

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

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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Jim Reese, state Sec. of Agriculture (left); and Mike Thralls, OCC executive director (right); presented Ron Hilliard with a Governor's Commendation from Gov. Mary Fallin.

Leaving his own personal "brand" on Texas, South Carolina, Maryland, Wisconsin, Pacific Basin, West Virginia and most recently Oklahoma, Ron Hilliard has decided to hang up his black cowboy hat and NRCS shirt. After a 36-year career, Jan. 3, 2013, was his final day as a federal employee.

After graduating from Texas Tech University and working in the private sector for a while, Hilliard began his career with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as a range conservationist in Bastrop, Texas, in 1976. He worked as district conservationist, area staff resource specialist, assistant for field operations, assistant state conservationist for programs, operations management coordinator at a regional office, deputy state conservationist, acting director for the Pacific Basin, state conservationist for West Virginia and completed his career here in Oklahoma as state conservationist.

"I want to thank each and every one, whom I have met, worked with here in Oklahoma and other states across the U.S.," Hilliard said. "I have had some awesome assignments and have enjoyed each and every one. Good luck to you all!"



At the January 2013 Commission Meeting, OCC presented Hilliard with a Conservation Commendation. From left are OCC Commission members George Stunkard, Jim Grego and Karl Jett; Ron Hilliard; Commission members Dan Lowrance and Mike Rooker; and Mike Thralls, OCC executive director.

## OCC Partners on USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant / EQIP Project for Nutrient Management

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Accepting Applications through Feb. 15, 2013, for the Conservation Innovation Grant – Environmental Quality Incentive Program project in Oklahoma**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in partnership with the Delta Institute, Oklahoma State University, and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, has received funding for the Bringing Greenhouse Gas Benefits to Market: Nutrient Management for Nitrous Oxide Reductions CIG project. The funding is available for farmers in Blaine, Canadian, Grant, Harmon, Jackson, and Major Counties. Applicants can apply by Feb. 15, 2013, at their local USDA-NRCS field service center.

Funding will be available to eligible landowners through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS will provide technical and financial assistance for implementing the core practice of nutrient management as well as supporting the other eligible practices, including cover crops,

*CIG-EQIP Project, continued on page two*

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## Going Green?

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**Our vision:**  
Responsible care for Oklahoma's natural resources.

**Our mission:**  
To conserve, protect and restore Oklahoma's natural resources, working in collaboration with the conservation districts and other partners, on behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma.

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

## Conservation Calendar

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

**Garfield County Conservation Tillage  
Workshop, Feb. 7, Enid**

**Mammals...From Head to Toe Workshop,  
Feb. 12, Frederick**

**No-Till Oklahoma Conference,  
Feb. 19-20, Norman**

**American Farmers and Ranchers  
Convention, Feb. 21-22, Norman**

**OACD State Meeting,  
Feb. 24-26, Midwest City**

**GIS Day at the Capitol,  
March 14, Oklahoma City**

**Water Appreciation Day at the Capitol,  
March 19, Oklahoma City**

**Conservation Day at the Capitol,  
April 1, Oklahoma City**

**Agriculture Day at the Capitol,  
April 4, Oklahoma City**

**Four-State Forestry on the Grow  
Conference,  
April 24-27, Texarkana, Texas**

**National Land & Range Judging Contest,  
April 30 - May 2, Oklahoma City**

**NACD Summer Board Meeting and  
Legislative Conference,  
July 12-18, Washington, D.C.**

*"A demonstration is  
when you know what  
will happen:  
an experiment is  
when you don't."*

*Greg Scott, NRCS Soil  
Scientist (retired)*

### **Congratulations!**

Jolene Sparks, Noble County CD secretary, became a grandma with the birth of a baby boy, Cale Wade Sparks, on New Years Day.

Marti Mefford, OCC/WQ Honey Creek Project coordinator, is retiring in February.

*CIG-EQIP Project, continued from page one*

crop rotations, and continuous no-till. The practices are designed to produce multiple benefits for farmers including improved soil health, water quality protection, and reduced erosion.

The main focus of this project is to increase the efficiency of nitrogen applications, particularly through the use of nitrogen rich strips, gather data for measuring the reductions in nitrous oxide emissions, and field-test NRCS's COMET-FARM online tool. Results will be used to guide USDA policy and programs to improve incentives that encourage the voluntary adoption of conservation practices. Additional information about the CIG-GHG project, including area maps and conservation practices, is available at <http://www.ok.usda.gov/programs>.

## OACD State Meeting 2013: Conservation — Don't Let it be Gone with the Wind!

The 75th Annual State Meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts will be held at the Reed Conference Center in Midwest City on Feb. 24-26. The theme of the meeting is "Conservation — Don't Let it be Gone with the Wind!"

The meeting will begin with registration opening at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 24, followed by youth speech contests beginning at 1:30, and a youth awards program at 4 p.m. Inspirational time will begin at 5 p.m. and the day's activities will conclude with Conservation Game Night at 7:30.

The theme for the Monday morning opening session is "Tending the Garden: Finding inspiration in what we're called to do." Morning concurrent session will focus on planning for the future. Tom Buchanan, Lugert-Altus Irrigation District general manager, will be the luncheon speaker. Afternoon concurrent sessions will examine the success of other organizations partnering with OACD or conservation districts in various endeavors. An afternoon tour is planned for the OACD Auxillary. The day will conclude with a Legislative Banquet where awards will be presented, followed by a live auction.

Tuesday morning sessions will focus on the themes of proof that conservation works in real life and surviving drought and communicating its impacts.



The No-Till Oklahoma 2013 Conference, cosponsored by OCC, will be held at the National Center for Employee Development in Norman on Feb. 19-20. This year the conference will also host the Southern Conservation Agricultural Systems Conference in conjunction with the No-Till Conference.

Early registration before Feb. 4 is \$115; after that date the cost is \$140.

Visit the website <http://www.notill.okstate.edu> for the agenda or contact Janelle Malone, 405-744-3669, for more information.

### **Awards & Recognition**

**Johnny Pelley, OCC Conservation Programs watershed technician**, was recognized at the January 2013 meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission for being named Employee of the Quarter at the December OCC Full Staff Meeting. **Mark Harrison, OCC public information officer**, was recognized at the January 2013 meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission for 20 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

## Texas County Conservation District names Outstanding Cooperators for 2012

Submitted by Clancy Green, Texas County Conservation District

Jerry and Linda Lunsford of Jerry Lunsford Farms near Guymon, Okla., have been selected as the Texas County Conservation District's 2012 Outstanding Cooperators. The award, presented annually by the Texas County Conservation District, seeks to recognize a local farmer or rancher who has worked with the conservation district and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to implement progressive, sustainable, and successful conservation programs and practices in their operation. State Rep. Gus Blackwell presented the 2012 award to the Lunsfords at the Panhandle Ag Appreciation Day on Jan. 24, 2013. The Guymon Chamber of Commerce sponsors the event to recognize the farming and ranching community.

The district board of directors selected the Lunsfords from 18 nominations. The Lunsfords, who have been farming and ranching for 41 years, were chosen not only for their successful implementation of the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and their active participation in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), but also for their progressive utilization of strip-till farming, grazing management and nutrient management.

Jerry and Linda currently raise wheat, milo, corn, sunflowers, and cattle. They understand the importance of conservation and started early on to implement practices in their operation that would help conserve moisture and nutrients in the soil. On their pasture and rangeland, the Lunsfords monitor key grazing areas to help assess and meet management goals and objectives. They also rotate feeding areas to help improve livestock distribution and to prevent overuse of areas where livestock activity is concentrated. Through EQIP, a new livestock well and tank have been installed, and brush management practices to reduce sagebrush and cactus have been applied to help further improve the quality of their grazing land. Mr. and Mrs. Lunsford have also instituted conservation practices in their farming operation, using strip-tilling, crop rotation, and plant tissue testing to help manage residue and enhance soil quality. An irrigation sprinkler nozzle upgrade was performed to help manage and optimize water usage in their irrigated crops. Additionally, through CRP, the Lunsfords have helped to improve wildlife habitat – planting native grasses, food plots, trees and shrubs, and installing wildlife watering facilities.



(From left) State Rep. Gus Blackwell presented the Texas County Conservation District Outstanding Cooperator 2012 Award to Jerry and Linda Lunsford at the Panhandle Ag Appreciation Day on Jan. 24, 2013. The Guymon Chamber of Commerce sponsors the event to recognize the farming and ranching community.

## Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association holds training sessions

The Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association (OPBA) held two prescribed fire training sessions in January. Approximately 60 participants attended each of the two-day sessions in Stillwater and Woodward. The first session was held at the Wes Watkins Center on the Oklahoma State University campus in Stillwater on Jan. 11-12 and the second was held at the High Plains Technology Center in Woodward on Jan. 18-19. Prescribed burns were planned for both events but weather conditions prevented their implementation.

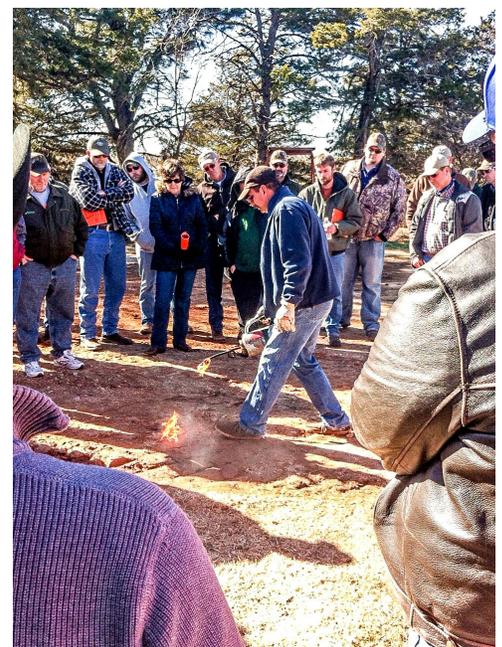


The following topics were covered:

- Oklahoma burning laws and liability
- Burn bans
- Habitat improvement utilizing prescribed fire (Noble Foundation)
- Notification requirements for safe and lawful prescribed burning
- When and where to burn
- Examples/exercises on developing burn plans
- Burn equipment
- Safety – Safety – Safety
- Liability insurance

The following local burn associations and tribes were represented:

- Pontotoc Ridge PBA
- Okmulgee County PBA
- Crosstimbers PBA
- Creek County PBA
- Roger Mills PBA
- Noble County PBA
- Iowa Nation PBA
- Creek Nation PBA
- Roger Mills PBA
- Cimarron PBA
- South Canadian PBA
- Major County PBA



John Weir, from Oklahoma State University's Natural Resource Ecology and Management division, demonstrating prescribed fire equipment at the Woodward training session.

## Garfield County Conservation District and the Sterling House People's Garden

Garfield County Conservation District and the Enid office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service hosted a dedication for a "People's Garden" at the Sterling House of Enid senior assisted living center in October. The People's Garden project created a garden of several raised beds, including handicapped accessible beds, that residents of the Sterling House can manage and enjoy.

Sponsors of the People's Garden Project include the Sterling House and Senior Resources and benefits, LLC; Lowes Home Improvement; Dolese Construction; Atwoods; Hansen Construction; Meadowlake Golf Course; Garfield County Conservation District and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.



The People's Garden raised beds at Sterling House of Enid include handicapped-accessible raised beds.



Following the dedication ceremony visitors viewed the raised bed gardens.

### WORKSHOPS & TRUNKS

Project WET Workshops  
Karla Beatty, 405.521.2384

Project Learning Tree  
Workshops or Trunks  
Christina Stallings, 405.521.3864

Project WILD Workshops  
Lisa Anderson, 405.990.1292

### *Oklahoma Conservation Conversation*

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