

# OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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## Oklahoma's 2010 Water Quality Success Stories

Monitoring and assessment efforts by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) have led to removal of eight additional streams from Oklahoma's proposed 2010 impaired-waters list submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency this past summer. Commonly referred to as the 303d list, this section of the state's Integrated Report contains those waterbodies that don't support one or more water quality standards due to impacts by such pollutants as sediment, bacteria, and excess nutrients. Streams are delisted when data indicates they are again meeting standards.

Approximately 500 streams statewide are monitored on a rotating basis by OCC. The resulting data is assessed using state rules to determine if waterbodies are attaining water quality standards or are impacted by pollutants, particularly those from nonpoint or diffuse sources.

Oklahoma's conservation partnership, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), local conservation districts and OCC, works with farmers, ranchers and other landowners to address streams with water quality challenges through voluntary, locally-led implementation of best management practices. Last year four streams had documented improvements in water quality that were due to the voluntary implementation of landowners in Oklahoma.

"Effective implementation is key to the success of our nonpoint source management program in Oklahoma," said Mike Thralls, OCC executive director. "Voluntary participation by landowners, with assistance from state and federal cost-share programs, puts best management practices on the ground that improve water quality while preserving agricultural production interests. The positive, documented results of the conservation partnership's efforts on water quality are many and have set Oklahoma apart as a leader among programs nationally," Thralls said.

In February 2010 OCC announced that EPA had removed Wolf Creek in the northwest, California Creek in the northeast, Little Wewoka Creek in central Oklahoma and Little Elk Creek in the southwest from the 303d list. In addition another 170 streams in the state were shown to meet most of the state's water quality standards and wouldn't be listed for these pollutants, due again largely to work done by the agriculture producers and other landowners in these watersheds.

The new streams removed from Oklahoma's proposed 2010 303d list include Bull, Cloud, Dirty, and Elk Creeks in the eastern central part of the state, Mission Creek in north central Oklahoma, and Cooper, Dugout, and Little Wewoka Creeks in central Oklahoma. New data shows these streams to have improved from impacts from one or more issues such as turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and bacteria.

### The creeks and the counties where they are monitored:

**Dirty Creek** — Muskogee, McIntosh  
**Elk Creek** — McIntosh  
**Cloud Creek** — Okmulgee, Muskogee  
**Delaware Creek** — Osage, Tulsa  
**Mission Creek** — Osage

Oklahoma's 2010 Success Stories



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## Going Green?

Want to receive the electronic newsletter instead of the paper one? Just email [Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov](mailto:Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov) asking to be moved to the email subscription list!

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

**No-Till Oklahoma Conference,**  
Feb. 1-2, Oklahoma City

**Conservation Commission Meeting,**  
Feb. 7, Oklahoma City

**American Farmers & Ranchers  
Convention,**  
Feb. 18-19, Oklahoma City

**Presidents Day Holiday,** Feb 21

**OACD Annual State Meeting,**  
Feb. 27 - March 1, Midwest City

**Conservation Commission Meeting,**  
March 1, Midwest City

### *In our thoughts...*

Clifford LeGate, former OCC assistant director, passed away Dec. 24.

J.L. Matli, Blaine County CD director 1960-1998, passed away Dec. 28, at age 83.

Dr. Jim Stiegler, OSU professor emeritus and one of the long-time principal coordinators of the National Land and Range Judging Contest, lost his son and daughter-in-law in an auto accident on Dec. 24. The couple's 8-month old daughter Emily was seriously injured but survived the accident.

J.V. Williams, father of Jim Williams NRCS district conservationist, Ardmore FSC, and grandfather of Brian Williams, NRCS soil scientist, Woodward TSC, passed away Dec. 14 at age 84. Joyce Williams, Jim's mother and Brian's grandmother, passed away Jan. 2 at age 81.

Irene Clements, widow of Buck Clements, NRCS area conservationist, passed away Dec. 17 at the age of 90.

George Carman, Pittsburg County CD director 1978-1994, passed away Dec. 21 at age 80.

### *Congratulations*

Lisa Knauf, OCC/District Services director, married Keith Owen, former Rogers County CD manager, on Nov. 11.

Ashley Rhea, OCC/WQ plan writer, and her husband Rodney have a new baby girl. Ever Leigh Rhea was born Dec. 28.

Brandy Pietz-Jones, NRCS resource conservationist, Clinton TSC, and husband Ryan have a new baby boy. Porter Riley Jones was born Dec. 14.

Saska Koch, NRCS clerk, Clinton TSC, has a new grandson, Tyler Dean Koch, born Dec. 22.

### *Thank You...*

Dear Friends:

The Max Dominick family wants to thank you for all of your support, thoughts and prayers. Dad and I talked practically everyday the past four years about some aspect of conservation business. People are at the center of that business and you are the best!

Sincerely, Darrel Dominick and family

## Deer Creek Conservation District Open House

Deer Creek Conservation District held an Open House on Tuesday, Dec. 14, and more than 50 people visited during the day. As the Open House began, Carol Gaunt, district chairman, gave welcoming remarks.

The district used the event as an opportunity to present two awards. Dean Wilson received a Governor's Conservation Award for his use of traditional conservation practices combined with prudent grazing practices. Loren Liebscher received the OACD Area IV Outstanding Cooperator Award for establishing native grass on some of his cropland and for including conservation with education activities that are presented as part of his Agrotourism programs at P Bar Farms. The farm is home of "The Maize," an intricate pattern of twists and turns carved into a seven-acre cornfield that is a recreational attraction for thousands of families and students every spring and summer. The farm is also the location of a new flour mill to produce whole wheat flour from wheat grown only by farmers practicing no-till farming.



District employees Christine Harper (left) and Kristi Hill making final preparations in the kitchenette were dressed for the holiday season.



(Above) OACD Area IV Outstanding Cooperator Loren Liebscher (left) with Carol Gaunt, district chairman.



Deer Creek CD Director Bertha Miller with sons David and Perry who are also district cooperators.



Governor's Award recipient Dean Wilson (left) with Carol Gaunt, district chairman.

## Great Plains RC&D named to Tier II in Circle of Diamonds

The National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils has announced that the Great Plains RC&D Council of Cordell has earned enhanced (Tier II) membership in the National Association's Circle of Diamonds program. Great Plains RC&D Council is only the 11th RC&D Council out of 375 nationwide to have earned this distinction for its exemplary management policies and practices.



As a standing member of the Circle of Diamonds, Great Plains RC&D Council has already demonstrated its positive impact on the quality of life within its local area, accountability to the public, and commitment to the RC&D mission. In earning enhanced membership, it has shown its ability to go beyond the specific benchmarks outlined in basic program guidelines. The RC&D Council's adherence to the governance practices and high management standards necessary for enhanced membership raises its credibility and effectiveness in serving the needs of its community.

### Awards & Recognition

**Jim Leach**, OCC/WQ cost-share and finance director, was recognized at the January 2011 Commission meeting for being named Employee of the Quarter..

**Margaret Blevins**, OCC/WQ data manager, was recognized at the January 2011 meeting of the Conservation Commission for 25 year of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma

**Ann Craven**, OCC/Water Quality Program executive secretary, was recognized at the January 2011 meeting of the Conservation Commission for 15 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

## Pittsburg County Legislators Tour District Sites

In December 2010 state Sen. Richard Lerblance and Reps. Brian Renegar and Donnie Condit toured Pittsburg County Conservation District small watershed flood control sites with Bradley Hamilton, district manager.

On Dec. 13 Sen. Lerblance rode around the district with Hamilton and toured several of the Brushy Peaceable watershed sites. Later in the week Rep. Renegar and incoming Rep. Condit rode with Hamilton on a tour of the sites.

Rep. Renegar is a veterinarian and owner of an animal hospital in McAlester. The second-term legislator told Hamilton he grew up in the Sallisaw area and that his grandparents had a flood control lake on their property.

Rep. Condit is a retired school teacher and administrator. He served 30 years in the McAlester school system with 11 of those in administration. He told Hamilton that if he had seen flood control dams before, he was unaware of their purpose but that he would be aware of them in the future.

"Pittsburg County has 19 flood control structures and I thought it would be important for the three men to see the impacts that flood control lakes can have in their own districts," Hamilton said. "This was a good way to show our legislators the responsibilities that conservation districts have. I encourage any district that can do something like this to do it before the legislative session while the legislators aren't so busy. This is a very important year to educate our legislators on our importance, especially any newcomers to the Capitol," Hamilton said.



Reps. Brian Renegar (left) and Donnie Condit standing by the district truck as they visit Brushy Peaceable Site No. 26.

## Oklahoma-Grown Seedlings Available Online Tree seedlings to improve wildlife habitat

All landowners can do something for wildlife, even if it just means planting some trees. And they can start by ordering tree seedlings from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

In partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Oklahoma Forestry Services is offering three different packages of seedlings, called wildlife habitat improvement packages, that will enhance the habitat of deer, songbirds, turkey, quail and a variety of other wildlife. Each wildlife packet is made up of 25 each of four different species of trees and shrubs chosen specifically to improve the wildlife habitat of your property.

"Planting the appropriate trees can be a great way to enhance wildlife habitat on your property," said Mike Sams, private lands biologist for the Wildlife Department. "Planting a tree today can be a long-term investment for future generations."

According to foresters, the fall is the best time for preparing planting sites for seedlings, and the best time for planting seedlings spans from December through early April.

Oklahoma-grown seedlings are available to landowners for a broad range of conservation projects. Landowners use the trees for windbreaks to protect crops and livestock, timber production, water quality protection, erosion control or other natural resource projects such as firewood plantings and Christmas tree production.

An online store is available where landowners can purchase their wildlife habitat improvement packages, as well as choose from over 35 species of trees and shrubs. Seedlings are one year old, bare-root, and each species is packaged in multiples of 50 with a minimum order of 100 trees. They are to be used in rural conservation plantings and cannot be used for ornamental plantings or resold as living trees.

All orders will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis, so landowners are encouraged to visit [www.forestry.ok.gov](http://www.forestry.ok.gov) today to choose their tree seedlings for planting this winter. The seedlings will be available for pickup or shipment starting in early January 2011, but orders are being taken now via the online store or you can request a paper order form by contacting the Department's Forest Regeneration Center at 800-517-FOREST.



## Garfield County Conservation District, OSU Extension Service to Host 6th Conservation Tillage Conference

Garfield County Conservation District, OSU Extension Service will host 6th annual Conservation Tillage Conference on Feb 10 in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The conference is intended for agricultural producers who are interested in conservation tillage but have no experience with it. The conference is also intended for producers currently using conservation tillage who would like to increase their efficiency.

"Our speakers this year will provide timely information regarding Tillage Concepts, where comparisons between strip-till and conventional no-till agriculture will be discussed," said Jason Skaggs, Garfield County Conservation District manager. "We will review how the soil responds once transitioned to no-till. Crop rotation is always a concern of no-till production so information about grain and oilseed markets, production technologies regarding maturities and herbicide history will be covered as well," Skaggs said.

An overview of spraying technology, with a focus on tools that are available to applicators that will allow them to consistently provide a highly effective spray application with minimal impact on off target plants, will be included. "We have invited one of the foremost no-till producers in the area to recap his experience with no-till and what he sees in the future for no-till," Skaggs said.

"We are hopeful that this will be one of our best programs yet!" said Jeff Bedwell, Garfield County Extension Service educator. "Last year we had over 140 at the conference," he said.

There is no admission charge to attend and coffee, donuts and lunch are provided. Sponsors are welcome with display booth spaces available for \$100. Companies are also invited to co-sponsor refreshments or the meal with a \$75 sponsorship. Sponsors will be recognized during the program and featured in promotional and meeting materials.

Registration by Feb. 7 is encouraged by calling 580-237-1228 or 580-237-7880.

## Stream Teams on the Job!

The Blue Thumb water pollution education program recently recognized a group of Blue Thumb volunteers for the work they do monitoring 29 stream sites. The individuals were recognized for their dedication and consistency on the streams they monitor out of the more than 100 streams actively monitored in the program.

"This group of volunteers has worked hard to complete their stream monitoring on a monthly basis during 2010," said Cheryl Cheadle, Blue Thumb Program coordinator. "That means they were outdoors in all kinds of weather making stream observations, collecting water samples and running a battery of tests," she said.

Cheadle added that in some seasons, the volunteers also venture out to make biological collections. Stream insects and other benthic macroinvertebrates are collected in the winter and the spring, and stream flow is measured as well. Fish collections are rotated with regard to ecoregion, and take place about every four years. Volunteer efforts are



Students from Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton making a benthic macroinvertebrate collection on Bandy Creek in Latimer County. Biology and Forestry instructor Eddie Woods (second from right) has worked with the Blue Thumb Program for five years. EOSC has performed monitoring on both Fourche Maline Creek and Bandy Creek for 12 years.

critical in all aspects of Blue Thumb stream monitoring.

A review of volunteer-collected data for 2010 revealed that volunteers working on those 29 streams went an extra mile to keep their monitoring current, Cheadle said.

"The result of those efforts is a wealth of information on the health and conditions of the streams," Cheadle said.

"Almost every Oklahoman wants to know how the creek in their neighborhood is faring, and having a corps of caring, well-trained volunteers lets us know just how well many of our streams and rivers are doing," Cheadle said. Often, volunteer-generated data is the only data that exists for some of the streams, she said.

"Probably the most important aspect of our Blue Thumb Program is the work done by our volunteers to help local residents understand that streams and rivers are best protected when the public knows how to be good stewards of our natural world. Being careful what we apply to our yards, keeping our cars and trucks in good shape so that oil leaks don't make their way into streams, and picking up after pets are just a few ways to help streams," Cheadle summarized.

For the complete list of the 29 stream sites and counties, look for "Stream Teams on the Job!" at <http://www.conservation.ok.gov>. For more information about Blue Thumb, call 918-398-1804 or go to [www.conservation.ok.gov](http://www.conservation.ok.gov) and click "Blue Thumb" in the top left corner.

### 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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