

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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New Location for the OACD State Meeting!

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts 2008 State Meeting will be held at the Reed Center in Midwest City. The Sheraton Hotel is attached to the conference center and other hotels within walking distance include the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Hampton Inn, Hawthorne Suites, and Comfort Inn & Suites, with shuttle service to the conference center also available.

The Reed Conference Center can accommodate up to 1,000 people and includes 13,780 square feet of inside event space, 6,000 square feet of exhibit hall space, 13,000 square feet of pre-function space, as well as outside event space. Onsite parking is available for over 500 cars. The Reed Center is four miles from downtown Oklahoma City, and approximately 16 miles from the Will Rogers World Airport.

The theme for this year's meeting is "Conservation College" with emphasis on training and education.

Chesapeake Energy is donating a pickup truck to be given to a conservation district through a drawing open to any conservation district that is current with OACD dues and has at least one district director registered for the entire OACD state meeting. Additional tickets will be given to districts for each additional director registered. The drawing for the quarter-ton four-wheel drive truck will take place on Feb. 25 at the Legislative Banquet.

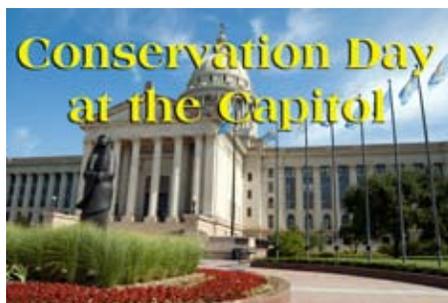


Reed Center

Conservation Day at the Capitol 2008

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts will again host Conservation Day at the Capitol. The event will take place 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 19, in the Fourth Floor Rotunda. Activities include award presentations in the Governor's Blue Room beginning at 10:00 a.m. Gov. Brad Henry has been invited to join OACD President Scotty Herriman in presenting awards.

The OACD Conservation Awards include Outstanding Conservation District cosponsored by Chesapeake Energy; Outstanding District Director cosponsored by the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation; and the Outstanding Cooperator/Landowner cosponsored by the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. In addition, five teachers from across the state, one in each Congressional district, will receive Outstanding Conservation Educator Awards also cosponsored by Chesapeake Energy.



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Every great and commanding moment in the annals of the world is the triumph of some enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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" at www.conservation.ok.gov

NACD Annual Meeting,

Feb. 10-13, John Ascuaga's Nugget, Reno, NV

No-Till Oklahoma Conference,

Feb. 11-12, Clarion Conference Center, Oklahoma City

Presidents' Day Holiday, Feb. 18

OCC Full Staff Meeting, Feb. 20

Will Rogers Park Garden Center, Oklahoma City.

OACD State Meeting,

Feb 24-26, Reed Center, Midwest City

Southern States RC&D Meeting,

March 2-5, St. Louis, Mo.

Conservation Day at the Capitol,

March 19, Oklahoma City

Ag Day at the Capitol, April 2,

Oklahoma City

Forestry on the Grow,

April 30-May 2, Western Hills Lodge, Wagoner

OCC Full Staff Meeting, May 5

(location tba)

National Land & Range Judging Contest,

May 5-7, Oklahoma City

Memorial Day Holiday, May 26

In our thoughts...

Jick Grant, Caney Valley CD manager, lost his wife Janet in December.

Grady County CD board member Doug Parr's home was totally destroyed by fire on Dec. 31. To contribute to a fund for the family, contact the district at 405-224-0523.

Bailey Brooks, 5-year-old daughter of Tracy Brooks, Konawa CD engineering aide, and his wife Lori, and niece of Angie Brooks, Konawa CD secretary, died unexpectedly on Jan. 31 from a brief illness.

Congratulations!

Dee Surber, Grady County CD, has a new granddaughter — Haddee Caroline Griffin, born Nov. 26 to Dee's daughter Saradee.

No-Till Oklahoma Conference 2008

Farmers and ranchers interested in the latest developments in no-till cropping systems should register to attend the No-Till Oklahoma Conference on Feb. 11-12 in Oklahoma City. The conference will take place at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, 737 S. Meridian (just south of Interstate 40). The conference will begin at 10:30 a.m., on Feb. 11 and will finish at 4 p.m., on Feb. 12. Cost is \$75 per person, on or before Jan. 21 and \$100 per person, thereafter. Reservation information is available at <http://oces.okstate.edu/notill> online.



"The conference is the result of the growing interest in no-till cropping systems because of increased fuel prices, soil moisture conservation and improved environmental awareness that have contributed to increased adoption of no-till in Oklahoma," said Chad Godsey, cropping systems specialist for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Godsey said the conference is geared toward beginning producers as well as experienced producers who are considering switching to no-till.

"A key advantage of attending the conference will be the opportunity to interact with both technical specialists and experienced no-till farmers," said Mike Thralls, executive director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. "We all want to receive the highly valuable technical information, but I'm like most other producers in that we also want to hear from somebody who has made it work," Thralls said. "That interaction is critical and we've made sure it's a key component of this conference. Our no-till farming pioneers are speaking from personal experience on what it takes for a producer to learn about and use no-till effectively."

Sessions will include the philosophy of no-till; key considerations for crop rotation; disease, weed and insect management; equipment essentials; no-till wheat, cotton and grazing systems; and ways to overcome obstacles.

The conference is a collaboration of Oklahoma State University's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, with additional sponsorship from the High Plains Journal, Southern Plains Agricultural Resources Coalition and Great Plains Resource Conservation and Development.

"It's a great combination of organizations working together to provide information that is very timely, especially with the increased interest in biofuels production," Thralls said. "No-till helps keep the soil in place, helps maintain the productivity of the soil and helps it soak in the moisture better than other farming methods."

Joe Schneider, OCC/WQ Eucha Project coordinator, was recognized at the January Commission meeting for being named Employee of the Quarter at the December full staff meeting.

Robert Gibbs, Keith Owen, Blake McQueen and Holly Smith, Rogers County CD; **Jeff Kuhn**, Payne County CD; and **Karla Beatty**, OCC/CP education coordinator, were commended at the January Commission meeting for the work on the large conservation exhibit and interactive education area at the Wildlife Expo for the past three years.

Mark Harrison, OCC information officer, was recognized at the January Commission meeting for 15 years of service to OCC.

Nevada levy break highlight's need to fix Oklahoma's aging flood control dams

Over 1,000 Oklahoma dams will be past their design life in 10 years.

The rupture of an earthen levy on Jan. 5 in Nevada should serve as a warning to Oklahoma — “It’s time to focus on the rehabilitation of our flood control dams,” according to Scotty Herriman, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). The incident points out the importance of maintaining infrastructure that helps hold back floodwater, he said.

A section of an irrigation canal in Fernley, Nev., ruptured after receiving heavy rain and snow fall, pouring three feet of near-freezing water into homes and stranding over 3,000 people.

One possible factor that officials mentioned early on was rodents burrowing holes in the earthen bank, which was involved in a smaller collapse that flooded about 60 Fernley homes in December 1996. But Ernie Schank, president of the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, said later that the cause may never be known, he said.

“It’ll be hard to pinpoint the cause because the evidence is washed away,” said Schank, whose agency operates the 31-mile-long earthen canal.

“The damage that appears to have caused this levy to break is very similar to the problems facing many of our state’s flood control dams due to the shortage of operation and maintenance funds,” Herriman said. He said that figures from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission show a need for at least \$25 million spread out over the next five years just to address the day-to-day operation and maintenance of Oklahoma’s flood control infrastructure. This is on top of the need for funds to rehabilitate the 1,000-plus flood control dams that will be past their design life over the course of the next ten years.

“Last year we received a record \$6.5 million for watershed dam rehabilitation that was matched two-to-one by the federal government for a total of \$19.5 million,” Herriman said. “We are very appreciative of this appropriation, but when it takes on average \$1 million per dam for rehabilitation and we have over 1,000 dams that need to be rehabilitated, it doesn’t go as far as you would think. This also doesn’t cover the additional costs for operation and maintenance to prevent damage like what we saw in Nevada.”

According to OACD Executive Director Clay Pope, the issue of dam safety and watershed rehabilitation should be a concern for all Oklahomans.

“Oklahoma has over 2,000 flood control dams that saved our state over \$300 million in flood damage that didn’t happen during last years record rain fall and that is a good thing,” Pope said. “This also means, however, that Oklahoma has more rehabilitation work and repair needs than any other state in the Union. We started building these dams back in the 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s and built them with an average lifespan of 50 years. You can do the math and see that much work needs to be done if we are to adequately protect the public. The legislature and the Governor made a great start on working on these dams last year. We need to keep this issue a priority if we are going to ensure that something similar to what happened in Nevada doesn’t happen here,” Pope said.



Conservation Partnership at KNID AgriFest

Once again the Garfield County Conservation District, Oklahoma Conservation Commission and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service presented a Conservation Partnership booth at the KNID AgriFest Farm Show in Enid Jan. 11-12. This year the Garfield County Floodplain Board and County Commissioners joined in with an expanded display area that included an electronic floodplain demonstration machine. Staffing the booth in the photo above are Jason Skaggs, Garfield County CD manager (second adult from left), and Jasper Parker, NRCS assistant state conservationist/Outreach (far right).

Priority Watersheds Program Moves to North Canadian River

At the January Commission meeting, a new Priority Watershed program was approved to implement best management practices (BMPs) in the North Canadian River Watershed. The watershed was added to the 303(d) list (a list of the state’s impaired waters, required by the Clean Water Act) for pathogens and turbidity exceeding the established criteria. The Priority Watershed project, funded 55 percent federally through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with a 45 percent state match from OCC, will make incentive funds and equipment available to producers via conservation districts to implement BMPs in crop fields, pastures and riparian areas to protect the water resources in the watershed.

OCC Presents Performance Review to House Committee Water Quality Success Highlighted

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission presented its Performance Review to the House Committee on Natural Resources on Jan. 23 at the Capitol.

One of the highlights of the report was the most recent grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. In recognition of the Commission's Nonpoint Source Program success, the EPA awarded the OCC \$1 million in additional Clean Water Act Section 319 funds to begin a 3 year project to implement additional water quality protection strategies in the Illinois River Watershed. The Water Quality Division's project in subwatersheds of the Illinois River prompted EPA to award funds unused by other states to Oklahoma for continuing and expanding its successful activities.

Completed and ongoing Priority Watershed Nonpoint Source Projects and the totals for best management practices implementation include:

- Fort Cobb Watershed (\$4.3 million) completed in FY-2007
- Stillwater Creek Watershed (\$1.1 million) completed in FY-2007
- Spavinaw Creek Watershed (\$2.8 million) except for Beaty Creek
- Grand Lake Watershed – Phase I (\$2.1 million)
- Honey Creek (Grand Lake) Watershed (\$1.7 million)
- Illinois River Watershed Riparian Project (\$1.6 million)
- North Canadian River Watershed (\$1.1 million)

These Priority Watershed Projects include implementation and demonstration of best management practices. The projects also include education programs to encourage watershed residents to help reduce nonpoint source pollution.

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

Oklahoma Conservation Conversation

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
73105-4201
405.521.2384, FAX: 405.521.6686
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