover River in McCurtain County;
17 2. The Kiamichi River in Choctaw, Pushmataha, and Le Flore
18 Counties;

19 3. The Little River in McCurtain, Pushmataha, and Le Flore
20 Counties; and

21 4. The Mountain Fork River in Le Flore and McCurtain Counties.

22 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
23 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 898.2 of Title 82, unless there
24 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1 A. There is hereby created the Southeast Scenic Rivers
2 Commission for the management of designated scenic river areas or a
3 combination of areas for which operating areas for planning and
4 management have been delineated. The Commission shall be an agency
5 of the state. State funds for the Commission shall be provided for
6 by a separate line-item appropriation through the Oklahoma Wildlife
7 Conservation Commission. The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation
8 Commission shall disburse the funds to the Southeast Scenic Rivers
9 Commission in the amount and pursuant to the conditions prescribed
10 by the Legislature.

11 B. The Commission shall consist of eleven (11) members. The
12 term of office for each member shall be four (4) years. The
13 Commission shall be composed of the following members:

14 1. Three members appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall
15 be a representative of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission or the
16 Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Commission from a list provided by a
17 Senator or a Representative, chosen by the Governor, representing
18 the affected county of the scenic river designation;

19 2. Two members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the
20 Senate, one of whom shall be a member of a statewide citizens'
21 conservation or environmental group and one of whom shall be a
22 member of an accredited state-supported college or university
23 specializing in agricultural sciences and natural resources from a

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1 list provided by a Senator, chosen by the President Pro Tempore,
2 representing the affected county of the scenic river designation;

3 3. Two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of
4 Representatives, one of whom shall be from the membership of a
5 federally recognized tribe in one of the counties containing the
6 scenic river area, and one of whom shall be a representative of the
7 agriculture industry from a list provided by a Representative,
8 chosen by the Speaker, representing the affected county of the
9 scenic river designation; and

10 4. The remaining four members of the Commission shall be
11 selected from the constituency of the Senator or Representative
12 chosen by either the President Pro Tempore or Speaker of the House
13 of Representatives, as follows:

14 a. from the registered voters who reside, own real
15 property, or own permanent residential structures
16 within six hundred sixty (660) feet of the Glover
17 River within McCurtain County,

18 b. from the registered voters who reside, own real
19 property, or own permanent residential structures
20 within six hundred sixty (660) feet of the Kiamichi
21 River within Choctaw, Pushmataha, or Le Flore County,

22 c. from the registered voters who reside, own real
23 property, or own permanent residential structures
24 within six hundred sixty (660) feet of the Little

River within McCurtain, Pushmataha, or Le Flore
County, and

d. from the registered voters who reside, own real property, or own permanent residential structures within six hundred sixty (660) feet of the Mountain Fork River within Le Flore or McCurtain County.

C. The Commission shall promulgate all rules necessary for the conduct of appointments for Commission members.

D. A vacancy on the Commission shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointment. Each appointed member shall serve at the pleasure of his or her appointing authority. Each appointing member shall not have more than one selection in the event of an appointment or vacancy.

E. The Commission shall elect a chair and such other officers as the Commission deems necessary to conduct the affairs of the Commission. Six members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, and the vote of the majority of members present shall be necessary for any action to be taken by the Commission. No vacancy in the membership of the Commission shall impair the rights of a quorum to exercise and perform all the rights and duties of the Commission.

F. The Commission shall hold meetings not less than once each quarter, at such times as may be fixed by call of the chair or as determined by a majority vote in advance of the meeting. It is the

1 responsibility of the Commission to encourage the general public to
2 participate in the formation and adoption of plans, standards,
3 procedures, and regulations.

4 G. 1. A Commission member to whom some private benefit, direct
5 or indirect, financial or otherwise, may come as a result of some
6 public action shall not be a participant in that action. The
7 possibility, not actuality, of a conflict of interest shall govern.

8 2. A Commission member, pursuant to paragraph 1 of this
9 subsection, shall declare his or her interest publicly, abstain from
10 voting, and refrain from deliberation on the matter. The Commission
11 member shall not discuss the matter with any fellow member for the
12 purpose of influencing a decision thereon.

13 H. The meetings of the Commission shall be subject to the
14 Oklahoma Open Meeting Act and the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

15 I. 1. The Southeast Scenic Rivers Commission shall prepare and
16 establish minimum standards for planning and other ordinances and
17 rules for the implementation of this act by counties,
18 municipalities, or any political subdivisions in the operating area.

19 2. The standards shall be developed and executed in such a
20 manner as to protect and enhance the values that caused the area to
21 be designated a scenic rivers area without limiting other uses that
22 do not substantially interfere with the protection, public use, and
23 enjoyment of these values.

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1 3. Primary emphasis on the standards shall be given to
2 protecting the aesthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and
3 scientific features of the scenic river area with due consideration
4 being given to the orderly development of the lands adjacent and
5 contiguous to the scenic river area.

6 4. Standards set pursuant to the provisions of this act shall
7 not exceed those established by any other federal or state agency
8 possessing jurisdiction of the designated area.

9 Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as authorizing the
10 Commission the power of eminent domain.

11 J. The Southeast Scenic Rivers Commission shall have the
12 additional powers and duties to:

13 1. Appoint and fix the salary of an administrator experienced
14 in land resource planning and management who shall serve at the
15 pleasure of the Commission and in accordance with its policies,
16 budgets, powers, and responsibilities. Such administrator may be
17 commissioned as a peace officer. The administrator may select,
18 appoint, and employ individuals to fill personnel positions
19 authorized, budgeted, and deemed necessary by the Commission to
20 implement the purposes of this act;

21 2. Act in cooperation with all federal, state, and local
22 governments and agencies;

23 3. Coordinate with the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation
24 Commission for the enforcement of this act;

1 4. Prepare and adopt a management plan or plans to guide and
2 control private activities and public programs and to include
3 varying degrees of protection and development based on the special
4 attributes of the area;

5 5. Provide for the review and consideration of the impact on
6 the natural and aesthetic environment within the designated area
7 related to any existing or proposed action by public agencies,
8 private individuals, or any other activity;

9 6. Accept real and personal property that is granted,
10 bequeathed, devised, or conveyed to the Southeast Scenic Rivers
11 Commission to implement the purposes of this act, upon such trusts
12 and conditions as may be prescribed by the grantors or devisors,
13 upon approval of the Commission;

14 7. Enter into contracts on behalf of the Commission to
15 implement the purposes of this act, and may accept gifts and grants,
16 including real or personal property;

17 8. Identify public or private nuisances that are adverse to the
18 purposes of this act and take such action as permitted by law to
19 remove the public nuisances;

20 9. Own and control public access points to the scenic river
21 area, issue use permits, and purchase easements and fee title to
22 land within the designed area. Legal title to the property shall be
23 held in the name of the Southeast Scenic Rivers Commission;

1 10. Review any action taken by any local, municipal, or county
2 authority within the designated area of the Commission in an
3 administrative adjudicatory proceeding brought upon the petition of
4 any office or agency of this state, including the administrator, or
5 of any person acting on behalf of the public interest, to determine
6 whether such action conforms to the standards promulgated by the
7 Commission or has an adverse effect upon the proper achievement of
8 the purposes of this act. Upon a finding that such action does not
9 conform or does have an adverse effect, the Commission order that
10 the action be nullified, superseded, or amended to the extent
11 necessary to produce such conformity or eliminate such adverse
12 effect. The Commission may issue such orders as may be necessary to
13 effectuate its primary order;

14 11. Hire an attorney or request legal assistance from the
15 district attorney or the Office of the Attorney General when
16 appropriate and if there is no conflict of interest;

17 12. Bring an action in the district court of any county of this
18 state where service can be obtained on one or more of the
19 defendants, to enjoin the acts or practices that appear to
20 constitute a violation of any provision of this act or any rule
21 promulgated, and to enforce compliance with the provisions of this
22 act. Upon a proper showing, a restraining order, permanent or
23 temporary injunction, writ of mandamus, or other appropriate

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1 remedies including damages shall be granted. The court may not
2 require the administrator or Commission to post a bond; and

3 13. Suspend the effectiveness of any action taken by a
4 municipality or county within the designated area of the Commission
5 when it appears the action has or may have an adverse effect upon
6 the provisions of this act, whereupon all proceedings thereunder
7 shall be held in abeyance upon receipt of written notice from the
8 administrator pending a final determination of the Commission in
9 regard to such action. If it is determined that such adverse effect
10 exists, the Commission may nullify, supersede, or amend the action
11 only to the extent necessary.

12 K. The Commission shall promulgate all rules necessary to
13 implement the provisions of this act.

14 SECTION 4. AMENDATORY 29 O.S. 2021, Section 3-103, as
15 amended by Section 1, Chapter 6, O.S.L. 2024 (29 O.S. Supp. 2025,
16 Section 3-103), is amended to read as follows:

17 Section 3-103. A. The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation
18 Commission shall constitute an advisory, administrative and
19 policymaking board for the protection, restoration, perpetuation,
20 conservation, supervision, maintenance, enhancement, and management
21 of wildlife in this state as provided in the Oklahoma Wildlife
22 Conservation Code.

23 B. The Director shall consult with the Commission regarding the
24 administration of the affairs of the Department of Wildlife

1 Conservation. The Commission is authorized and empowered to require
2 from the Director complete reports and information relative to the
3 affairs of the Department at the time and in the manner the
4 Commission may deem advisable.

5 C. The Commission shall meet in regular session at least nine
6 times per year not to exceed one meeting per month with not more
7 than two consecutive calendar months between meetings and in special
8 sessions as may be called by the Chair or a majority of the
9 Commission. The Commission may hold any regular or special session
10 at any location within this state. Should a location be chosen
11 other than Commission headquarters in Oklahoma City for a regular or
12 special meeting, notice shall be posted at Commission headquarters
13 in Oklahoma City and advertised in the local newspaper of the city
14 in which the meeting is to be held, at least one time during each of
15 the two (2) weeks prior to the meeting. The advertisements shall
16 include time, date, and address of location of the meeting.

17 D. In addition to the other powers and duties prescribed by
18 law, the Commission shall:

19 1. ~~Institute an affirmative action plan for hiring women and~~
20 ~~minorities throughout the agency;~~

21 2. Elect a chair, vice chair, and secretary, who shall perform
22 the duties required of them by statutes, rules of the Commission,
23 and the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma. The chair, vice
24 chair, and secretary shall receive no extra compensation;

1 3. 2. Appoint a Director, and determine the qualifications of
2 the Director and all assistants and employees. A Commissioner shall
3 not be eligible for employment in any position within the
4 Department;

5 4. 3. Prescribe rules and policies for the transaction of its
6 business and the control of the Department;

7 5. 4. Develop and implement a plan to provide step raises for
8 Commission employees so that discrepancies of pay levels within a
9 pay grade are eliminated;

10 6. 5. Acquire by purchase, lease, gift, or devise, waters, real
11 property, and personal property incident to the exercise of its
12 functions and to maintain, operate, and dispose of the same;

13 7. 6. Acquire real property by condemnation only when the
14 Attorney General or other counsel deems it an appropriate means of
15 clearing title from willing or unavailable sellers;

16 8. 7. Supervise the establishment, extension, improvement, and
17 operation of the wildlife refuges, propagation areas or stations,
18 public hunting areas, public fishing areas, game management areas,
19 and fish hatcheries;

20 9. 8. Prescribe the manner of cooperation with the Oklahoma
21 Tourism and Recreation Department, colleges and universities within
22 the state, other state agencies, any agency of the federal
23 government, and any city, town, school district, or any other agency
24 or organization in study of conservation and propagation of wildlife

1 and in the establishment, maintenance, and operation of visual
2 educational facilities, recreational facilities, and hunting and
3 fishing facilities, in the study and propagation of wildlife;

4 9. Prescribe the manner of cooperation with the Southeast
5 Scenic Rivers Commission created in Section 3 of this act;

6 10. Supervise the letting of all contracts and purchases for
7 the Department, with all purchases of personal property to be made
8 through the Office of Management and Enterprise Services;

9 11. Authorize all claims or expenditures prior to incurring
10 payment except as otherwise provided in this Code;

11 12. Prescribe rules on the use of Department-owned vehicles by
12 the Director, department heads and other essential employees as the
13 Commission deems necessary in order to perform their duties;

14 13. Prescribe rules for the sale of all regular or special
15 licenses;

16 14. Publicize and encourage the conservation and appreciation
17 of wildlife and all other natural resources;

18 15. Regulate the seasons and harvest of wildlife;

19 16. Promulgate rules to sell fishing and hunting licenses via
20 the Internet;

21 17. Annually report to the Governor and the Legislature on the
22 complete operation, activities, and plans of the Department,
23 together with such recommendations for future activities as the
24 Commission may deem to be in the best interest of the state; and

1 18. Provide the Governor and the Legislature with an annual
2 inventory of all property and equipment.

3 E. Five (5) years after the effective date of this act, and
4 every five (5) years thereafter, the Commission shall prepare a
5 report for the Legislature with proposed licensing fees based on the
6 latest Consumer Price Index year-to-date percent change release as
7 of the date of the annual average county wage data release from the
8 Bureau of Economic Analysis of the U.S. Department of Commerce for
9 Legislature approval or rejection.

10 SECTION 5. This act shall become effective November 1, 2026.

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