

O K L A H O M A C O N S E R V A T I O N C O N V E R S A T I O N

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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Oklahoma Again Makes History in Small Watershed Upstream Flood Control Projects — Double Creek, Turkey Creek and Sallisaw Creek.

Double Creek Celebration Marks First Completed Rehab Project in the Nation

Over 200 people attended a celebration ceremony held Sept. 2, 2009, near Ochelata, Okla., in Washington County, to mark the completion of the rehabilitation of the six upstream flood control dams in the Double Creek Watershed Project. It was the first USDA-assisted watershed project in the nation to have all the dams rehabilitated. Rehabilitation included raising the height of the dams, widening the earthen spillways and replacing the principal spillways. The Double Creek Dams were built between 1954 and 1955 for flood control and provide protection for 3,800 acres of land, U. S. Highway 75 and the town of Ramona. The original dams were constructed with a 50-year

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OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls (front, right), presents a framed photo of Double Creek No. 6 to landowners Dr. and Mrs. James Russell. Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach (at microphone), recognized landowners involved in the project. Seated, from left, are OCC Area III Commissioner George Stunkard, Caney Valley Conservation District Chairman Kirk Darnell, and Taylor Laughlin, field representative for Congressman Frank Lucas.

Turkey Creek No. 3 — Groundbreaking for First New Dam to be built with ARRA stimulus funds

The Garfield County Conservation District, Turkey Creek Conservancy District, NRCS and OCC broke ground Sept, 9, 2009, on the first upstream flood control dam in the nation to be built with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) federal stimulus plan. The dam will be the first of several new conservation projects throughout Oklahoma and the nation made possible by the passage of the stimulus act, said Trey Lam, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). The site of the new dam is near Enid in Garfield County, Okla.

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Sallisaw 18M — First ARRA-funded dam rehabilitation

The Adair County Conservation District, City of Stilwell, NRCS and OCC broke ground for the first upstream flood control dam in the nation to be rehabilitated using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funds. The groundbreaking was held Thursday, Sept. 24, 2009, at the site of the dam, Sallisaw Creek site 18M, near Stilwell in Adair County.

In addition to flood control benefits, the lake behind the dam provides municipal water supply to Stilwell, population 3,276 (2000 Census), and to area rural water supply systems. Sallisaw 18M will be the fourth dam in Adair County to be rehabilitated. Rehabilitation on Sallisaw Creek Sites No. 15, 16 and 20 was completed earlier in the month. Total construction cost for rehabilitation of the four dams was \$7,531,957. Among the structures and residences protected from flood water by the dams are the Dalonegah School (K-8), Cave Springs School (K-12) and the Cherokee Children's Mission.

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Conservation Calendar

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

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Nov. 2, Oklahoma City

Veterans' Day Holiday, Nov. 11

Thanksgiving Holiday, Nov. 26-27

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Dec. 7, Oklahoma City

OACD Area Meetings 2009

Area I - Oct. 29, Dewey County
Fairgrounds, Taloga

Area IV - Nov. 5, Great Plains Coliseum,
Lawton

Area III - Nov. 10, Faith Freewill Baptist
Church, Bartlesville

Area II - Nov. 17, Expo Center, Shawnee

Area V - Nov. 19, Mary H. Herron
Community Conference Center, Idabel

In our thoughts...

Linda Kane, wife of Harold Kane, USDA systems analyst, passed away July 14.

Keith Vaughn, NRCS retiree, had surgery Aug. 24.

Kayla Puffinbarger, Alfalfa County CD secretary, had emergency C-section surgery Aug. 27. The baby, Presley Lane, did not survive. Cards may be sent to Kayla and Cody in care of the district.

Kathy Allen, Cross Timbers RC&D office manager, lost her home and belongings in a fire Aug. 6 while attending an RC&D Council meeting.

Jess W. Lam Jr., longtime Garvin CD board member, passed away Sept. 17. Jess and wife Betty are parents of current Garvin CD board member and OACD President Jess W. "Trey" Lam III.

Keith, husband of Coleta Bratten, Dewey County secretary, suffered a heart attack Sept. 19 and is recovering at home.

Congratulations!

Jennifer Smith, Harmon CCD secretary, and husband Scotty have a new baby girl, Heidi Jocelyn, born May 28.

Jack Schnauffer, Cimarron County CD director, and wife, Becky have a new grandson, Colby Wayne Williams, son of daughter Beth and Larry Williams born July 21.

Harold Dawson, Cimarron County CD director and wife Judy have twin grandsons, Caleb Samuel and Jacob Michael, born Aug. 10.

Shellie Willoughby, OCC/IT GIS coordinator, and husband Richard have a new baby boy, Andrew Ryan, born Aug. 16.

Matt Thielke, NRCS soil conservationist, Cherokee FO, and wife Amy have a new baby girl, Addilyn Bree Thielke born Sept. 16th.

Jana Chicoine, OCC/FMHR Administrative Programs Officer, has a new granddaughter, Lola Olivia, born Sept. 23.

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life span. Due to age and condition of the dams and development downstream it was necessary to rehabilitate the dams to bring them up to current dam safety standards and extend their life for another 100 years. The Caney Valley Conservation District is the sponsor for the watershed project. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service assisted in planning, design, and construction of the dams in the 1950s and in the rehabilitation of the dams, which occurred between 2004 and 2009.

George Stunkard, Area III Conservation Commissioner, emceed the event. Speakers included Lt. Governor Jari Askins; Tyler Laughlin, field representative for Congressman Frank Lucas; NRCS Director of Engineering Noller Herbert; Oklahoma Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach; Oklahoma Sec. of the Environment J. D. Strong; Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts President Trey Lam; landowner and former county commissioner Lee Chew; and Caney Valley CD Vice Chairman Kirk Darnell.

Lee Chew recalled during his high school days seeing runoff from flood-stage Double Creek wash cars off the road just north of where the football field sits in the town of Ramona today. Trey Lam commended the Caney Valley Conservation District for pioneering the watershed dam rehabilitation process in Oklahoma, stating the district had faced the full range of challenges present in that process, from gaining easements from landowners to changes in contractors during construction. Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach recognized the landowners on whose property the watershed dams are located as well as those on whose land water will stand temporarily during flood stage. He presented landowners present with an aerial photo of the lake on their land recently taken by Mark Harrison, OCC public information officer.

Lt. Gov. Askins praised the cooperation between landowners, Caney Valley CD, NRCS and others in getting this project completed. She also praised state legislators for supporting this and other rehabilitation projects by providing funding to help local project sponsors meet their 35 percent of the project costs.

"We are fortunate that Oklahoma had great conservation leaders in the '40s and '50s that helped us recover as a state and helped us keep other states from suffering some of the same damage that incurred during the 1930s," Askins said. "And because of those efforts, it's no surprise to me that Oklahoma has more projects, more dams, more watersheds than any other state, but as a result we have more needs. We have been so successful because of the partnership of the property owners, the local conservation districts, and certainly not just NRCS but especially the Oklahoma Conservation Commission," Askins said. "For those of you who live in this world everyday, it may be hard to understand that there are elected officials who really don't understand why we need to have the cost share programs and other dollars that go to the Conservation Commission. It is important and you should know that we have great leadership in this organization not just from the board of Commissioners but from the staff who come to the state Capitol to make sure that elected officials who live in other parts of the state or maybe who live in urban areas, that they understand the need for us to contribute state dollars as well to these projects," she said.

Awards & Recognition

N.W. "Jr." Skidgel, Pawnee CCD director, was named the Pawnee Rodeo's "Citizen of the Year" in August.

Sheryl Gibson, OCC/FMHR grants accountant, was recognized at the July 2009 Commission meeting for 15 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

George Moore, OCC/CP watershed technician, was recognized for 15 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma at the July 2009 Commission meeting.

Robert Toole, OCC/CP director, was recognized at the July Commission meeting for 10 years of service to the Conservation Commission and the State of Oklahoma.

Bob Heidlage, OCC/AML project inspector, was recognized at the August 2009 Commission meeting for five years of service to the Conservation Commission and the state of Oklahoma.

Turkey Creek, continued from page 1 “This new dam signifies the first step in what promises to be a huge investment in the conservation infrastructure of Oklahoma and the nation,” Lam said. “The dollars made available by the stimulus plan will help us not only build new upstream flood control structures like the one we broke ground on today, but they will also provide much needed assistance in repairing aging dams throughout Oklahoma and the nation and will provide funds for other conservation initiatives as well. This groundbreaking is a great way to kick off a new wave of investment in natural resource protection.”

Located west of Enid, the new dam, Turkey Creek No. 3, will reduce flooding on more than 500 acres of cropland, protect six county bridges and roads located below the structure and provide wildlife habitat, all for the construction cost of \$510,998. The project will be funded completely by federal dollars from the stimulus plan. The dam will be the second of 11 dams to be built in the 244,000-acre Turkey Creek watershed. When all dams are completed, the project will reduce flooding for the 6,000 residents in the eight small communities in the watershed.

“Without the stimulus funds we would have had a hard time getting this project on the ground,” Lam said. “We hope this kick start of funding will begin a process that will continue until we get the entire watershed system finished.”

NRCS in Oklahoma has received nearly \$2 million in stimulus funds to build new flood control dams. In addition, another \$14 million in stimulus funds has been earmarked to the NRCS for flood control rehabilitation and repair. Two million dollars in stimulus funds have been received by OCC for water quality work in the Illinois River Watershed, and another \$100,000 has come to conservation districts in northwest Oklahoma for work on controlled burns. Additionally, \$308,000 in stimulus funds has also been earmarked for carbon and methane credit work by OACD statewide. All of this adds up to a significant investment for conservation in Oklahoma according to Matt Gard, OCC chairman.

“We are excited about this investment in Oklahoma conservation by the federal government,” Gard said. “It will provide new jobs for construction projects, new investment in the economy of rural Oklahoma and additional protection for our natural resources. This groundbreaking ceremony today signals the kickoff of what promises to be a new era in conservation work in Oklahoma, and we are excited to be a part of it.”

Sallisaw 18M, continued from page 1

Speakers at the event included Kenneth Snodgrass, Adair County CD vice chair; Mike Doublehead, general manager of utilities for the City of Stilwell; George Stunkard, OCC Area III commissioner; Ron Hilliard, NRCS state conservationist, and Clay Pope, OACD executive director.

“While the dam provides important flood control, the lake provides much of the water for the City of Stilwell,” Doublehead said. “We also supply rural water districts, which in turn provide many of our rural schools with water from this site. This project ensures our water supply will be stable well into the future,” he said. “On behalf of the Stilwell Area Development Authority, the citizens of Stilwell and our surrounding community, we want to thank the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the federal government for the commitment shown to our community’s future,” he said.

“What is special about this project is the local, state and federal government working together to benefit the local people,” Snodgrass said. “It is not just the over 3,000 residents of Stilwell who benefit from this lake. The people on rural water supply in the area combined with the city population totals over 8,000 people,” he said.

OACD President Trey Lam said the groundbreaking represents another first for conservation in Oklahoma. “Oklahoma is the home to many conservation firsts in the country’s upstream flood control program,” Lam said. “We had the first upstream flood control dam in the country, the first completed flood control system in the country, and now the first flood control dam to be rehabilitated with funds from the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We thank the Governor and the Oklahoma Legislature for providing the state funds needed to match the federal construction dollars, and we thank the folks in Washington for making the stimulus funds available.”

“This is a good example of the strong partnership we have in Oklahoma,” Hilliard said. “NRCS, Adair County Conservation District, City of Stilwell, and OCC have worked closely together to get this project so quickly. This involved getting the final design, land rights, funding for the local sponsors’ share of the project, and the construction contract advertised in a short period of time. Future generations in Adair County will benefit from this good working relationship.”

George Stunkard, Area III Commissioner for the Oklahoma Conservation Commission commended the board and staff of the Adair County Conservation District for their role in the project. “We appreciate the federal and state funding for the project, but it is the local conservation district that deserves the most credit. They are responsible for the operation, maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of these flood control dams now and into the future. It is a big responsibility and we appreciate their commitment to keeping these dams safe and operational.”



At the groundbreaking ceremony were, from left, Rep. Mike Jackson, Sen. David Myers, Garfield County Conservation District Chairman Dale Milacek, Sen. Patrick Anderson, Rep. John Enns, NRCS State Conservationist Ron Hilliard, OCC Chairman Matt Gard, OACD President Trey Lam, and Turkey Creek Conservancy District Chairman Vernon Kuhnemund.



Breaking ground for rehabilitation construction on Sallisaw 18M are, from left, OACD President Trey Lam; Adair County CD Vice Chair Kenneth Snodgrass; NRCS State Conservationist Ron Hilliard; City Stilwell Utilities Manager Mike Doublehead; state Senator Jim Wilson; OCC Area III Commissioner George Stunkard; Congressman Dan Boren’s representative Steve Hines; Cherokee Nation representative Joel Bean; and Mike Henley of Earth Builders, Inc.

Oklahoma Hosts Advanced O&M Workshop

Ninety people from nine states attended the Advanced Watershed Project Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Workshop in Oklahoma City, Sept. 15-17, 2009. The National Watershed Coalition, Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service sponsored the workshop. It was tailored for project sponsors and their employees, NRCS personnel and others involved in watershed projects.

Participants spent one and a half days in the classroom and one day in the field at a Bear Creek Watershed dam in Custer County.

“The workshop included presentations on a variety of subjects designed to provide the participants with information about the policies and responsibilities of all partners,” said Dan Sebert, executive director of the National Watershed Coalition (NWC). “The workshop also gave participants a chance to learn how different states are dealing with the growing challenges of operation and maintenance and to learn about new equipment and techniques.”



OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls speaks to workshop participants.



Participants examine a mower used on watershed dams.

The field day provided participants with an opportunity to see various kinds of equipment used by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and private companies to assist project sponsors with O&M, including pumps, siphons, mowers, and tree removal equipment. Participants received training in conducting dam inspections and how to identify existing or potential problems with dams.

This is one of several O&M workshops being held across the nation by the NWC. Workshops in Arkansas and Mississippi are scheduled in coming months.

Subjects covered in the classroom portion of the workshop included: watershed sponsor liability issues, dam safety, NRCS policies, legislative support for O&M, rehabilitation of aging dams, and the Incident Command System.

At right, participants help assemble a pipe used to draw down water level in cases where the spillway gate is stuck closed.



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