

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

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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Conservation Day at the Capitol 2011

Awards Presented for Conservation, Education and Communication

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) and other sponsors presented awards to outstanding conservationists and conservation educators during Conservation Day at the Capitol on March 22. Awards were also presented to members of the press and conservation districts for outstanding efforts in spreading information about conservation. The various awards were cosponsored by Chesapeake Energy, the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma and the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation.

At the awards ceremony in the Governor's Blue Room, presenters included state Sec. of Agriculture Jim Reese, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts President Joe Parker and Oklahoma Conservation Commission Executive Director Mike Thralls. In addition, representatives from Chesapeake Energy, the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation and the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma were present to help present awards. Several honorees also received Legislative Citations from their home area state senator or representative.

The OACD Conservation Awards are presented in three categories — Outstanding Conservation District, Outstanding District Director and Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator. Each received a cash award presented by the award cosponsor.

Little River Conservation District received the Outstanding District Award, presented by Lindsay McIntire, Chesapeake Energy.

Jimmie Purvine, Dewey County Conservation District, received the Outstanding District Director Award, presented by Corey Moffet, Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation.

Loren Liebscher of Hydro received the Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator Award, presented by Jay Pruet, Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. Liebscher is a cooperator with and was nominated by the Deer Creek Conservation District.

In addition, five teachers from across the state, one in each Congressional district, received Outstanding Conservation Educator Awards cosponsored by Chesapeake Energy. The recipients were Kathy Pursley, Bixby High School; Juli Mathews, Miami High School; Justin Kliewer, Thomas Fay Custer Unified Schools; Kay Gamble, Ada High School; and Cathy Barber, Jones Elementary School. *Conservation Day, continued on page 2*

The 2011 OACD Annual State Meeting

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) held its 73rd Annual State Meeting at the Reed Conference Center in Midwest City Feb. 27 – March 1, 2011. The meeting was cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC).

Lt. Governor Todd Lamb kicked off the Monday morning opening session, followed by new state Sec. of Agriculture Jim Reese. Earl Garber, first vice president of the National Association of Conservation Districts rounded out the opening session. Neal McCaleb, Chickasaw Nation; Gary Sherrer, new Sec. of Environment; and Shanon Phillips, OCC Water Quality division director spoke at the Monday luncheon, themed "Navigating Oklahoma's Waters."

Mayes County Conservation District won a pickup donated by Chesapeake Energy in a drawing held following the OACD banquet on Feb. 22.

OACD President Trey Lam named Carol Gaunt of Weatherford to the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame during the organization's *OACD State Meeting, continued on page 2*



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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

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
Conference,** May 15-18, Oklahoma City

In our thoughts...

James Wesley “Wes” Thomas, retired NRCS area conservationist, passed away Jan. 22.

J.W. Edwards, Wagoner County CD board member, lost his wife Elada Jan 26 to leukemia.

Ott Ladner, 20-year member of the Love CCD board, passed away on Jan. 28 at age 77.

Joe Vielma, NRCS soil conservationist, Pawnee FSC, lost his wife Sally Feb. 7. Sally worked in the Rural Development state office.

J.W. Sheperd, retired NRCS civil engineering technician, lost his wife Jackie Feb. 7.

Robin Landrum, Nowata County CD director, lost his mother Ima on Feb. 9.

J.P. “Doc” Duvall, Seminole County CD director, lost his wife Sue on Feb. 27.

Congratulations

Kevin Gustavson, OCC/WQ staff, and wife Britta have a new baby girl, Svea Brook Gustavson, born Jan. 11.

Clay and Sarah Pope, OACD, have a new baby boy, Ian Henri Adair Pope, Jan. 11.

Jacy Murphy, Cherokee County CD, and her husband Matt, have a new baby boy, Gavin Patrick Murphy, born Feb. 4.

April and Brandon Burns have a new baby boy, Rylan Carl Burns, born Feb. 23. April is Water Resources coordinator, NRCS state office, and Brandon is district conservationist, Kingfisher County CD.

Karen Smith, Little River CD secretary, has a new grandson, Hudson Asher Cox, born March 1.

Tyler Lovett, Rangeland Management specialist, Grady County CD, and wife Sara have a new son, Tyler Joe “T.J.” Lovett, born March 4.

Saska Koch, NRCS Zone 3 clerk, has a fourth grandchild, Ava Elizabeth Koch,, born March 22.

Thank You

Sylvia Hudson and Betty Lam send their thanks to the NACD and OACD Auxiliaries and to Oklahoma’s conservation family for honoring them at the OACD State Meeting.

Conservation Day, continued from page 1

The *Woodward News* daily and *Mooreland Leader* weekly newspapers received Excellence in Communication awards for Outstanding Continuing Support of Conservation. Grady County Conservation District was honored for Outstanding Ad Series ads and Oklahoma County Conservation District was honored for Outstanding Newsletter.

During the day approximately 20 display booths were exhibited by local conservation districts, OCC, NRCS and other partner agencies and organizations in the Fourth Floor Rotunda of the Capitol. The displays featured diverse conservation activities across the state that address local natural resource needs.

OACD State Meeting, continued from page 1

banquet on Feb. 28. In addition to serving on the Deer Creek Conservation District Board since 1982, Gaunt served as president of OACD 1999-2000.

Brent Mynhier of Wynnewood was named to the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame as a “Friend of Conservation.” Mynhier had served as a Garvin Conservation District board member and on the OACD executive board as treasurer, but recently resigned to accept a position in Oklahoma City.

OACD President Trey Lam presented the President’s Award for 2011 to Matt Gard, Major County Conservation District board member and Area I member of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Lam commended Gard, who suffered a tragic motorcycle accident in 2010 that left him partially paralyzed. Despite that personal tragedy and a subsequent rigorous rehabilitation program, Gard only missed one Commission meeting and had continued in his public service almost without missing a beat, Lam said.

Clay Pope, OACD executive director presented special awards to Sen. David Myers and Rep. Dale DeWitt for their “tireless support of rural Oklahoma and the conservation of our natural resources.” He also presented special awards to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service state and regional staff for assisting conservation districts with equipment to assist with no-till native grassland planting and prescribed burning.

Becky Inmon, secretary for the Oklahoma County Conservation District, was named Employee of the Year by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE) and commended for her work helping coordinate the National Land and Range Judging Contest. Robert Toole, OCC Conservation Programs director, received an OACDE President’s Award for his work with district employees and helping with OACDE bylaws.

OACD Auxiliary members Sylvia Hudson and Betty Lam were honored for their years of service by the Auxiliary of the National Association of Conservation Districts, represented by NACD Auxiliary South Central Region President Dianne Jeans (see *Thank You*, on this page).

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service presented the following awards during the three-day meeting:

Conservation Educator – Wade Warren and Jolene Sparks, Noble County Conservation District; Patricia Kloeckler, Muskogee County Conservation District; and Robert Gibbs, Rogers County Conservation District.

Standing in the Gap – LeFlore County Conservation District

Conservationist of the Year – Robert Toole, OCC Conservation Programs director.

Resource Conservation and Development Council Member of the Year – Reonna Slagell Gossen, Great Plains RC&D

Earth Team Awards: Zone 1 – Wheatland RC&D – William S. Key Correctional Center; Zone 2 – Stilwell Field Service Center; Zone – 3 Purcell Field Service Center; Zone 4 – Poteau Field Service Center.

Joe Parker, farmer and rancher in Talala, Okla., and a Rogers County Conservation District board member, was elected as OACD president. He replaces Trey Lam, outgoing OACD president. Alveta Taylor, Deer Creek Conservation District Board member and OACD Area IV director, was elected to fill the OACD vice president’s position vacated by Parker.

Awards & Recognition

Clint Abernathy, Jackson County CD director, was named by U.S. Sec. of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to serve a three-year term on the National Cotton Board beginning with 2011. Clint was elected to the district board in 2003, replacing his father Charles who served on the board from 1976 to 2003.

CREP and 319 Program Work Together to Address Water Quality and Landowner Issues

OCC has been implementing the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in northeast Oklahoma since Gov. Brad Henry and U.S. Deputy Sec. of Agriculture Chuck Connor signed an agreement in April 2007 in a special ceremony at the state Capitol. The purpose of CREP is to reduce nonpoint source runoff for improved water quality, to stabilize streambanks to reduce sediment loading in streams, and to create wildlife habitat by removing riparian strips from production and revegetating them with trees as buffer strips. CREP, created by the federal Farm Bill, is funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition to OCC, key CREP partners also include the City of Tulsa's Metropolitan Utility Authority, Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission, five local conservation districts, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The Oklahoma CREP area targets the Eucha/Spavinaw watershed and the Illinois River watershed and includes parts of Adair, Cherokee, Delaware, Mayes and Sequoyah counties with participation by the conservation districts in those counties. The project seeks to filter runoff, stabilize stream banks, shade stream channels, and improve drinking water and aquatic habitat by creating 500 acres of filter strips and 8,500 acres of riparian buffers, for a total of 9,000 acres, or 370 miles, of protected streams. Spavinaw Lake is the primary water supply for Tulsa, the second largest city in the state.

Land owners participating in the program receive annual rental payments, financial and technical assistance and other incentives for voluntarily enrolling land into contracts. Eligible landowners receive a one-time Practice Incentive Payment and a one-time Signing Incentive Payment from FSA. In addition, federal dollars pay 50 percent of the reimbursable costs of establishing eligible practices, conducting compliance reviews, and providing technical assistance and other services up to \$16.5 million for Oklahoma CREP. OCC markets the program to the public and writes the necessary conservation plans.

The challenge has been that CREP can only enroll individuals who have denuded/deforested streambanks. Often a landowner will have a "mosaic" of CREP-eligible areas combined with areas already sufficiently wooded to serve as buffers.

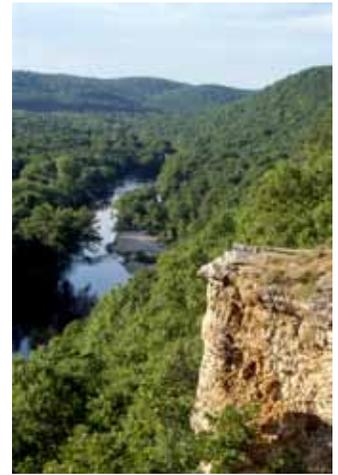
"When we encountered a situation like that, it would often be a deal breaker since we could not pay annual rental rates on areas that were already wooded," said Gina Levesque, OCC Water Quality Division CREP coordinator.

Enter the Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Water Quality Program with funding from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency. "By combining the 319 Program with CREP, we are able to give a producer an annual rental payment for their entire riparian area, both wooded and not wooded," Levesque said.

Best management practices that CREP can cost share on are limited to those directly associated with the riparian areas. But with 319 monies, OCC's Water Quality CREP staff is able to address issues that are also out of the floodplain. Any 319 riparian contracts that are associated with CREP contracts also act as match for federal dollars. Under the CREP agreement the state receives four federal dollars for every state dollar invested. Another asset of this cooperation is a more contiguous riparian zone through the watershed.

Currently, there are 493 acres in CREP and 576 acres enrolled in the 319 Program for a total of 1,069 acres enrolled in practices to improve water quality.

"Using the 319 Program to complement CREP, we are able to address water quality issues as well as landowner concerns," Levesque said. "It has turned out to be a good fit to accomplish a win/win situation in our efforts to protect our natural resources," she said.



Illinois River

Muskogee County and Rogers County Conservation Districts Featured in the News

Muskogee County and Rogers County Conservation Districts were each featured in local newspapers for their activities in January 2011.

Muskogee County Conservation District, along with OCC's Blue Thumb Program, were featured in the *Muskogee Phoenix* newspaper on Jan. 22. The article, "Fort Gibson students learn conservation," by Phoenix correspondent Chesley Oxendine, reported on a presentation that Trish Kloeckler, Muskogee CCD secretary, and Cheryl Cheadle, OCC Blue Thumb coordinator, gave to Fort Gibson Middle School science class. They explained what nonpoint source water pollution is and ways to prevent it to teacher Tammy Delmedico's eighth-grade science class. They also described how the Blue Thumb Program trains volunteers how to take and test water samples to monitor the health of local streams and creeks. The article was also posted on the newspaper's website at <http://muskogee phoenix.com>.



Rogers State University Conservation Education Reserve

Rogers County Conservation District and the Rogers State University Conservation Education Reserve were featured in the Trends section of the Sunday edition of the *Claremore Daily Progress* newspaper on Jan. 24. "How do animals deal with Oklahoma's weather swings?" by newspaper staff writer Pat Reeder posed that and other questions to Robert Gibbs, the district's conservation education coordinator. Gibbs described how various birds and other wildlife survive seasonal changes. The article and related photos were posted on the newspaper's website at <http://claremoreprogress.com>.



Trish Kloeckler, Muskogee CCD, speaking to eighth graders at Fort Gibson Middle School.

NRCS Listening Session Jan. 11-12, 2011

NRCS in Oklahoma Receives Praise, Suggestions and Ideas for the Future

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service held a listening session at Metro Tech in Oklahoma City on Jan. 11 and 12, 2011. Ron Hilliard, NRCS state conservationist for Oklahoma and members of his administrative staff from the state headquarters in Stillwater were in attendance. Larry Wright, Great Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council coordinator for NRCS, facilitated the two-day session.

The purpose of the listening session was to seek input from agricultural and environmental organizations as well as partnering governmental organizations. Groups and governmental entities participating included the Commissioners of the Land Office; Ducks Unlimited; Langston University; Noble Foundation; Oklahoma Conservation Commission; Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation; Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Council; Oklahoma Rural Water Association; Oklahoma State University; Playa Lake Joint Venture; Poultry Federation; Soil and Water Conservation Society; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; USDA Farm Service Agency.

There was general consensus that NRCS had a positive reputation with landowners and producers and had valuable technical capabilities. NRCS received high marks for their efforts to partner with and get input from other state and federal agencies and

Mailing Tab Area

organizations such as the State Technical Committee and also for the locally-led process. It was agreed that having a presence in all counties was important for assistance to landowners. Several participants with experience in other states said that things work much better in Oklahoma. It was stated that poultry litter transport had been a beneficial effort in broadening the understanding of the value of the litter as a resource as fertilizer.

Among issues raised was a statement that delivering Farm Bill programs leaves NRCS personnel little time to deliver non-Farm Bill assistance to landowners. Other challenges raised were communicating new program information to landowners and providing technical assistance to small acre tract operations, hobby farmers and absentee landlords. Another comment was that there are so many programs now that it confuses people. "How can NRCS offer such a wide array of programs and maintain high quality technical assistance?" it was asked. It was also stated that there are too many components required of landowners who generally only have a few objectives they would like to accomplish in their conservation programs.

In the area of changes and what NRCS should do in the future, the suggestion was supported on several sides to reduce the amount of paper and computer work required of NRCS technical assistance staff in favor of more time free to work in the field one-on-one with landowners.

Overall the NRCS received high marks from meeting participants on their program delivery and performance.

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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