

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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EPA Ranks Oklahoma in Top Five for Improving Water Quality

Oklahoma conservation programs are improving water quality, state legislators announced at a news conference held at the Oklahoma state Capitol on March 17.

The dedicated work of farmers, ranchers and other landowners to control non-point source pollution in Oklahoma by using voluntary programs administered by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and local conservation districts is paying off according to new water quality numbers recently released by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Recent analysis of nutrient and sediment reduction numbers from across the nation shows that Oklahoma now ranks among the top five states in reducing contamination in the state's streams and rivers, an accomplishment of which Senator Ron Justice (R-Chickasha), chair of the Oklahoma State Senate Rural Caucus, said all citizens of the state should be proud.

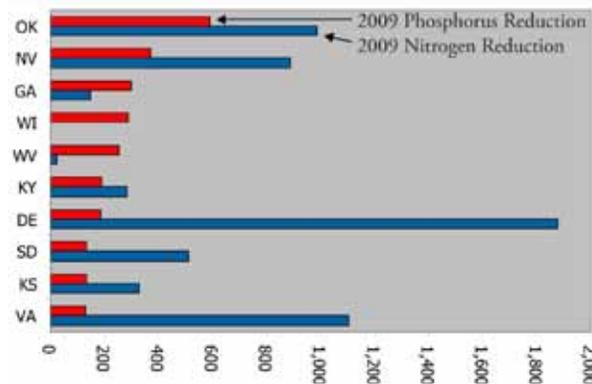
"All Oklahomans should take pride in this accomplishment," Justice said. "When given the chance and technical and financial help from the state and federal governments, Oklahoma's agriculture producers and other landowners have been willing to step forward and do what needs to be done to protect our water."

State Reps. Skye McNeil (R-Bristow) and Cory Holland (R-Marlow), co-chairs of the Oklahoma House of Representatives Rural Caucus, agreed. They noted that the new ranking from the EPA shows that the voluntary approach used by the state, working through the partnership of the Conservation Commission, local conservation districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is effective and should serve as a model for other states.

"These new water quality numbers show that the focus we have put on working with landowners through voluntary programs works when the program is structured right," McNeil said. "By utilizing the delivery system consisting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, local conservation districts and NRCS, we have been able to use Federal Clean Water Act dollars to partner with landowners in a way that not only controls pollution, but also respects private property rights and takes into consideration the financial situation of the local landowner."

"This approach shows that protecting the environment and profitable production agriculture can go hand-in-hand," Holland said. "This is quite an accomplishment and I am hopeful the federal government and other states will take notice."

Water quality numbers released at the beginning of March show that over 10 percent of the total amount of nitrogen reduced from water nation-wide was accounted for by reductions in Oklahoma. Of total national reductions of phosphorous in water, over 16 percent of all reductions happened in Oklahoma, and a significant reduction of soil



The top ten states for Phosphorus reduction (red) including associated Nitrogen reduction (blue) in thousands of pounds.

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Going Green?

Want to receive the electronic newsletter instead of the paper one? Just email Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov asking to be moved to the email subscription list!

Our vision:

Responsible care for Oklahoma's natural resources.

Our mission:

To conserve, protect and restore Oklahoma's natural resources, working in collaboration with the conservation districts and other partners, on behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma.

www.conservation.ok.gov

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Conservation Calendar

For more events and information, click on "Calendar of Events" at www.conservation.ok.gov

Conservation Commission Meeting,
May 3, Oklahoma City

OCC Full Staff Meeting,
May 3, Oklahoma City

National Land & Range Judging Contest, May. 4-6, Oklahoma City

Prescribed Fire Day at the Capitol,
May 10, Oklahoma City

Memorial Day Holiday, May 31

Conservation Commission Meeting,
June 7, Oklahoma City

Forestry and Wildlife Camp,
June 7-12, Beaver's Bend State Park

Conservation Commission Meeting,
July 1, Oklahoma City

Independence Day Holiday, July 5

Blue Thumb Training for Volunteers,
July 13-14, Geary

OK Invasive Plant Council Annual Meeting, July 14, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Aug. 2, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Sept. 2, Oklahoma City

Labor Day Holiday, Sept. 6

Blue Thumb Training for Volunteers,
Sept. 18-19, Tulsa

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Oct. 4, Oklahoma City

Women in Ag & Small Business,
Oct. 14-15, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Nov. 1, Oklahoma City

In our thoughts...

George Fraley, past OACD president and current Area III director and Rogers County CD board member, lost his brother Bill Fraley on March 11 following a massive stroke on March 10.

Dorothy Clark, mother of Coleta Bratten, Dewey County CD secretary, and Earth Team volunteer, is recovering well from back surgery on March 19.

Odos Henson, retired NRCS state agronomist, is recovering well from a stroke suffered on Feb. 28.

Dee Surber, Grady County CD programs coordinator, lost her father on March 31 after a long illness.

Mary Rusch, Cimarron Valley CD secretary, lost her son DeVoe Cowdrey, age 37, after a long illness.

George Stunkard, Area III Commissioner and Wagoner CCD board member, is recovering from a broken leg suffered while working cattle on March 13.

Jim Grego, Latimer County CD director, lost his mother on March 26.

Congratulations!

Kim Hitchings, Cimarron County CD director, has a new grandson, Case Channing Brown, born March 11.

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particle delivery to the state's waters was shown as well. When reviewing these numbers in comparison with the levels of non-point source pollution reduced by other states, Oklahoma is shown to be one of the top five states in the nation in total nutrient and sediment reduction in the surface water of the state while receiving less than one percent of all federal EPA non-point source pollution funds.

"The mission of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission is to conserve, protect, and restore Oklahoma's natural resources, working in collaboration with the conservation districts and other partners, on behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma," said Shanon Phillips, OCC's Water Quality Division director. "OCC receives a combination of state and federal dollars to carry out this mission. As a condition of receiving these monies, it is important that we showcase our programs' effectiveness," Phillips said. "For this reason, EPA annually requires the state to estimate reduction of the most significant causes of nonpoint source pollution — nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment — that can be linked to the Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Program. Although Oklahoma always performs well, the numbers for 2009 were exceptional. Many water quality challenges remain, but through the voluntary efforts of Oklahomans statewide, we're making great progress," Phillips said.

According to Clay Pope, executive director of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, this water quality success was achieved through voluntary cost-share efforts similar to those used by conservationists to address soil erosion since the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Through funding from the EPA's Clean Water Act Section 319 program, the Farm Services Agency's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Farm Bill conservation programs administered by the NRCS, state conservation programs administered by the Conservation Commission, and with local leadership from conservation districts, Pope said farmers, ranchers and other landowners are working to protect our natural resources.

"In the past, the government learned that it was best to work cooperatively with landowners to address environmental concerns." Pope said. "By helping individuals with technical and financial assistance, farmers, ranchers and other landowners are willing to put their own money out of their own pocket into cost-share projects designed to address concerns such as water quality. This approach worked to tame the Dust Bowl, and this recent recognition by the EPA shows it can also work to address non-point source pollution. By working cooperatively with landowners, we can get a handle on these issues. This high ranking in the area of water quality success proves it!"



A Conservation Legacy Reaching Back to 1935

April 27, 2010, marks the 75th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and its commitment to conserving natural resources on private lands. NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals that result in productive lands and healthy ecosystems. Originally created in 1933 as the Soil Erosion Service, a temporary agency within the Department of Interior, then established by Congress in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS has expanded to become a conservation leader for all natural resources, ensuring private lands are conserved, restored, and resilient to modern environmental challenges.

April 14, 2010, marked the 75th anniversary of Black Sunday and April 15 marked the 73rd anniversary of the Oklahoma Conservation District Act. Look for more on NRCS, Dust Bowl and conservation commemorative events next month.

Awards & Recognition

Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, was recognized at the March Conservation Commission meeting for 15 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

Marti Mefford, OCC/WQ Honey Creek Project coordinator, was recognized at the March Conservation Commission meeting for 10 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma State Envirothon 2010

The Oklahoma Envirothon was held in Oklahoma City on April 6, 2010. The Oklahoma Envirothon is part of a national program for high school students designed to educate and challenge young people in areas of environmental sciences such as forestry, wildlife management, water quality, and soil erosion. Combining in-class curriculum with hands-on field experiences, Envirothon demonstrates the role people have in important environmental issues.

Oklahoma's conservation districts support the Oklahoma Envirothon by sponsoring teams and providing volunteers to assist as Walking Leaders and with other duties at the contest.



Six five-member teams competed at Lake Arcadia with headquarters at the new Lake Arcadia Conservation Education Center. The day started off overcast but the sun broke through before noon and the temperature rose into the 80s. The wind from the south at about 20 miles per hour with gusts to 30 mph never abated all day. Karla Beatty, OCC Conservation Programs education coordinator, coordinated the event hosted by Oklahoma County Conservation District. In addition to nine conservation district employees, personnel from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry assisted with the contest.

The six teams were Lawton FFA, Watts FFA, Ft. Supply FFA, Tulsa Memorial High School, Owasso High School and Ninekah High School. First place awards were presented for the topics of Wildlife, Aquatic Ecology, Soils and Land Use, Forestry and this year's Special Topic, Groundwater Protection. An award is also presented for best Oral Presentation.

The Ninekah High School team scored the best overall and will go to compete nationally at the Canon Envirothon in Fresno, Calif., in August 2010. Ninekah scored best in the Forestry and Special Topic categories as well as for the Oral Presentation. Lawton FFA topped the Wildlife, Aquatic Ecology and Soils categories resulting in being named Best FFA Team for the competition. The Lawton team will be recognized at the State FFA Convention for achievement in Environmental and Natural Resources Science and will be eligible to compete in that category at the FFA national level.

The first national Envirothon was held in 1998. The first state competition in Oklahoma took place in 1999 and a team from Edmond Memorial High School represented the state at the Canon Envirothon that year.



OCC working on Green Roof Project for National Weather Center

OCC's Water Quality division is working with the University of Oklahoma's College of Architecture and its Landscape Architecture Division on a Green Roof Project for the top of the National Weather Center (NWC) building at the OU campus in Norman. Roof greening, the growth of plants on rooftops, is becoming a popular technique in North American cities to reduce stormwater runoff quantity, improve discharge quality and reduce warm season energy demand.

Two-foot square plant containers with four to six inches of growing media will be placed together in paddocks to create contiguous areas of green roof. Sedum plants will be used, overseeded with native grasses and perennials including blue grama and purple coneflower. The project is split between two areas on the multi-roof building — the service roof and the classroom roof, using two different manufacturers' systems for comparison. The smaller classroom roof will be used for study, teaching of students and officials and as an exhibit for visitors. The larger service roof will be used for long-term examination and study.

Recent studies show green roofs reduce annual stormwater runoff by 50-75 percent while preventing atmospheric pollutants from entering the stormwater system. Simultaneously, these vegetative roof systems intercept solar radiation and act to cool the building during summer, reducing the air conditioning costs by between 25-75 percent. The project can demonstrate broader economic benefits for the public as well. For example, covering 90 percent of the rooftops of Chicago with green roofs could save the city 750 megawatts of peak flow electric consumption annually. Rising temperatures created by the urban heat effect can be reduced three to four degrees.

Despite its growth in popularity elsewhere, Green Roof is largely unknown in Oklahoma. One goal of the OCC/NWC Green Roof Project is to serve as a model and increase awareness of the concept. Its location on the University Campus will lend itself to research, examination and visitation by numerous scholars, students and officials.

The cost for the one-year project is \$86,000. Funding is through the U.S Environmental Protection Agency under the Green Reserve Program. Green Reserve is a portion of the water infrastructure funds in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus plan that is intended for communities to spend on green infrastructure, water and energy efficiency and environmental innovation. Planning and design began in July 2009 and was completed in December. Installation is now underway and is scheduled to be complete in May 2010.



In this aerial photo of the NWC building in Norman, green squares are used to indicate the areas where the Green Roof Project will be installed.

Oklahoma County Conservation District Sponsors Erosion and Sediment Control Workshop

The Oklahoma County Conservation District and OCC's Blue Thumb Program sponsored a daylong Erosion and Sediment Control Workshop on March 24 at the Oklahoma Engineering Center in Oklahoma City.

Shirley Morrow, president of ABC's of BMP's, presented the workshop. Shirley is a Certified Professional Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist and Inspector and a member of the International Erosion Control Association. Her presentation included information on how to prepare a compliant



Richard Parker, Oklahoma County Conservation District chairman (at podium), introduced Shirley Morrow (left), instructor for the Erosion and Sediment Control Workshop.

WORKSHOPS & TRUNKS

Project WET Workshops
Karla Beatty, 405.521.2384

Project Learning Tree
Workshops or Trunks
Christina Stallings, 405.521-3864

Project WILD Workshops
Lisa Anderson, 405.521-3857

Oklahoma Conservation Conversation
Oklahoma Conservation Commission
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 160
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-4201
405.521.2384, FAX: 405.521.6686
<http://www.conservation.ok.gov>

Mailing Tab Area

Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and proper use of the latest erosion and sediment control techniques and materials.

Participating in the workshop were engineers, inspectors, and personnel from several different organizations including local developers, cities, and state agencies, with approximately 50 people in attendance.

Commission Members

Area I Matt Gard
Area II Mike Rooker
Area III George Stunkard
Area IV Dan Lowrance
Area V Virginia Kidd

Editing and Layout — Mark Harrison
email: Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov
Proofreading and Reviewing — Charlotte Stieber
and Ben Pollard

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