

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

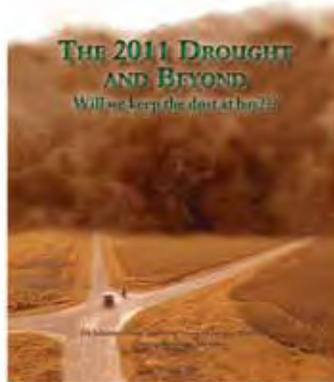
Volume 57, Issue No. 12 December 2011

“The 2011 Drought and Beyond”

Local Conservation Representatives Attend Area Meetings of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Conservation leaders discussed issues relevant to Oklahoma at the five Area Meetings of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts held across the state during November 2011. “The 2011 Drought and Beyond — Will we keep the dust at bay?,” the theme of the meetings for Oklahoma’s conservation district directors and employees, reflected the challenges faced by natural resource conservation entities during the hottest and second driest year in state history. The meetings were sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) and cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Garrett King, field representative for Oklahoma’s U.S. Congressman Frank Lucas, spoke at the meetings about the process underway in Congress to craft the



Garrett King, field representative for Congressman Frank Lucas

next federal Farm Bill and the role of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (“Super Committee”) in that process.

Gary McManus, associate state climatologist for the Oklahoma Climatological Survey, gave a presentation featuring facts about climate conditions in Oklahoma in 2011 and in state history. He stated that this year’s extremes of heat and drought were neither forecast nor expected.

Representatives from the Oklahoma State University Co-

OACD Area Meetings, continued on page two

Honey Creek Implementation Project Shows Water Quality Improving

Recent monitoring data shows that implementation of best management practices (BMPs) by farmers and ranchers is improving water quality in a sub-watershed of Grand Lake, according to Shanon Phillips, director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission’s (OCC) Water Quality Division.

In 2006 the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC), in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Delaware County Conservation District, and in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, began working with local landowners in the Oklahoma portion of the Honey Creek watershed on a project to improve water quality. The implementation project is funded primarily through EPA under Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act, along with some state funding. The purpose of the project is to demonstrate the beneficial effects of BMPs in reducing the amount of “nonpoint source” pollutants (those carried in runoff) entering into streams that empty into Grand Lake. The pollutants specifically targeted in the project are phosphorus and bacteria. The program provides cost-share assistance to landowners in implementing those BMPs as well as education

Honey Creek, continued on page three

In This Issue

“The 2011 Drought and Beyond” OACD Area Meetings 2011

Honey Creek Project Shows Water Quality Improving

Record Earthquakes Leave Flood Control Dams Undamaged

Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays



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! Also— See “QR Code” on page two!

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
<http://conservation.ok.gov>

Christmas Holiday, Dec. 26-27

2012

New Year's Day Holiday, Jan. 2

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday
Jan. 16

NACD Annual Meeting,
Jan. 29-Feb. 1, Las Vegas, Nev.

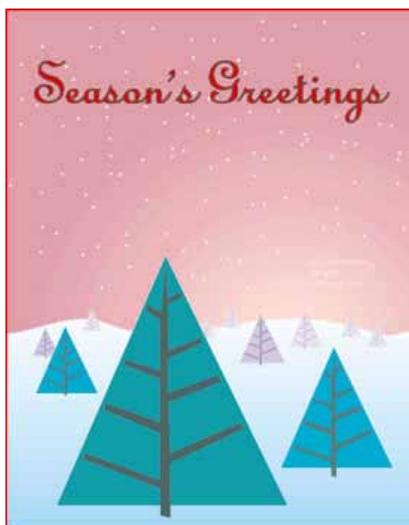
Presidents' Day Holiday, Feb. 20

OACD State Meeting
Feb. 26-28, Oklahoma City

Oklahoma Envirothon,
April 3, location TBA

National Land & Range Judging Contest
May 1-3, Oklahoma City

Memorial Day Holiday, May 28



QR (Quick Response) Code

Scan the QR Code below with the QR Reader on your smart phone to go to our website. Bookmark it as a Favorite to stay up-to-date on Conservation in Oklahoma.



<http://conservation.ok.gov>

(Free QR Reader applications are available for iPhone, Android and other smart phones.)

In our thoughts...

Karl Jett, Beaver County CD director and Area I Conservation Commission member, underwent an outpatient CyberKnife procedure on Dec. 1.

William "Bill" Tallman, longtime Craig County CD board member, passed away Dec. 3 after a long illness.

OACD Area Meetings, continued from page one

operative Extension Service spoke on agronomy and livestock subjects related to drought conditions. Representatives of the USDA Risk Management Agency spoke about the role of crop insurance during drought.

Oklahoma County and Logan County Conservation Districts hosted the Area II Meeting for central Oklahoma on Nov. 1 in Oklahoma City. North, South and West Caddo Conservation Districts hosted the Area IV Meeting for southwest Oklahoma on Nov. 2 at Fort Cobb. Muskogee County Conservation District hosted the Area III Meeting for the northeast region of the state on Nov. 10 in Muskogee. Woodward County Conservation District hosted the Area I Meeting for northwest Oklahoma on Nov. 15 in Woodward. Latimer County Conservation District hosted the final meeting of the series in Wilburton on Nov. 17. From 120 to 150 adults and students attended each of the five meetings.

Area winners of the OACD Conservation Awards were recognized at each meeting. The winners from each area of the state will be considered for recognition at the state level in the categories of Outstanding Conservation District, sponsored by Chesapeake Energy; Outstanding District Director, sponsored by the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation; and Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator, sponsored by the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. The state winner will be announced at the OACD State Meeting Feb. 26-28, 2012, in Midwest City and recognized during Conservation Day at the Capitol.

The Area I honorees were Woodward County Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; Mead Ferguson, Woodward County Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and G.E. Mitchell, Woodward County Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator. The Area II honorees were Kay County Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; Jan Kunze, Oklahoma County Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and Sue Ann Priboth, Kay County Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator. The Area III honorees were Craig County Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; Robert Willy, Craig County Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and Bill Mangels, Nowata County Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator. The Area IV honorees were Upper Washita Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; John Flaming, Deer Creek Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and David Eyester, Deer Creek Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator. There were no entries in the competition for Area V.

The OACD Area Meetings include contests sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE) for youth in categories of speeches, essays and posters. Oklahoma Farmers Royalty Company provides awards for the OACD/OACDE Contests. First place winners in the essay and poster contests, as well as first and second place winners in the speech contest, are eligible to compete at the state level during OACD's Annual State Meeting to be held Feb. 26-28, 2012, in Midwest City.

Links to presentations made by speakers at the Area Meetings are available on the OCC website, <http://conservation.ok.gov>.



This year Oklahoma Farmers Royalty Company (OFRC) began a five-year commitment to sponsor awards for the OACD/OACDE Youth Contests. From left are Richard Parker, OACD Area II director; Christina Richard, OACDE president; Julie Miller, Area II Division II Speech Contest first place winner; Mason Mungle, OFRC executive director; and Charles Sandmann, OFRC board member.



Honey Creek, continued from page one

and demonstration of the BMPs promoted through the program on a demonstration farm in the watershed.

The BMPs are all aimed at reducing the amount of sediment and excess nutrients that enter into streams. The nutrients, namely phosphorus and nitrogen, may originate from sources such as fertilizers, animal wastes or sewage. It is the *excess* — more than existing plants can use — that runs off and causes algae growth and other problems in the streams. Bacteria that pose threats to human or animal health may also be present in runoff.

Among the BMPs is restoring or enhancing riparian (streamside) vegetation to help filter runoff water. Other practices include poultry litter storage, winter feeding facilities for livestock, pasture improvement, cross fencing, creation of ponds or other watering facilities, and transfer of poultry litter out of the watershed.

Approximately two thirds of the Honey Creek watershed lies in Oklahoma, with the remainder lying in Arkansas. Since the project began 86 Oklahoma landowners have enrolled, resulting in approximately 49 percent of the Oklahoma portion of the watershed having some kind of BMP in place. The implementation has occurred on approximately 42 percent of land identified as contributing high amounts of phosphorus in earlier watershed modeling.

“We are already seeing a nine to 15 percent reduction in phosphorus and a 40 percent reduction in *E. coli* and *Enterococcus* bacteria loading into the streams,” Phillips said. “And over time, the longer these practices are in place, we anticipate seeing the rate of reduction continue to climb,” she said.

Phillips referred to a similar project in the Beatty Creek watershed. In 2005, after five years of implementation and monitoring, a 14 percent reduction in phosphorus was reported. More recent results show the reduction in phosphorus has climbed to 66 percent, with an 80 percent reduction in nitrogen loading into streams.

“In these projects we work with local landowners through voluntary, cooperative agreements,” Phillips said. “And in programs like this we have always run out of funding before we have run out of landowners wanting to participate,” she said. “The demonstration efforts show how effective BMPs can be in improving water quality, and the cost-share assistance makes it economically feasible for landowners who really care about the land and water to participate,” she said.

Implementation of BMPs in the Honey Creek watershed is ongoing, with the project scheduled to end in February 2013. Monitoring data will be reanalyzed following that time to assess the further effects of the project on improving water quality.

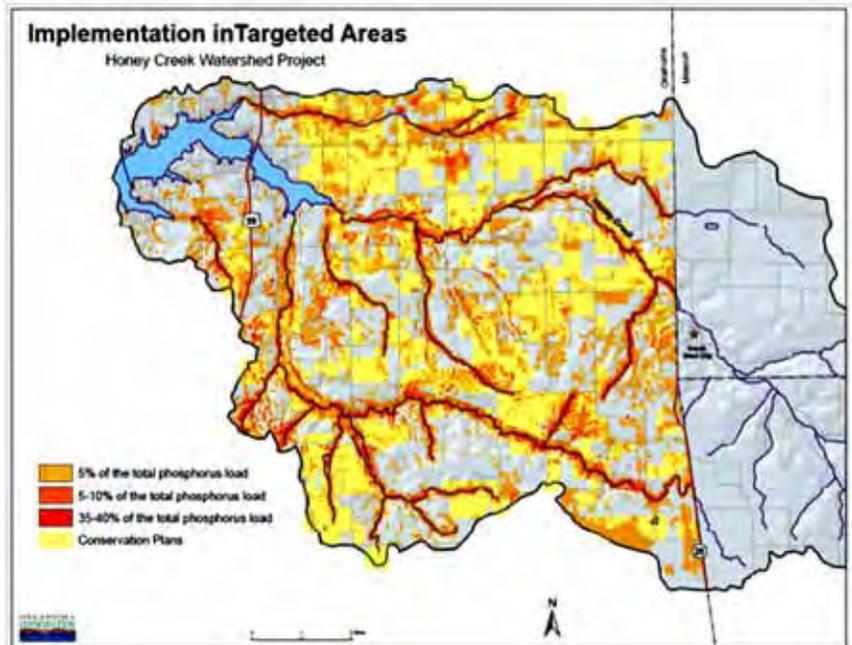
Record Earthquakes Leave Flood Control Dams Undamaged

After a four-day period, Nov. 5-8, when a series of earthquakes shook Oklahoma, including the largest in state history, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission reports that the state’s small watershed flood control dams showed no significant visible damage.

The earthquakes centered around 35.55N latitude and 96.76W longitude in northwest Lincoln County, or about 8 miles southeast of Perkins. On Nov. 5 a 4.7-magnitude quake occurred at 2:12 a.m., followed by lesser tremors during the day, capped by the record-breaking 5.6-magnitude quake at 10:53 p.m. The 5.6 earthquake broke the state’s previous record for strongest recorded earthquake — a 5.5-magnitude quake in El Reno in 1952, according to the Oklahoma Geological Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey. Smaller quakes were recorded over the next two days and another earthquake, registered at 4.8-magnitude, was centered slightly to the southwest on Nov. 7.

Within 48 hours after the 5.6-magnitude quake, a cursory inspection by local conservation districts determined that no visible damage had occurred to the high hazard structures within the area closest to the heart of the quake. Over the course of the next 48 hours, additional inspections were conducted on other structures to determine if the earthquake had any negative impact on them.

“With over 36 high hazard dams within 50 miles of the epicenter of the quake that hit Saturday, Nov. 5., and a reduced staff due to tight budgets, it took us some time to evaluate the system, but reports indicated that



Honey Creek Watershed Project: Implementation in Targeted Areas. Gold indicates the location of five percent of the total phosphorus load; orange indicates five to 10 percent of the load; and red indicates 35-40 percent of the load. Yellow shows where conservation plans are in place in relationship to the sources of phosphorus loading.



North Deer Creek Watershed Dam 1M, which impounds the Wes Watkins Reservoir, is one of the largest of the state’s 2,107 small watershed upstream flood control dams. The reservoir serves as a municipal water supply for the city of Shawnee. The dam was one of 36 within 50 miles of the earthquake epicenter that were inspected for damage within 48 hours of the record earthquakes.

Earthquakes and Dams, continued on page four

(Earthquakes and Dams, continued from page three)

the structures came through the tremors without significant visible damage” said Mike Thralls, executive director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

According to Clay Pope, executive director of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD), this recent event again shows the importance of adequately funding conservation in Oklahoma.

“With the tight budgets we have been facing at the state, local and federal levels these last few years, we are struggling to make sure we have the staff and funding necessary to maintain the integrity of our flood control system,” Pope said. “Luckily we seem to have suffered no significant damage due to these last earthquakes. This event shows however, that it is extremely important that we keep the system of Conservation Districts and the staffing at the Conservation Commission funded at the level sufficient to maintain and operate these structures because you never know what kind of challenge will come next. It might even be a record earthquake in Oklahoma.”

“Assistance from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission is available to conservation districts and municipalities who feel the need to video inspect spillway pipes,” said Robert Toole, director of OCC’s Conservation Programs division. “OCC has a robotic camera and an experienced team who can perform this type of inspection,” Toole said.

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

Project WILD Workshops
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