



# Conservation Conversation

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

Volume 52 No. 2/3, February/March 2007

## 2007 State Meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts 70 Years — And Still Going!

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) held its 69th Annual State Meeting at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City Feb. 25-27. The theme of this year's meeting, "70 Years -- And Still Going!" celebrated the 70th anniversary of the law creating conservation districts in Oklahoma. The meeting was cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.



Lt. Gov. Jari Askins

Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins opened the meeting at the first general session on Monday, Feb. 26. She welcomed the attendees on behalf of Gov. Brad Henry and commended the assembled conservationists for their commitment to the state's natural resources. She stated that she was proud that the honorary chair of her first campaign for state representative in 1990 was Nolen Fuqua. Fuqua, then a Stephens County Conservation District Director, had been the first president of the OACD. Askins said her father taught her the importance of tree windbreaks in preventing wind erosion, but Fuqua taught her the role that water conservation and flood control play in soil conservation. She spoke of frequently visiting the local conservation district office through her years in office to stay in touch with natural resource activities and needs.

Bill Wilson of Kinta, Oklahoma, Haskell County Conservation District director, also spoke during the opening session. Wilson recently concluded a two-year term as president of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

At the Monday luncheon, Walter Eskridge, a curator for the Oklahoma Historical Society, gave a living history presentation in the character of a Dust Bowl-era Oklahoma farmer.



Speaker of the House  
Lance Cargill

Oklahoma Speaker of the House of Representatives Lance Cargill spoke to the group at the Tuesday morning general session. Cargill said "As proud as I am of Oklahoma's history, I am more excited about our future." He stated that "green spaces," areas with well-developed and healthy natural resources, are high among criteria for areas ranked as outstanding places to live. For that reason, Cargill will introduce into this legislative session House Bill 4108 that he has named the Oklahoma Forever Land Trust Act. The goal of the bill is to encourage a future of outstanding rural and natural resource development.

Awards for outstanding contributions to conservation of Oklahoma's natural resources were presented to individuals and organizations during the OACD State Meeting. (*For Hall of Fame and President's Award, see page two.*)

Mark Thomas, executive vice president of the Oklahoma Press Association (OPA), joined OACD President Dan Lowrance to present the Excellence in Communications Awards, cosponsored by OACD and OPA. The award for Outstanding Continuing Support by an OPA

OACD State Meeting, continued on page 2



Mark Thomas, OPA executive vice president, and Dan Lowrance, OACD president, presented the Excellence in Communications Award to Latimer County Conservation District. From left are Mark Thomas, Mike Bryan, NRCS district conservationist; Nicole Norris, LCCD education coordinator; Robert Hunnicut, LCCD equipment manager; Donna Hannebrink, LCCD program coordinator; and Dan Lowrance.

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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.



**Celebrating the Oklahoma  
Statehood Centennial and the 70th  
anniversary of the Conservation  
District Enabling Act!**



[www.ok.gov/okcc/News/Conservation\\_History](http://www.ok.gov/okcc/News/Conservation_History)

## Conservation Calendar

For more events and information, click on "Calendar" at [www.conservation.ok.gov](http://www.conservation.ok.gov)

April 19-21 — Southern Plains Farm Show, State Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City.

April 21 — Clear Grand Earth Day Celebration, Grand Lake Visitor Center, Grove.

April 23-27 — Fish ID and Habitat Assessment Training, Tahlequah.

April 24 — Cimarron County Livestock Producers' Meeting, Cimarron County CD, Boise City.

April 26 — Cimarron County Outdoor Resources Day for students, Cimarron County CD, Boise City.

April 26 — Cimarron County Butterfly Workshop, Boise City.

April 26-27 — Oklahoma Farm & Ranch Summit, P Bar Farms, Weatherford.

April 27 — A Closer Look - Protecting Tulsa's Drinking Water, Tulsa.

May 3-4 — Blue Thumb Volunteer Training, Kay County CD, Newkirk.

May 7 — Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, 9:30 a.m., Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City.

May 9-11 — Forest Utilization Conference and Equipment Expo, Western Hills State Lodge, Wagoner.

May 10-11 — Oklahoma Farm & Ranch Summit, Grape Ranch, Okemah.

May 28 — Memorial Day Holiday

June 4 — Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, 9:30 a.m., Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City.

June 24-29 — Black Mesa Ecological Academy Range Camp, Cimarron County CD.

## In Our Thoughts

Fredia Rice, Cotton County CD programs coordinator, is recovering from knee surgery. Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, will undergo surgery and treatment for an illness. Please inform **Mark Harrison** at OCC of district directors or employees who have been ill, passed away or had babies. **Please include dates!!!!!!!**

[OACD State Meeting, continued from page 1](#)

Member Newspaper went to Kevin Hassler, associate editor of the Enid News and Eagle. Hassler was entered in the contest by the Garfield County Conservation District.

The Excellence in Innovative Communication went to Harper County Conservation District for developing handouts for legislators that helped achieve a pay raise for district employees. The items were Pay Day candy bars and packets of Equal sweetener labeled with messages calling attention to the fact that district employee salaries were much lower than state employees performing comparable work.

Harper County Conservation District was honored for continuing a record of 100 percent attendance of district directors at board meetings.

Cindy Bierig, secretary for the Major County Conservation District, received the Adeline Laird Award. The award was established in memory of Adeline Laird, finance officer at the Oklahoma Conservation Commission from October 1974 until her death in 1984. The award is presented to recognize district secretaries or programs coordinators who typify Laird's hard work, dedication, enthusiasm and caring attitude.

Bradley Hamilton, district manager for the Pittsburg County Conservation District, received the Outstanding Conservation District Employee Award from the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees.

Kirk Schreiner of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service presented NRCS Earth Team awards for volunteer service. Wheatland RC&D was named Oklahoma Workgroup of the Year; Newkirk Field Office/Kay County CD won the Group Project 2006 Award and Pam Silas, Purcell Field Office/McClain County CD received the Volunteer Award.

## OACD Conservation Hall of Fame and President's Awards

Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts President Dan Lowrance presented the OACD Hall of Fame and President's Awards at the OACD State Meeting on Feb. 26.

Wayne Sexton was named to the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame as a conservation district director. Sexton was first elected to the Pittsburg County Conservation District board of directors in 1979 and has served in that position for the past 25 years. He is a lifelong southeast Oklahoma rancher and a second generation conservation district director whose father served for 21 years on the Atoka County Conservation District board.

Lowrance cited Sexton for his dedication to the state association. "Over the past ten years no other conservation district director has made more trips to the state Capitol to participate in our legislative days," Lowrance said. "He is known around the Capitol as 'that tall cowboy with the black

*Hall of Fame, continued on page 3*

### Conservation Commission Employees: Awards & Recognition

**Kelly Mockabee**, OCC/FMHR executive secretary, received recognition at the February Commission meeting for 25 years of service to the Conservation Commission and the state of Oklahoma.

**Shellie Willoughby**, OCC/IT GIS specialist, received recognition at the February Commission meeting for 10 years of service to the Conservation Commission and the state of Oklahoma.

**Gene Spurlock**, OCC/AML inspector, received recognition at the March Commission meeting for 25 years of service to the Conservation Commission and the state of Oklahoma.

**Cheryl Cheadle**, OCC/WQ Blue Thumb coordinator, received recognition at the March Commission meeting for 15 years of service to the Conservation Commission and the state of Oklahoma.



*Cindy Bierig, Major County CD secretary (center), shown here with district board and staff, received the Adeline Laird award.*



*Wayne Sexton (in white hat) with his wife Joyce and family and his Hall of Fame Award.*

hat.' He taught many of our district directors how to feel comfortable at the Capitol and how to talk up conservation with our legislators."

Lowrance stated that significant conservation legislation, including the state Conservation Cost-Share Program, passed in no small part due to the many trips Sexton made to the Capitol to promote the legislation.

Sexton has also been a leader on water issues in southeast Oklahoma, having served as vice chair of the Southern Oklahoma Water Alliance. He has also been active in rural development, serving as a director and officer of the Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma.

Ranching and rodeos have always been Wayne's passion. He has served as president of the Pittsburg County Cattleman's Association and is a member of the Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association, the Senior Steer Ropers Association and Choctaw Steer Ropers Club. Sexton and his wife Joyce live in Kiowa.

"A proud Oklahoman and a cowboy through and through, the conservation movement has no better ambassador than tonight's recipient," Lowrance said.

Darrel Dominick was named to the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame as a "Friend of Conservation."

"He set a high standard of performance for his employees, but not any higher than the standards he set for himself," Lowrance said of Dominick.

"He believes in Oklahoma's conservation partnership and he believed in the conservation delivery system that starts with the local conservation district," Lowrance added. He commended Dominick for building the strength of Oklahoma's conservation partnership and setting an example for the rest of the nation.

Dominick is the third generation of his family to have worked for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which was called the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) until 1994, following his father and grandfather. As a young boy he learned about the watershed flood control program from his father Max, an SCS engineer.

Dominick recently retired with over 27 years of federal service – 25 of those working for NRCS including the last six years as state conservationist for Oklahoma, the federal agency's highest position in the state. He began his career with SCS as a range conservationist student trainee at Atoka and then Beaver in 1978 while attending Oklahoma State University. After graduation he was promoted to a range conservationist position at Cherokee. Other locations he worked included Mangum and Duncan. From 1985 to 1987 he worked as a community planner with the Department of the Army. Dominick then returned to SCS as a range conservationist. During his career he worked in Missouri, Wyoming and New York, and served as state conservationist in Maine and Oklahoma.

In November 2006 Dominick received a commendation from Gov. Brad Henry as well as a commendation from the Conservation Commission. The Governor's Commendation read, in part, "for your visionary leadership in the conservation of Oklahoma's natural resources and your tireless commitment to making the State of Oklahoma a better place to



*Darrel Dominick holding his Friend of Conservation, Hall of Fame Award, with his family. From left are daughter Becca, wife Gwyn, Darrel, and father Max.*

live." The Conservation Commission Commendation read, in part, "For unsurpassed leadership as the NRCS State Conservationist in Oklahoma, your commitment and unwavering support of Oklahoma's 88 conservation districts and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, championing the outreach of conservation programs to all citizens of the state."

Dominick has received numerous honors previously in his career including the 1999 Coastal America Partnership Award. He was honored by the Greater Boston Federal Executive Board for outstanding individual reinvention efforts in 1999. The Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, Northeast Region, honored Dominick with the 1998 outstanding service and dedication award. In June, 2000, he received the USDA Award for Superior Service. The NRCS American Indian/Alaskan Native Employee Association honored Dominick with the Mentoring Award in 2001.

Dominick served in leadership roles in his service with NRCS and USDA, such as chairing the National Civil Rights Committee and serving on the Chief's Advisory Committee. He was a charter member and president of the NRCS American Indian/Alaska Native Indian Employees' Association. Dominick served as Secretary Glickman's Acting Director of Native American Programs during part of 1999 and on the USDA Working Group for Tribal Colleges. Dominick was a member of the Harmony Cadre that provides training on working effectively with Indian Nations.

Dominick holds a B.S. in Agriculture (Agronomy/Range Management) and an M.A. in Political Science (Public Administration) from OSU. He is a Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Senior Executive Fellow. He graduated from Okmulgee High School and also lived in Sallisaw. He grew up around the family's small cow-calf operation at Hartshorne and is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Dominick and his wife Gwyn live in Stillwater and have two daughters.

President Lowrance presented the OACD President's Award for 2007 to Ron Hays, Director of Farm Programming for the Radio Oklahoma Network and publisher of the Oklahoma Farm Report daily email bulletin.

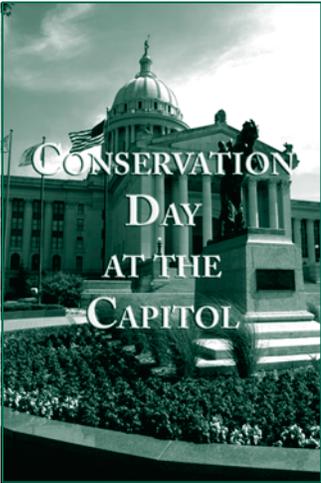
"Mr. Hays has been the radio voice of Oklahoma agriculture for many years. He is committed to providing Oklahoma farmers and ranchers with the best, and most up to date information about Ag issues and market news," Lowrance said. "Along with Ag news, Ron has been a tremendous source of information about conservation activities in our state. We appreciate his efforts to cover the activities and events of our conservation districts," Lowrance added.

Lowrance commended Hays for the daily email news service Hays started in the past year – the Oklahoma Farm and Ranch News Update. Lowrance stated that he is sure many Oklahoma people in agriculture and conservation start their day by reading the electronic bulletin.

"For his tireless efforts in covering Ag and conservation issues in Oklahoma, and for his commitment to providing information about our association and our conservation districts to a wide audience I am pleased to present Ron Hays with this year's President's Award," Lowrance said. "And there is no better way to introduce Ron Hays than by saying 'Howdy Neighbor,' you are a great friend to Oklahoma conservationists!"



*Ron Hays (left) accepting his OACD President's from Dan Lowrance.*



## Conservation Day at the Capitol 2007

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) presented the OACD Conservation Awards and the OACD Outstanding Conservation Educator Awards during "Conservation Day at the Capitol" on March 19. Cosponsors included a number of the state's 88 local conservation districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The event took place in the Capitol Rotunda on the fourth floor from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Approximately 30 participating organizations presented display booths featuring diverse conservation activities across the state.

In an awards presentation in the Governor's Blue Room, state Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach joined OACD President Scotty Herriman in presenting the OACD Conservation Award. The three award categories were cosponsored by Chesapeake Energy, the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma and the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation.

East Woods County Conservation District (EWCCD) received the Outstanding District Award, sponsored by OACD and Chesapeake Energy. The district was honored for carrying

out a wide variety of activities to promote and support conservation of natural resources. EWCCD activities including education opportunities for students and sponsoring trees for Washington School and bird feeders for Longfellow School. Both schools are in Alva. The district makes conservation-related implements available to farmers and cosponsors the Northwest Oklahoma Land Judging Contest for area 4H and FFA members.



*East Woods County Conservation District (EWCCD) was named Outstanding Conservation District for 2006. Above, from left, are EWCCD Director David Lyon, Sen. Owen Laughlin, EWCCD Program Coordinator Reva Maddox, EWCCD Director Jay Leeper; Chesapeake Energy Government Relations Director Sarah Gainer; EWCCD Directors Clint Olson and Bob McCray; Chesapeake Energy Vice President Tom Price; Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach and OACD President Scotty Herriman.*



*Paul Brown of Chickasha was named Outstanding Director for 2006. Above, from left, are Sen. Ron Justice, Paul Brown, Noble Foundation Agricultural Division Director Waddel Altom, Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach, and OACD President Scotty Herriman.*

Paul Brown of Chickasha, on the board of directors of the Grady County Conservation District, received the Outstanding District

Director Award, sponsored by OACD and the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. Brown represented the conservation district during the construction and inspection, with NRCS, of the Bitter Creek No. 18 flood control dam. He also represented Grady County CD during the district's lagoon pumpout operation and in the acquisition process for new equipment. The Brown Dairy helps with conservation education by hosting tours for students with visitors ranging from elementary school to exchange students from Germany, Russia and Brazil.

Joe Jeter of Copan received the Outstanding Landowner/

Cooperator Award, sponsored by OACD and the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. Jeter is a cooperator with and was nominated by the Caney Valley Conservation District. Jeter is a fourth generation farmer in Washington County who began farming his own land in 1971 while still in high school. Through conservation programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), he has installed ponds, re-shaped terraces and sprayed weeds to fight soil erosion and invasive plants. Jeter also employs no-till farming methods to curb soil erosion and conserve moisture. His great grandfather B.H. "Bud" Jeter was a founding member of the Caney Valley CD and served on the board until 1950.



*Above, from left, are Shannon Chatwin, Shirley Nelson, Chesapeake Energy Vice President Tom Price, Tracie Leeper, Jyme Tyner and Nellie Patterson.*

Joe Jeter of Copan, Okla., was named Outstanding Cooperator for 2006. Above, from left are, OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls, Rep. Earl Sears, Rep. Steve Martin, Sen. John Ford, Joe Jeter, Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach, and OACD President Scotty Herriman.



*Joe Jeter of Copan, Okla., was named Outstanding Cooperator for 2006. Above, from left are, OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls, Rep. Earl Sears, Rep. Steve Martin, Sen. John Ford, Joe Jeter, Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach, and OACD President Scotty Herriman.*

In addition, five teachers from across the state – one in each Congressional district – received Outstanding Conservation Educator Awards cosponsored by OACD and Chesapeake Energy. The recipients were Shannon Chatwin, Tulsa, nominated by Tulsa County Conservation District; Shirley Nelson, Talihina, nominated by Talihina Conservation District; Tracie Leeper, Alva, nominated by East Woods County Conservation District; Jyme Tyner, Chickasha, nominated by Grady County Conservation District; and Nellie Patterson, Edmond, nominated by Oklahoma County Conservation District.

## Taking Pride in Your Work

Something happened to me the week before this year's OACD State Meeting that had an effect on me and I want to share it with everyone who works with landowners throughout the state.

Pittsburg County CD is one of the conservation districts that still holds an annual Bankers Conservation Awards Banquet, and has done so every October for the past 27 years. At this banquet we honor three outstanding district cooperators who have improved their land with conservation practices.

In 2002 a friend and neighbor of mine was one of the awardees honored at the banquet. On February 22, 2007, I attended the man's funeral, as he had passed on after a lengthy illness. As with many funerals the family chose to show family pictures on a big screen television while they played music. One of the pictures the family picked to show during the funeral was of the man and wife receiving their Outstanding District Cooperator Certificate along with one of our board members.

The point I want to make is that they were proud of the fact that they were good stewards of the land and were also proud that they had been recognized for it. It is a privilege to work for people who appreciate what we do and that should give us a sense of pride for doing the job we do.

— Bradley Hamilton, District Manager, Pittsburg County Conservation District

## Large Crowd of Area Farmers Attend Multi-County Seminar

by Susan Henning, Kay County Conservation District

Over 150 agricultural producers attended a farm survival seminar entitled "Alternative Tillage and Crops," presented by the Noble County, Kay County, and Osage County Conservation Districts, and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Resource Conservation & Development Conservation Councils, and OSU Extension Service offices from those three counties.

Pioneer Technology Center at Ponca City hosted the event and catered the evening meal that began the event. Conoco/Phillips and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts sponsored the meal. Additional sponsors were the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council.

The seminar kicked off with an introduction by each agency on services they offer to producers, with invitations to follow-up at informational booths after the seminar.

The heart of the seminar included a panel discussion by local farm producers from Tom Cannon and Neal Otto from Kay County; Steve Kienholz and Marty Williams from Noble County; and NRCS Soil Scientist Greg Scott. Each panelist related the details of their farming operation especially in relation to no-till practices used and alternative crops grown. Panelists then addressed questions from the audience.

An issue of special interest was the success of no-till during the current drought. Greg Scott responded with data from 2004 and 2005, comparing no-till to conventionally-tilled soils. He stated that no-till soils with residue on the surface slowed evaporation and were moist to a depth of 5 feet, whereas conventionally-tilled soils were dry. Scott said that no-till soils are able to capture more rainfall because there is greater infiltration and less runoff.

Neal Otto commented that that's why he originally tried no-till. After a big rain event he had observed greater amounts of sediment laden runoff water coming from a conventionally-tilled field versus a no-till field across the road. That year, conserving water would become very important as the weather turned dry and much of the conventionally-tilled wheat "blew out."

Marty Williams stated he believes that conserving the soil structure is the most important factor in switching to no-till. "If the soil is healthy, plant health and yields will follow," he said. Greg Scott reiterated William's comments saying that conventional tillage creates an artificial soil structure as a fluffy seedbed is prepared. No-till allows the soil structure to rebuild itself, reestablishing the granular structure of native prairie soils teeming with microorganisms and earthworms that help recycle nutrients.

One thing that all of the panelists and many of the audience admit still struggling with is finding successful rotational crops, although all agreed that rotational crops help reduce insect, weed and disease problems. When asked about continuous wheat production under a no-till system, the panelists suggested that three years under a monoculture cropping system was definitely the limit before alternative crops in rotation should be introduced to reduce disease, insect and weed problems.

Steve Kienholz said that switching to no-till has been a slow gradual process, especially figuring out what rotational crops to grow. Tom Cannon commented that the lack of rainfall in the last few years has made it extremely challenging to successfully grow alternative crops, but he feels that even though the soybean yields have been low that the plants have contributed about four pounds of nitrogen per acre for the next crop. Cannon is also trying some long-term rotations such as alfalfa and brome to reestablish the soil structure and that also work well with his cattle operation.

The seminar concluded with a presentation on value-added agriculture by Mike Schrammel, Rural Development specialist. He encouraged farmers and ranchers to develop their farm products into a marketable end product close to home. Farmers in the Alva area have processed their wheat into flour and developed baking mixes and pizza dough. Grants are available to help farmers create value-added crop opportunities.



*Over 150 area farmers listened as fellow producer panelists discussed alternative tillage and crops at a recent farm survival seminar at Pioneer Technology Center. Panelists, from left, were Greg Scott, NRCS Soil Scientist; Tom Cannon and Neal Otto, Kay County producers; and Steve Kienholz and Marty Williams, Noble County producers. Photo by Susan Henning, Kay County Conservation District.*

## **A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission** tion.

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Jan. 8, 2007, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

### **District Director Appointments**

Delaware County - Jack Harris  
Payne County - Robert Priess  
South Caddo - Ralph Myers  
West Caddo - Marty Oxley

### **Claims/Financial Statement**

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement as presented by Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources director, who reported \$1,583,865.71 in claims from Nov. 18 to Dec. 18.

### **Agreements**

Commissioners approved two amended agreements and four new agreements as presented by Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director.

### **Travel Requests**

Commissioners approved four out-state travel requests for four employees.

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program**

Commissioners approved a request submitted by Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, to reallocate \$480,000 of REAP funds originally set aside to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in the Eucha/Spavinaw and Illinois River Watersheds for agency administration. He stated that when these funds were set aside OCC did not have a contributions agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Since then an NRCS agreement has been signed and these funds are not needed for agency operations.

### **Commissioner Reports**

Commissioner Matt Gard reported attending a hunting and target shooting event for legislators in Garfield County at the Groendyke Ranch and commended the district for its activities. Commissioner Virginia Kidd also attended that as well as the Pittsburg County CD dinner and the Tulsa Farm Show. Commissioner Rick Jeans visited with Rep. Dewitt and Sen. David Myers regarding the OCC's budget and they are very optimistic about funding.

### **Staff Reports**

**Administration:** Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, stated that staff has been gathering information for the pending lawsuit against poultry integrators. Ben Pollard and Shanon Phillips would participate in the deposition scheduled for Jan. 9. Thralls stated that he and Clay Pope, OACD executive director, met with Rep. Phil Richardson regarding OCC's budget, lifting the cap on the REAP funds and filling budget shortfalls. The Office of State Finance had inquired about lifting the cap as well. Thralls reported that Darrel Dominick, former NRCS state conservationist, had accepted a position with OCC as tribal outreach liaison as well as heading up some leadership training opportunities.

Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director, provided copies of recent news articles for review including one about the Coalition for Conservation and one from Ron Hays' Oklahoma Farm Report about OCC's all-time high for current construction contracts which total more than \$9 million. These contracts are in the areas of abandoned mine lands, Tar Creek reclamation, and upstream flood control structures.

**District Services:** Lisa Knauf, DS director, attended a retirement reception for Georgia Lawrence, Coal County CD secretary, who retired after 40 years. Knauf provided training to new secretaries at Tulsa and Muskogee County CDs. She worked on unemployment claim issues in Tulsa County. Knauf reported on development of a series of 10-Minute Management Guides for district directors. The first series was sent out for discussion at January board meetings. She scheduled five workshops in January to assist district employees with W-2 forms.

**Water Quality:** Shanon Phillips, WQ assistant director, stated that WQ director Dan Butler was participating in a conference call with the Environmental Protection Agency regarding the Stamper Project. She reported that landowners with at least 40 acre tracts in the Honey Creek 319 watershed project area were being invited to an opportunity on Jan. 9 to sign up for the program. She reported that the City Council of Elk City agreed to support a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in their area and provide a portion of the match. Staff will draft a watershed-based work plan.

**Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation:** Mike Kastl, AML director, stated that before the 109th Congress adjourned it passed HR 611 extending the AML program for 15 years and that President Bush had signed the bill into law. The bill contains \$135 million for the AML program over the next 15 years. Kastl expressed disappointment that Oklahoma would continue to receive 1.5 million in reclamation funds for the next three years before the funds began to increase. He stated that Oklahoma has five million dollars in designed projects sitting on the shelf awaiting construction funds.

**Financial Management and Human Resources:** Steve Coffman, FMHR director, stated that staff has been busy with end-of-year reporting. Coffman attended a meeting of the Motor Vehicle Advisory Council, that will look at developing uniform procedures for state-owned vehicles. He also attended a meeting of the Oklahoma Financial Manager's Association.

**Information Technology:** Mike Sharp, IT director, reported on the West Commerce Tar Creek AML project stating it is nearly finished. Reclamation work continues on the Southeast Commerce Tar Creek project. Staff continues work on the strategic and business plan development for the Geographic Information Council and the Office of Geographic Informa-

In addition, staff is working on implementing remote desktop computer applications that will be useful in resolving district and OCC field staff computer problems without the need to physically go to the remote office.

**Conservation Programs:** Robert Toole, CP director, informed the Commission that a significant advance had been made in the Oklahoma Corporation Commission/Oklahoma Conservation Commission Initiative with the addition of watershed structures on the Department of Environmental Quality website. This allows greater access to the watershed structure location database and increases the efficiency and effectiveness in noting watershed structures during the energy well permitting process

### **Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts**

Clay Pope, OACD executive director, stated that the National Association of Conservation Districts' South Central meeting has been scheduled for July 27-29 at the Cherokee Casino Resort in Catoosa. Conservation Day at the Capitol would take place March 19 and Chesapeake Energy, the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation and the Nature Conservancy would again sponsor awards for the event. Pope stated that legislative committee work is underway. OACD will monitor several bills on topics ranging from controlled burn to tax credits for conservation easements. Pope expressed his pleasure with Elk City's support of the CREP project. He has been in contact with the City of Shawnee on water quality issues as well. The OACD Executive Board will meet in a special meeting on January 22 to discuss bylaw changes for consideration at the State Meeting. He also reported that representatives of Leadership Oklahoma have requested copies of *Out of the Dust* books for their new class members.

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Ron Hilliard, NRCS state conservationist, reported the Garfield County CD shooting event was very enjoyable. Hilliard stated that the NRCS is operating under a continuing resolution as it had not received a new budget. The impact on Oklahoma's NRCS budget is that it does not allow flexibility nor does it allow NRCS to fill personnel vacancies at this time. He reported that there is \$20 million available for Conservation Innovation Grants and proposals are due by Feb. 2. Hilliard stated that there had been several retirements the past month and his staff will discuss the positions.

### **Next Meeting**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held Thursday, Feb. 1, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

## **A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission**

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Feb. 12, 2007, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

### **District Director Appointments**

Adair County - Mickey Longshore  
Atoka County - Roger Richardson  
Custer County - Lonnie Haggard  
Kiamichi - Bob Holley  
Love County - Larry Taliaferro  
Major County - Trent Marten  
Ottawa - Dennis Beard  
Pawnee County - Allen Fulton

### **Claims/Financial Statement**

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement as presented by Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources director, who reported \$1,443,042.96 in claims from Dec. 19 to Jan. 18.

### **District Director Elections**

Commissioners authorized OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls to certify eligibility of candidates and approve polling places in those districts holding elections.

### **BMP, Inc., Poultry Litter Agreement**

Jackie Hill, attorney at law, representing Rodney P. Steffan, owner of S and S Cattle Company LLC, appeared before the Commission to inquire about the agreement between OCC and BMP Inc. for litter hauling. Steffan owns land in the Prague and the Okemah areas and is interested in applying poultry litter as fertilizer on his farm near Prague. His main concern is that the general public can purchase litter from the open market for the same price as the government subsidized program with BMP Inc. Commissioners responded that they had the ability to table extending or amending the agreement until OCC can investigate the situation and provide a report on the questions raised.

### **Agreements**

Commissioners ratified one new agreement previously approved by the chairman due to time constraints, approved new agreement and four amended agreements. The motion included tabling a fifth amended agreement with BMP, Inc., as discussed above.

### **Travel Requests**

Commissioners approved six out-of-state travel requests for five OCC employees.

### **Strategic Plan**

Commissioners approved a motion to table action on the strategic plan until the March meeting as requested by Mike Thralls.

### **Illinois River Watershed Litigation**

Joann Stevenson, assistant Attorney General, reported that during the month of January OCC staff members Ben Pollard and Shanon Phillips were deposed regarding the discovery request. At the time, a vendor hired by the defendants were copying documents submitted by OCC. She stated that no agreement had been reached regarding electronic file discovery.

### **Legislative Update**

Mike Thralls reported that the Governor's Executive Budget recommends \$4.7 million for conservation programs above last year's budget, but did not acknowledge \$2.5 mil-

lion from REAP funds in this year's budget. It was discovered that during last year's session one bill provided REAP funds for five years; however, a second bill was passed that set aside the action. Sec. of Environment Miles Tolbert requested an informal Attorney General's opinion on the issue.

### **Commissioner Reports**

Commissioner Rick Jeans reported the NACD Annual Meeting was a good meeting. The 2008 meeting will be held in Reno, Nevada. The NACD Legislative Conference has been rescheduled from spring and will be held July 20 in Washington, D.C. The NACD South Central Region Meeting is scheduled for July in the Tulsa area. Commissioner Dan Lowrance stated that the committee structure of NACD is changing and that he attended his last meeting as Chairman of the Water Resources Committee. Commissioner Matt Gard reported on attending the Enid Farm Show and commended the Garfield County CD on its activities. He attended a no-till meeting in Alva and the Oklahoma Farmers Union meeting in Oklahoma City. He stated that Olin Sims was elected new president at the NACD annual meeting. He will attend a no-till meeting in Garfield County and a pesticide meeting in Drummond.

### **Staff Reports**

**Administration:** Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, commended staff members Karla Beatty, Lisa Knauf, Ben Pollard and Robert Toole for their work on the OACD strategic plan. Thralls was pleased with the NACD Annual Meeting. He reported that watershed planning and new construction had been zeroed out in the NRCS budget for this fiscal year. Watershed rehabilitation is at the same level as last year which may allow NRCS to maintain watershed staff.

Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director, reported on the Illinois River lawsuit, stating that staff, particularly Water Quality staff, had done tremendous work gathering records. The documents totaled 120 boxes, 90 of which are water quality documents. The process led to formation of a workgroup to address OCC records management. Pollard reported that OCC meets with agriculture organizations weekly to discuss issues of mutual concern and he attended a one the past week. Pollard reported also attending the Oklahoma Farmers Union meeting. Pollard expressed appreciation to Dan Lowrance, as OACD president, for inviting OCC staff to participate in the OACD strategic planning process.

**Water Quality:** Dan Butler, WQ director, stated that around 300 producers attended a no-till meeting at Fort Cobb. Butler reported that the Farm Service Agency has not approved rules for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program for the Illinois River and Spavinaw Watersheds, but the proposal has been accepted. He stated that the initial meeting was held for the Honey Creek Project and producers are signing up.

**Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation:** Mike Kastl, AML director, reported that Congress will no longer appropriate funding for the AML program. He stated that the Office of Surface Mining has developed a distribution time chart that divides all the AML funds among the states and tribes. Annual funds will come directly from the U.S.

Treasury. A hearing was scheduled for the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to look at OSM's budget.

**Financial Management/Human Resources:** Steve Coffman, FMHR director, reported that the session on marketing conservation districts presented by the state of Virginia at the NACD Annual Meeting was particularly good.

**Information Technology Division:** Mike Sharp, IT director, stated that weather issues have stalled work in the Tar Creek area projects. Sharp reported that the Geographic Information Council adopted a strategic plan including a budget request totaling \$371,000 as well as three FTE. He provided copies to Commissioners as they will be asked to consider the plan for approval at the March meeting.

**Conservation Programs Division:** Tammy Sawatzky, CP administrative officer, reported that four watershed rehabilitation projects are underway totaling \$4.2 million. Staff is working on land rights issues on 12 sites. A pre-bid meeting is scheduled for Double Creek Site No. 2.

**District Services:** Ben Pollard reported that District Services had completed a third 10-Minute Management Guide for conservation districts directors.

### **Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts**

Clay Pope, OACD executive director, reported the NACD Annual Meeting was a great send off for President Bill Wilson. Pope reported that several legislative bills of interest to OACD have been introduced in the areas of carbon sequestration, buffer strips, and controlled burns. Pope reported on an outreach meeting in Ponca City sponsored by OACD, Kay County CD, and Wheatland. Speaker of the House Lance Cargill and Lt. Governor Jari Askins were scheduled to speak at the OACD State Meeting. He reported that Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach will represent the Governor at the Conservation Day at the Capitol awards ceremony on March 19. Pope attended the Oklahoma Farmers Union Convention. OACD sent letters to conservation districts asking for donations for the National Land and Range Judging Contest. Pope is working on Stewardship Week activities.

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Kevin Norton, NRCS assistant state conservationist, stated that (U.S.) House Joint Resolution 20 was passed to appropriate funds for the remainder of FY2007. Norton stated that U.S. Sec. of Agriculture Mike Johanns released details of President Bush's FY2008 USDA budget and the process will be watched closely. He stated that State Conservationist Ron Hilliard has asked the leadership team to look at operational restrictions and a staffing plan. Norton reported there are indications that Emergency Watershed Protection Program funds may be available in a supplemental bill for drought and other types of damage but not including recent ice storm damage. NRCS has estimated \$13 million is needed for debris removal in streams. Commissioner Lowrance added that Gary Mast, past NACD president, had been named Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment.

### **Next Meeting**

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on March 5, 2007, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

## Garfield County CD & OACD say “thanks!” to event host

Garfield County Conservation District and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts presented John Groendyke with a Classic Series Fitted Shotgun Case on April 2 in Oklahoma City. The two groups made the presentation at the April meeting of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission of which Groendyke is a member.

Jason Skaggs, district manager for the Garfield County Conservation District, and Clay Pope, executive director of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, represented the two organizations. Garfield County CD board member Kim Farber and secretary Sherri Nickel attended the presentation as did Mark Harrison, OCC information officer.

The groups presented the deluxe gun case, emblazoned with an engraved brass plate, to Groendyke in appreciation for his hosting a hunting and target shooting at the Groendyke Lodge last year that included a tour of the Drummond Flats Wetlands Project. The Garfield County Conservation District Legislative Bird Hunt on Dec. 4, 2006, provided conservationists and legislators an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and discuss current and future natural resource issues. In addition to providing the grounds and facilities, Groendyke Hunting Lodge also provided dinner for the guests.



*Jason Skaggs, Garfield County Conservation District (left) and Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (right), presented John Groendyke with a personalized gun case at the April 2 meeting of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission.*

Mailing Tab Area

## WORKSHOPS & TRUNKS

Project WET Workshops  
Karla Beatty, (405) 521-2384

Project Learning Tree Workshops or Trunks  
Christina Stallings, (405) 521-3864

Project WILD Workshops or Trunks  
Lisa Anderson, (405) 521-6704

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