

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 60th Legislature (2026)

SENATE BILL 2157

By: Bullard

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to scenic rivers; creating the Southeast Scenic Rivers Act; providing short title; authorizing the Legislature to designate certain rivers as scenic rivers; establishing the Southeast Scenic Rivers Commission; designating the Department of Wildlife Conservation to administer funds as necessary; providing for membership; establishing procedure for the election of certain members; stating appointment terms; prohibiting participation of membership under certain circumstances; subjecting the Commission to the provisions of the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act and Oklahoma Open Records Act; requiring the Commission to establish certain minimum standards 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.

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  
24

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 F. The Commission shall hold meetings not less than once each  
23 quarter, at such times as may be fixed by call of the chair or as  
24 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.

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;  
24



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  
24

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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