

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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USFWS Provides Grass Drill to Dewey County Conservation District

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Wildlife Program has provided a 10-foot grass drill to the Dewey County Conservation District through a \$29,000 grant to help landowners plant native grasses for wildlife habitat restoration.

The district will charge a nominal maintenance fee to landowners to use the drill not only in Dewey County, but also adjacent counties.

An estimated 8,000 to 10,000 acres will be restored to native grasses over the 10-year life of the agreement. The restoration of native grasslands will provide important breeding, migrating and wintering habitat for neo-tropical birds, wading birds, shorebirds and other grassland nesting bird and wildlife species.

"This will help not only participants in U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Partners for Wildlife

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Deer Creek CD Holds Groundbreaking for Cobb Creek Site 1

Deer Creek Conservation District, in cooperation with Southwestern Oklahoma State University, held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Cobb Creek Site 1 dam rehabilitation project on Nov. 29. Work on the site, which is also Crowder Lake, located at Crowder Lake State Park, south of Weatherford, is slated to begin after the first of the year.

The structure has exceeded the life span of its original design and is now classified as a high hazard dam due to development that has occurred downstream since it was built. When the rehabilitation project is complete, the structure will continue to protect life and property for another 100 years.

Among those attending the ceremony were Deer Creek CD Directors Carol Gaunt, Alveta Taylor, Bertha Miller and John Flaming; SWOSU President Randy Beutler; Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director Clay Pope; Oklahoma Conservation Commission Executive Director Mike Thralls; OCC Conservation Programs Director Robert Toole, State Rep. Harold Wright, Congressman Frank Lucas's Field Representative Garrett King; OCC Watershed Technician George Moore; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist Steve Kelley; Weatherford Mayor Mike Brown; NRCS District Conservationist Ron Schmidt; Crowder Lake staff, Deer Creek CD staff and other SWOSU representatives.



In front of the grass drill (from left) are Clay Pope, OACD Executive Director; John Hendrix, USFW wildlife biologist; Mike Thralls, OCC executive director; Jimmy Emmons, Kenneth Salisbury, Jimmie Purvine, Dale Wilson and Roger Moore, Dewey County CD directors; and Mike Rooker, OCC chairman.



Among those participating in the groundbreaking ceremony were (from left) state Rep. Harold Wright; Weatherford Mayor Mike Brown, OCC/CP Director Robert Toole, OACD Executive Director Clay Pope, SWOSU President Randy Beutler, and Deer Creek CD Directors Bertha Miller, Alveta Taylor and Carol Gaunt.

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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

Conservation Calendar

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

2011

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Jan. 4, Oklahoma City

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday,
Jan. 17

NACD Annual Meeting,
Jan. 30 - Feb. 2, Nashville, Tenn.

No-Till Oklahoma Conference,
Feb. 1-2, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Feb. 7, Oklahoma City

**American Farmers & Ranchers
Convention,**
Feb. 18-19, Oklahoma City

Presidents Day Holiday, Feb 21

OACD Annual State Meeting,
Feb. 27 - March 1, Midwest City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
March 1, Midwest City

Conservation Day at the Capitol,
March 22, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
April 4, Oklahoma City

Oklahoma Envirothon Competition
April 5, Keystone State Park

Conservation Commission Meeting,
May 2, Oklahoma City

**National Land & Range Judging
Contest,** May 3-5, Oklahoma City

State Web Day at the Capitol,
May 10, Oklahoma City

12th National Watershed Coalition

In our thoughts...

Madison "Red" Hallows, retired Soil Conservation Technician at the Atoka Field Office, passed away on Nov. 3 at the age of 87.

Carl Woods Jr., NRCS resource soil scientist, lost his father, Carl Woods Sr., age 68, on Nov. 23.

Max Dominick, a career SCS employee and father of Darrel Dominick, OCC employee and former NRCS state conservationist, passed Dec. 7 at the age of 75.

Thank You...

To All,

Just wanted to say thank you for all the visits, phone calls, cards, emails and plants during this difficult time (the loss of my dad) in our lives. It is great to be able to work with such a wonderful and caring group of people. Again thank you all so much. Sincerely, Carl Woods

Grass Drill, continued from page 1

Program, but also landowners with Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program agreements with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or other programs through the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation," said John Hendrix. Hendrix is a wildlife biologist for USFW's Oklahoma Ecological Services office in Tulsa. "Use of the equipment is not limited to landowners enrolled in programs, though," Hendrix said. "Any landowner who wants to use the drill to plant native grasses is welcome to do so," Hendrix said. "The more the drill is used and the more native grasses are restored will add to the success of the project," he said. "We are optimistic this will be a successful project, and if it is, we would like to do similar projects at conservation districts in other areas of the state," Hendrix said.



Dewey County Conservation District and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hope to plant 8,000 to 10,000 acres of native grasses with the grass drill over the next 10 years.

Scholarship Fund Dedicated to Memory of Max Dominick

Max Dominick, a career Soil Conservation Service employee and father of Darrel Dominick, OCC employee and former NRCS state conservationist, passed away Dec. 7. The Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council has established a scholarship fund as a memorial to Dominick.

The scholarship will be awarded to an Oklahoma American Indian student who is a member of an Oklahoma Tribe pursuing a degree in the fields of natural resources or engineering.

To contribute to the scholarship fund, checks should be made out to OTCAC with "Max Dominick" written in the memo area of the check. A donation receipt will be provided for all donations received along with notification when selection is made. Donations may be mailed to: OTCAC, 208 Ruth, Tecumseh OK 74873



(From left) Darrel Dominick and father Max at the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts 2007 State Meeting when Darrel was inducted into the OACD Conservation Hall of Fame as a Friend of Conservation.



2011 NACD Annual Meeting: From the Roots Up

NACD 2011 Annual Meeting, Jan. 30 - Feb. 2, 2011, Nashville, TN

Conservation leaders from across the nation will gather in early February for NACD's 65th Annual Meeting at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center on the banks of the Cumberland River in the heart of Nashville, Tennessee.

Awards & Recognition

Congratulations: Jana Chicoine

Jana Chicoine, OCC/FMHR administrative programs officer, was recognized at the December Commission meeting for her 26 years of service to OCC. She is retiring effective Dec. 31. She worked at Cleveland County Conservation District for 3 years prior to joining OCC. Jana said she plans to enjoy her retirement, especially spending time with her grandchildren, and may volunteer for worthwhile projects in the future.



Kevin Gustavson, OCC/WQ Blue Thumb low impact development educator, was recognized at the December 2010 Commission meeting for being named Employee of the Quarter at the October OCC Full Staff Meeting.

Jean Lemmon, OCC/WQ Blue Thumb quality assurance officer, was recognized at the December 2010 Commission meeting for 10 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

The OCC/WQ Blue Thumb Program was recognized for receiving the Golden Paddle Award from the Illinois River Watershed Partnership in November.

Blue Thumb Volunteer Conference

Oklahoma City University hosted the 2010 Blue Thumb Volunteer Conference Nov. 5-6.

The conference, held biennially, brought in volunteers and people from all corners of the state interested in volunteer water quality monitoring. Topics presented included

- Educating citizens in your watershed
- Invasive Plants
- Wild Yards
- Making Data Meaningful
- Value of Outdoor Education

“We worked to offer these folks information that would be useful, and a chance to have fun and chat,” Blue Thumb coordinator Cheryl Cheadle said.

Apparently everything came together as planned, Cheadle added, stating “comments about the speakers and other facets of the conference have been very positive.” It didn’t hurt, she said, that the attending volunteers also got to select a monitoring tool or two to keep such as a Secchi tube, winter gloves, timer, stream-keeper guide, Oklahoma bird guide among other items.

Another big plus, Cheadle said, was the attendance of Dr. Bob Carlson, retired professor from Kent State University who is well-known throughout volunteer monitoring circles. Dr. Carlson mingled and chatted one-on-one with the volunteers on Friday evening.

Workshop for High School Students and Teachers

OCU also hosted the first-ever Blue Thumb conference for high school teachers and students on Nov. 20. Seven teachers and 26 students participated. Beth Landon, an OCU lab technician and long-time Blue Thumb volunteer, put together most of the activities, according to Cheadle.

“Obviously this kind of educational workshop is good for the students or we would never have had such a great turnout and so many positive comments,” Cheadle said, adding that she hopes it will become an annual event.

Blue Thumb Grants to Districts

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission’s Blue Thumb Program will provide up to 10 conservation districts with \$500 grants for use in conservation education, particularly education that has a focus on clean water. Blue Thumb coordinator Cheryl Cheadle said “Districts can apply by preparing a proposal that includes an estimate of costs involved, and by providing their Annual Report for the 2009/2010 time frame and a letter from the district director.” A document with details about applying for the grant is available on OCC’s website, www.conservation.ok.gov. The document also has ideas for projects that might be useful for districts.

“Our goal is to help districts to keep good educational efforts happening even though funding is tough to come by,” Cheadle said. Proposals will be accepted from Nov. 1, 2010, through Feb. 1, 2011. Interested districts should refer first to the guidelines on OCC’s website and contact Cheryl Cheadle with any questions. Proposals can be mailed or emailed to Cheadle, and contact information is in the guidelines.



(From left) Jean Lemmon, Cheryl Cheadle, Dr. Bob Carlson, and Kim Shaw at the 2010 Blue Thumb Volunteer Conference in Oklahoma City Nov. 5 & 6. Carlson is a well-known advocate of volunteer monitoring and the founder of the Secchi Dip-In, an annual event to gather water clarity information from volunteers world-wide.

Sammy Soil at Ben Franklin Science Academy

Staff from the Muskogee County Conservation District and Muskogee NRCS office presented programs about soil at the Ben Franklin Science Academy in Muskogee on Oct. 14, 2010.

Muskogee County CD manager Andy Qualls and secretary Trish Kloeckler participated as did NRCS soil scientist Steve Alspach and district conservationist Chris Lester. Jared Newton, NRCS technician, played Sammy Soil, the conservation mascot.

Approximately 1,000 pre-kindergarten through sixth grade students attended. The students visited booths with information and hands-on activities that teach about the role of agriculture in people’s lives from food to clothing. They got to see and touch a large tractor and other farm equipment and farm animals including a horse and a llama. The students also enjoyed a hay ride and a pumpkin patch.

“But in all, I think Sammy stole the day,” Kloeckler said.



The students enjoyed a visit from Sammy Soil.



Steve Alspach, NRCS soil scientist, explained the role of soil in agriculture for the food and other things people depend on in their lives.

Little River Receives McCurtain County 4-H Partnership Award

The McCurtain County 4-H Chapter presented its “Partners in 4-H Award” to Little River Conservation District on Oct. 2, 2010. Kathleen Taylor, McCurtain County 4-H leader, noted that the district had assisted the chapter in various activities including judging speech and poster contests, providing natural resource information to students and assisting the program in setting priorities. She said the district also continues to provide scholarship funds for those students excelling in natural resource projects.

“The Little River Conservation District has always been there to assist us whenever we have asked them for help” Taylor said. “We are very pleased to consider both the staff and directors of the Little River Conservation District as our partners.”



Kathleen Taylor, McCurtain County 4-H leader, presents the McCurtain County “Partners in 4-H Award” to Little River Conservation District staff. From left Frank Acker, Little River CD manager; Taylor; John Burnett, district technician; and Karen Smith, district secretary.

Oklahoma ECOpass Purchase Clears Conscience for Travel

Visitors coming to Oklahoma now have a means to lower the environmental footprint of their trip while promoting natural resource conservation. Oklahoma ECOpass is a new initiative by the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department (OTRD) and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). OTRD will sell ECOpasses, in denominations of \$5, \$10, \$15 and \$30, through the webstore on www.TravelOK.com. The denominations represent different levels of carbon credits created by practices such as no-till and strip-till farming, grass and tree planting and improved pasture management. All of these practices are encouraged by Oklahoma conservation districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to reduce non-point source pollution in water, conserve soil, improve wildlife habitat and sequester carbon.

Research shows that these improvements to the land can store or sequester anywhere from .5 to 1.2 metric tons of carbon in soil per acre, per year, helping reduce overall carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere while addressing other natural resource concerns. Landowners who undertake these practices have the ability to sell these carbon credits through the OACD Oklahoma Carbon Initiative with verification provided by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Carbon Program.

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

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