

# OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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## E.F. "Doc" Coker, 1914-2012 Former Area V Commission Member

E.F. "Doc" Coker, Pittsburg County Conservation District director from 1960 to 1997, passed away on Sept. 6, 2012. He celebrated his 98th birthday on Aug. 10. Gov. George Nigh appointed Coker to the Conservation Commission where he served as Area V member of the Commission from May 1986 to May 1996. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame in 2000. He is survived by Shirley, his wife of almost 43 years, two daughters, two grandsons and three great grandchildren.



E.F. "Doc" Coker

Raised in Savannah, Okla., his family farmed crops such as peanuts and corn, and sometimes picked cotton from dawn to dark. He served 30 months in the U.S. Army in the Pacific islands during World War II. After the war, Doc's mother couldn't believe he wanted to study agriculture at college. "Son," she said "you already know how to farm!"

He worked his way through college and with a B.S. in agriculture went on to earn a Master's degree in administration from the University of Oklahoma. Doc taught school for 18 years and served as superintendent for public schools in Kiowa, Pittsburg and Jack Fork.

A retired cattleman and pecan farmer in Blanco, Coker was known for his pioneering work in pecan tree grafting. At one time his operation averaged 1,200-1,400 head of cattle and approximately 3,000 improved-variety pecan trees.

"Upstream flood control and the watershed system is one of the best things we've come up with," Doc said one time. He remembered a time when a single rain washed out 27 bridges. Of the 16 Small Watershed Upstream Flood Control dams in Pittsburg County Conservation District, one was on Doc's land. "People today want to see results from their tax money," he said, "but it's harder to visualize the damage that didn't happen because the right protection was in place."

## Carbon Program receives Henry Bellmon Environmental Stewardship Award

The Oklahoma Carbon Program received the 2012 Environmental Stewardship Award from the Henry Bellmon Sustainability Awards program. The award was presented at a gala at the Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa on Sept. 13, 2012. Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, and Stacy Hansen, OCC Carbon Program director, accepted the award.

Sustainable Tulsa and the Tulsa Southside Rotary Club and Foundation joined together to create the Henry Bellmon Sustainability Awards to honor the memory of the Oklahoma Governor and U.S. Senator. The goal of the awards program is to raise awareness and reward those people, agencies, organizations or companies who dedicate themselves to a balanced approach toward quality of life, responsible economic growth and environmental stewardship.

The Oklahoma Carbon Program is a program of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Water Quality Division and has been recognized locally, nationally and



*Bellmon Award, continued on page three*

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### 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](http://www.conservation.ok.gov)

## Conservation Calendar

For more events and information, click on  
"Calendar of Events" at  
<http://conservation.ok.gov>

**THE DUST BOWL Screening,**  
Nov. 1, Guymon

**Conservation Commission Meeting,**  
Nov. 5, Oklahoma City

**THE DUST BOWL Screening,**  
Nov. 5, Stillwater

**THE DUST BOWL Screening,**  
Nov. 8, Oklahoma City

**Veterans Day Holiday,** Nov. 12

**THE DUST BOWL Screening,**  
Nov. 12, Tulsa

**Thanksgiving Holiday,** Nov. 22-23

**Conservation Commission Meeting,**  
Dec. 3, Oklahoma City

### AREA MEETINGS

**OACD Area I Meeting,**  
Nov. 1, Guymon

**OACD Area II Meeting,**  
Nov. 7, Oklahoma City

**OACD Area IV Meeting,**  
Nov. 8, Chickasha

**OACD Area V Meeting,**  
Nov. 15, Wilburton

### In our thoughts...

Steve House, Blaine County CD and  
OACD vice president, lost his father Jerry  
on July 16.

Todd Nightengale, Major County CD  
equipment manager, lost his mother on  
Sunday, July 22.

Johnny Green, former Oklahoma NRCS  
state conservation engineer, lost his moth-  
er Gertrude Ann "Trudie" on Aug. 7.

The home of Sandy Nobile, NRCS district  
conservationist at Jefferson County CD,  
was destroyed by fire on Aug. 21.

Former OCC employee Lori Wilson lost  
her son Andrew on Aug. 22.

E.F. "Doc" Coker, longtime Pittsburg  
County CD director and former Area V  
member of the Oklahoma Conservation  
Commission, passed away on Sept. 6. at  
age 98. (See story on page one.)

Longtime Talihina CD board member  
Charles "Buddy" Reamy lost his wife Viv-  
ian "Billie" on Sept 21.

Paula Stafford, Kiowa County CD secretary,  
lost her mother on Sept. 24.

Amanda Boatwright Burch, Pushmataha  
CD secretary, is recovering from several  
surgeries in the past few months.

Tammy Curry, Murray County CD,  
secretary, is recovering from surgery in  
September.

Bill Covalt, Woodward County CD equip-  
ment manager, lost his father William  
Covalt Sr. on Sept. 29.

## Conservation Partnership Honors Bill Wilson

Members of Oklahoma's Conservation Partnership hon-  
ored Bill Wilson Aug. 13, 2012, for his service and leader-  
ship to the cause of conservation at local, state and national  
levels. In June Wilson retired from the Haskell County Con-  
servation District board of directors after 32 years of service.

**Some of the highlights of Wilson's conservation com-  
mitment and leadership include:**

- Haskell County Conservation District: Served on the  
board of directors from March 3, 1980, to June 30, 2012.
- Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD): Served as Area V director,  
vice president and president.
- National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD): Served as board member, 1st  
and 2nd vice presidents and president.
- National Watershed Coalition: Served as founding member of the steering committee  
and chairman.

**Awards and recognition Wilson has received include:**

- Oklahoma's Outstanding Conservation District Director in 1989
- Oklahoma Wildlife Federation's Conservationist of the Year in 1993
- Oklahoma Water Pioneer in 1995
- Progressive Farmer magazine's Man of the Year in Oklahoma in 1995
- Soil and Water Conservation Society's Honor Award in 1995
- Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame in 2001

At the monthly meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission during the  
morning of Aug. 13, Wilson accepted a Conservation Commendation from OCC. The  
Commendation stated: "For your legacy of conservation leadership, consistent with  
the Oklahoma conservation leaders who have gone before. You have made your mark  
as an Oklahoma Conservationist, serving faithfully on the Haskell County Conserva-  
tion District Board, as President of OACD and NACD and as Chairman of the National  
Watershed Coalition."

Following the Commission meeting, a luncheon was held in Wilson's honor. Repre-  
sentatives from conservation organizations made statements praising Wilson's lead-  
ership and accomplishments. Speakers included representatives from the Oklahoma  
Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, National  
Association of Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service,  
and the National Watershed Coalition.

All members of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission — Karl Jett, Mike Rooker,  
George Stunkard, Dan Lowrance and Jim Grego — attended. In addition Mike Thralls,  
executive director, Ben Pollard, assistant director, and other members of OCC staff at-  
tended. Ron Hilliard, NRCS state conservationist, attended with members of his staff.  
Former Conservation Commission members Virginia Kidd and Sandra Drummond  
attended the luncheon as did Mason Mungle, former OCC executive director, and Ron  
Clark, former NRCS state conservationist. Rick Jeans, Kay County Conservation Dis-  
trict director, NACD board member and former Conservation Commission member and  
president of OACD, represented NACD at the luncheon.

Wilson thanked his wife Carolyn and family for their support through the years and  
praised the strength of the Conservation Partnership in Oklahoma as setting the standard  
for other states.

The Haskell County Conservation District had previously held a retirement dinner in  
Wilson's honor on June 28 in Stigler.



Bill and Carolyn Wilson

## Awards & Recognition

**Tashina Kirk, OCC/WQ Illinois River Project coordinator,** was recognized at the  
September 2012 Commission meeting for five years of service to OCC and the state  
of Oklahoma.

**Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director,** was recognized at the October Commission  
meeting for being named Employee of the Quarter at the OCC Full Staff Meeting on  
Sept. 27.

## Ken Burns' THE DUST BOWL "Screening and Community Conversation" Event at Woodward

More than 300 people turned out for a special preview screening of the Ken Burns' new documentary THE DUST BOWL at Woodward. The "Screening and Community Conversation" event, featuring excerpts from both episodes of the film, was held at the Woodward Conference Center on Aug. 16, 2012. The complete documentary will air on Public Broadcasting System (PBS) stations on the evenings of Nov. 18 and 19 beginning at 7:00 p.m. In Oklahoma, member stations of the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority (OETA) are the PBS network stations.

The public was invited to the Woodward preview screening of THE DUST BOWL, sponsored by OETA, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). Dewey County and Woodward County Conservation Districts had display exhibits along with displays from OCC and NRCS.

John McCarroll, OETA executive director, welcomed the audience and introduced the film screening. Following the 45-minute excerpted preview, Bill Collier, a Dust Bowl survivor from Taloga, Okla., participated in a panel discussion along with Greg Scott, NRCS state soil scientist, and Clay Pope, OACD executive director. At the end of the discussion questions were taken from the audience that included more than 30 individuals who experienced the Dust Bowl growing up in Oklahoma.

More preview screening events for Ken Burns' THE DUST BOWL are planned for other locations around the state leading up to the November broadcast of the documentary.

## ASABE Honors Larry Caldwell

Larry W. Caldwell, P.E., watershed specialist, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, was honored on Aug. 1, 2012, during an awards program at the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE) Annual International Meeting. The meeting was held at the Anatole Hilton in Dallas, Texas. Caldwell received both an ASABE Fellow honor and a G.B. Gunlogson Countryside Engineering Award. Caldwell is retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For more than 41 years, Caldwell has assisted landowners and communities with planning, design, and construction of thousands of conservation practices involving erosion control, water management, wildlife development, waste management, and flood control. A nationally-recognized authority on dam safety and rehabilitation of aging dams, Caldwell is currently providing leadership for a team assisting local conservation districts to evaluate aging flood control dams and to develop related emergency action plans and rehabilitation designs to meet current safety standards. He is also leading a national pilot project to design and implement a web-based system to monitor 2,100 flood control dams in Oklahoma.

Caldwell provided support for congressional efforts to obtain USDA authorization to rehabilitate aging dams. This involved numerous congressional hearings and briefings and coordination with other agencies and organizations. When Congress authorized funding for NRCS to begin a dam-rehabilitation program in 2000, Caldwell was named the first NRCS Watershed Rehabilitation Program Leader to develop and implement a national program to rehabilitate aging flood control dams. He worked tirelessly and traveled throughout the United States, providing guidance to states and watershed project sponsors in the development of their rehabilitation programs. He provided leadership in developing agency policy and procedures for implementation of rehabilitation projects and worked with other agencies to develop a ranking system to prioritize funding of NRCS-assisted projects. The 105 dams rehabilitated to date have protected thousands of lives downstream, and have provided wetland and wildlife habitat, water supplies, recreation for future generations, and millions of dollars in benefits annually.

In addition to having given 120 presentations at various conferences across the U.S. and Taiwan, Caldwell has authored or co-authored numerous journal articles, conference proceedings, and magazine articles, along with fact sheets, design guidelines, and technical manuals for federal and state agencies. He has conducted workshops in association with watershed sponsors across the U.S. on rehabilitating aging watershed dams and on dam operation, maintenance, and inspection procedures. In his 36 years of ASABE membership, Caldwell has served in officer positions in the Oklahoma Section and served on two ASABE historic landmark committees that earned recognition for vegetated waterways and the USDA Small Watershed program.

**Bellmon Award**, continued from page one

internationally as a leader in sustainability. The program encourages Oklahomans to protect water quality, prevent soil erosion and improve air quality by voluntarily adopting conservation practices that sequester carbon or avoid emission of greenhouse gasses. More than 50,000 acres of sustainable farming practices have been verified in the program since 2009.

In accepting the award, Thralls quoted the first chief of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, which is now the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. "The Oklahoma Carbon Program and all Conservation Commission programs are guided by the principle stated by Hugh Hammond Bennett: 'If you take care of the land, the land will take care of you.'"



Following the preview screening a panel of speakers discussed the Dust Bowl and fielded questions from the audience. From left are Greg Scott, NRCS state soil scientist; Clay Pope, OACD executive director; and Bill Collier, a Dust Bowl survivor from Taloga.



More than 30 Dust Bowl survivors attended the Woodward "Screening and Community Conversation."



Larry Caldwell was named as an ASABE Fellow. From left are Sonia Maassel Jacobsen, ASABE president, and Carolyn and Larry Caldwell.

## Farm Bureau Tours North Canadian River Project

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau (OFB) board of directors toured OCC's North Canadian River Watershed 319 (water quality) Project on the evening of Wednesday, July 18, 2012. Some of the board's family members accompanied them along with several OFB staff members. The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) and OCC hosted the tour in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The North Canadian River Watershed Project is a voluntary partnership between local farmers and ranchers, conservation districts, OCC, NRCS and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address water quality in the project area. Farmers and ranchers install best management practices (BMPs) with cost-share assistance to reduce bacteria, nutrients and turbidity as identified in a 2005 Total Maximum Daily Load Study by the state Department of Environmental Quality. The objective is to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of voluntary efforts to improve water quality by installing practices that reduce nonpoint source water runoff that include those pollutants. Monty Ramming is the project coordinator and Debi Carnott is the education coordinator for the project.

No-till farming, cross fencing and riparian area fencing, and grass planting are among the practices included in the project. Other cost-share components help with providing water for livestock, such as solar pumps and freeze-proof water tanks.

The tour visited the farm of Jeff Brower, a cooperator in the North Canadian Project. His farm serves as a demonstration farm for the project, where he converted from conventional tillage to no-till farming five years earlier. He explained that the damage to his land in 2007 from Tropical Storm Erin was a key factor in motivating him to switch to no-till. He told the group that the change had been extremely successful. Benefits include reduced fuel costs, reduced labor from the time saved by not tilling fields repeatedly and also increased crop production as a result in the improvement in soil health.

Upon leaving the Brower farm the group traveled to Blaine County to a former school house-turned event center owned by Aaron Base, Central North Canadian River Conservation District director. At that location Shanon Phillips, OCC Water Quality director, gave a presentation outlining the North Canadian Project. Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, and Clay Pope, OACD executive director, also spoke to the crowd of about 30 people including OCC and NRCS staff and guests. Greg Scott, NRCS state soil scientist, used a rainfall simulator to demonstrate the difference in water absorption and runoff in land with different amounts of ground cover, from bare soil, to moderate stubble, to heavy ground cover.

### 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, 405.990.1292

### Oklahoma Conservation Conversation

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Area III	George Stunkard
Area IV	Dan Lowrance
Area V	Jim Grego

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