



Conservation Conversation

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

Volume 53 No. 6, June 2007

Rick Jeans Honored on Completing Term as Area II Conservation Commissioner

Rick Jeans attended his final board meeting as Conservation Commissioner for Area II of Oklahoma on June 5. At the meeting and at a luncheon in his honor immediately following, Jeans was honored by state Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach, Sen. David Myers, Rep. Dale DeWitt and his fellow Commissioners. Scotty Herriman, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, and Ron Hilliard, state conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, also made presentations recognizing Jeans for his service to the state.

In May 2002 Jeans was appointed to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission by Gov. Frank Keating for a five year term that expired June 30, 2007. Jeans has served on the board of directors for the Kay County Conservation District since 1990. He served the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts as president 2001- 2003, having previously served on the executive board as vice president and Area II director. He will continue to represent Oklahoma on the board of directors of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Jeans is a third-generation Kay County farmer and rancher, raising wheat, soybeans and corn near Tonkawa. Jeans and his father Don have a cow/calf operation and raise and sell Angus bulls. He and wife Dianne and daughter Amber are members of the First Christian Church. With a B.S. degree in animal science from Oklahoma State University, Commissioner Jeans is also a graduate of the Oklahoma Conservation Leadership and Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Programs.

Some highlights from Rick Jeans' tenure on the Conservation Commission:

- June 2003 — Sandstone Creek Watershed Dam 17A was the first in the nation completed under the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000.
- August 2004 — Oklahoma was among 22 states to participate in the first series of Conservation Security Program (CSP) contracts.
- April 2005 — OCC announced that analysis of five years of water quality monitoring data indicated a 14 percent reduction of phosphorus entering Beaty Creek, a tributary of Lake Eucha.
- October 2005 — Congressman Frank Lucas, former Governor and U.S. Senator Henry Bellmon and state Senator David Myers participated in a ground-breaking ceremony for construction of Upper Red Rock Creek Watershed Dam No. 52 in Noble County.
- May 2006 — EPA named the Fort Cobb Watershed Plan as one of the six best watershed-based plans in U.S.
- June 2006 — U.S. Sec. of Agriculture Mike Johanns announced Oklahoma had more CSP contracts approved than any other state, most of which were in the Poteau River Watershed.
- July 2006 — The Legislature funded a pay equity adjustment for all conservation district employees.
- October 2006 — District employees received a five percent pay raise along with state employees.
- January 2007 — OCC began the year with a record amount of dollars under contract for conservation projects. Three Abandoned Mine Land Program projects, two Tar Creek Superfund Area reclamation projects, and six Conservation Programs watershed projects totaling \$8,334,468 were underway.
- April 2007 — Gov. Brad Henry and U.S Deputy Sec. of Agriculture Chuck Conner signed a new \$20.6 million Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreement.
- May 2007 — Beaty Creek water quality continues to improve, reflecting a 31 percent reduction in phosphorus. Reductions from a similar project in Peacheater Creek, a tributary of the Illinois River, are even greater, with a 66 percent decrease in phosphorus loading and a 57 percent decrease in total nitrogen loading with significantly reduced streambank erosion.
- May 2007 — Oklahoma ranks second in the nation on the EPA list of documented nonpoint source water quality success stories, representing 12 percent of the national successes through the 319 Water Quality Program.
- May 2007 — The state Legislature appropriated \$6.5 million to match \$13 million of federal funds for watershed rehabilitation.



Rick Jeans

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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!*



Conservation Calendar

For more events and information, click on "Calendar" at www.conservation.ok.gov

Monthly Conservation Commission Meeting,
Aug. 6, Agriculture Building Board Room,
Oklahoma City

Oklahoma RC&D Summit, Aug. 12 - 14,
Ardmore Convention Center, Ardmore

Labor Day Holiday, Sept. 3

Monthly Conservation Commission Meeting,
Sept. 4, Northwest Technology Center,
Alva Campus

Blue Thumb Volunteer Training,
Sept. 19 - 20, Tulsa County CD.

Monthly Conservation Commission Meeting,
Oct. 1, Agriculture Building Board Room,
Oklahoma City

Blue Thumb Volunteer Training,
Oct. 11-12, Norman

Greater Oklahoma Farm Show,
Oct. 12-13, Grady County
Fairgrounds, Chickasha

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Convention,
Nov. 9-10, Renaissance Hotel,
Oklahoma City.

Veterans' Day Holiday, Nov. 12
Tulsa Farm Show,

Dec. 7-8, Tulsa Fairgrounds, Tulsa

Thanksgiving Holiday, Nov. 22-23

Christmas Holiday, Dec. 24-25.
2008

KNID AgriFest, Jan. 11-12

NACD Annual Meeting,

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

OACD State Meeting,

Feb 24-26, Reed Center, Midwest City

In Our Thoughts

Kim Farber, Garfield County CD director, lost her father-in-law June 16.

Nena Wells, Upper Washita CD manager, lost her husband Bert, age 45, from a heart attack in June.

Scotty Herriman, Nowata County CD director and OACD president, and his family lost their home and entire crop for the year from flooding of the Verdigris River. Those who wish to help may send donations to Regent Bank, P.O. Box 609, South Coffeyville, OK 74072.

Please inform **Mark Harrison** at OCC of district directors or employees who have been ill, passed away or had babies. **Please include dates!!!!!!!**

Oklahoma's Water Plan

From the Water Research Institute, Stillwater, Okla.

Oklahoma citizens are taking advantage of the opportunity to speak out about Oklahoma's water resources. Over 530 people have participated in the first 10 of 42 planned Local Input Meetings being conducted across the state.

Mike Langston, Water Research Institute (WRI) assistant director, explained that the purpose of the meetings is to listen to citizens express their thoughts on Oklahoma's water resources. The meetings include a brief presentation about Oklahoma's water resources and the current laws regarding ground and surface water. However, the intention of the meetings is to listen to the citizens.

Comments from the meetings demonstrate many concerns related to Oklahoma's current water law and rights as well as water sales and transfers, both in and out-of-state. There have also been comments about water conservation, water quality and education about various water issues.

The planning update will require about four years to complete. The Oklahoma Water Resources Board is conducting technical studies to inventory the state's water supplies and infrastructure, develop projections of future water use, and investigate Oklahoma's most important water problems and issues. Recent rains may have at least temporarily shifted the focus from not having enough water to flood control. Both issues are important to discuss and the local input meetings are only one way people can comment. People can also comment on-line, email or call with comments.

The WRI's website, <http://okwaterplan.info>, includes a searchable database of comments and reports from each of the meetings. The website also includes a calendar of meeting dates and map of locations. Information explaining the citizens input process and a list of frequently asked questions are available.

For more information, contact WRI at 405-744-9994 or email them at waterplan@okstate.edu. Information packets, comment cards and nomination forms are available at county extension offices.



Terry Wyatt, Tillman County Conservation District director and past Area IV Conservation Commissioner, and her husband Fred offered comments at a Public Listening Session.

District Directors & Employees visit Capitol & OCC Office

A conservation district director and two employees stopped by the OCC office after visiting with legislators at the Capitol in May. Standing, from left, are Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director; and Wayne Sexton, Pittsburg County CD director. Seated, from left, are Kim Tweed, OCC executive secretary; Bradley Hamilton, Pittsburg County CD manager; and Tricia Soderstrom, Lincoln County CD administrative officer. Wayne, who was named the OACD Outstanding District Director, was wearing a belt buckle presented to him by his fellow board members to commemorate the honor (bottom photo).



Conservation Commission Employees: Awards & Recognition

Jeanette Lamb, OCC/WQ specialist, was named Employee of the Year, by the OCC Awards & Recognition Committee, at the May Commission Meeting.

Monty Ramming, OCC/WQ Fort Cobb Project coordinator, received recognition at the May Commission meeting for five years of service to the Conservation Commission and the state of Oklahoma.

Shellie Willoughby, OCC/IT GIS specialist, was named Employee of the Quarter at the May OCC staff meeting and recognized at the June Commission Meeting.

Ed Crall, OCC/WQ Fort Cobb Project education coordinator, was recognized at the June Commission meeting for five years of service to the Conservation Commission and the state of Oklahoma.

A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met May 7 in the Oklahoma City Zoo's Conservation Education Center, 2102 N.E. 50th Street, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

District Director Appointments

Cherokee County	Haskell Brown
Delaware County	Kreg Butler
Ellis County	Clinton Stahlman
Grant County	Gail Moore
Harper County	Bret Cosby
Johnston County	Weldon Barnes
Lincoln County	Verlin Hart
McClain County	Brent Walck
Mountain View	Russ Jackson
Noble County	Walter Freese
Nowata County	Joy Elledge
Pushmataha	Paul Wade
Woods County	Lowell Melkus

Claims/Financial Statement

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement presented by Jana Chicoine, Financial Management and Human Resources administrative officer, who reported \$1,348,580.34 in claims March 19-April 22.

Agreements

Commissioners approved two new agreements and one amended agreement, presented by Ben Pollard, assistant director.

Travel Requests

Commissioners approved seven out-of-state travel requests for five staff members submitted by Mike Thralls, executive director.

NACD South Central Meeting

Commissioners approved a motion for five Commissioners to attend the National Association of Conservation Districts' South Central Meeting on July 26-28 in Catoosa.

Barnitz Creek Site 14 Emergency Declaration

Commissioners declared a state of emergency at the Barnitz Creek Site 14 Watershed Rehabilitation Construction Project, as requested by Robert Toole, Conservation Programs division director. He stated that the contractor started the project and then ceased performance as of March 29 due to a dispute in contract specifications. The dam had been excavated down to the principal spillway drain pipe and a new drain pipe installed. The principal spillway tower had not been reconstructed and the dam has not been backfilled. The existing contract was being closed by the Department of Central Services who must grant a new contract to complete the project. Because the dam is classified as high hazard and is at risk of breaching, particularly with the ongoing heavy rains, an emergency declaration will help expedite a new contract. Due to heavy rains, the site was being monitored daily and the Dewey County CD was activating its Emergency Action Plan.

EPA Features Water Quality Success Stories

Dan Butler, Water Quality division director, reported that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "Success Story" web page recently featured three water quality success stories from Oklahoma — Beaty Creek, Lake Creek and Sandy and Yellowstone Creeks. EPA's list of documented non-point source water quality success stories ranks Oklahoma second in the nation, representing 12 percent of the national successes through the 319 Water Quality Program.

ScienceFest At The Zoo

Jan Kunze, OGE Energy Corporation and Oklahoma County CD board member, and Karla Beaty, OCC education coordinator, reported that ScienceFest at the OKC Zoo annually reaches between 4,000 and 5,000 fourth- and fifth-

grade students across the state with activities that teach conservation. The program was started six years ago in downtown Oklahoma City with 1,200 students. Beaty stated that so far 1,000 volunteers had provided activities for water, wild-life, soils, and alternative energy to more than 25,000 students.

Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Council

Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts executive director, reported that the OACD executive board voted to join the Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Council (OPFC). The council will bring organizations together to promote prescribed burns for invasive species control and pasture health and to purchase equipment for rental through conservation districts. Darel Dominick, OCC Tribal Outreach coordinator, reported that he has been asked to serve on the Council and work to obtain tribal representation. Commissioners approved a motion for OCC to join OPFC.

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Matt Gard reported attending the Governor's Ag Conference in Weatherford and an agri-tourism business event. Commissioner Virginia Kidd attended directors day at the Capitol, Ag Day activities in Poteau, and the Governor's "Boots, Bandanas, and BBQ" event. Commissioner Dan Lowrance reported attending the OSU Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' advisory council meeting for discussions on agriculture and water issues. He stated that the Attorney General's office contacted the OSU Division of Agriculture regarding agriculture issues. Commissioner George Stunkard attended the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program signing ceremony and the National Land and Range Judging Contest. He commended OCC and OACD for their work on the events. Commissioner Rick Jeans attended the CREP signing ceremony and he commended staff, particularly Water Quality Program staff members Dan Butler and Shanon Phillips.

Staff Reports

Administration: Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, stated that during the same week as the CREP signing, OCC and the Tulsa Municipal Utility Authority sponsored a tour of the Spavinaw Creek Watershed Demonstration Farm in Delaware County. Thralls commended Cheryl Cheadle, Blue Thumb Program coordinator, for her work on the tour. Thralls congratulated Mike Rooker, newly-appointed Area 2 Commissioner from the Shawnee Conservation District. Rooker will replace Jeans beginning July 1. Thralls expressed his appreciation to Jeans for his contributions to the Commission and conservation issues statewide.

Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director, stated it was a busy period with the CREP agreement signing, ScienceFest, National Land and Range Judging Contest and the water quality tour in Delaware County. He recognized the efforts of the Awards and Recognition Committee arranging activities for employee recognition week.

District Services: Lisa Knauft, DS director, reported assisting with the Envirothon contest and attending a Billy B Concert in Rogers County for 2,000 fourth-grade students and a presentation to the OACD Outstanding Teacher at Deer Creek Elementary School in Edmond. She is also assisting conservation districts with audits. She is beginning work on a field office review from a district request.

Water Quality: Dan Butler, WQ director, reported on plans to submit projects at Elk City Lake and the North Canadian River for 319 grants. Elk City approached OCC and will provide matching funds for this project. Butler stated that information compiled by OCC staff on the BMP, Inc., contract has been turned over to the EPA solicitor general's

office. Mike Thralls stated that no additional funding will be added to the agreement with BMP, Inc., until the report is received from EPA. Butler reported that a list of comments from Water Research Institute's statewide water plan public listening sessions can be obtained on the Internet. He stated that Gina Levesque has been hired as the new CREP manager and will work out of the Cherokee County CD office.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation: Mike Kastl, AML director, stated that vegetation work on reclamation sites is ongoing. A pre-bid meeting for a site in Tulsa County was held April 30. He stated that Thralls received a letter from U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn regarding the AML funding issues. He stated that in the proposed rules and regulations for AML reauthorization, now published, Oklahoma received no increase in funding.

Financial Management and Human Resources: Jana Chicoine, FM/HR administrative officer, reported staff attended Employee Benefits Council and Oklahoma State and Education Group Insurance Board meetings.

Information Technology: Mike Sharp, IT director, reported that the shortage of rice hulls made it hard to get poultry litter to help vegetation on the West Commerce Project Tar Creek reclamation project, so commercial fertilizer will be used. Sharp stated that the Geographic Information Council voted to request \$500,000 from the Rainy Day Fund for new digital photography for the state. This photography has not been done since 1995. An additional \$500,000 would come from private partners. He stated that these photos would be done when leaves are off the plants in winter, providing a clearer view of topography.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, CP director, reported that the fifth of six watershed rehabilitation construction projects scheduled for this fiscal year is about to begin, making a total of 5 projects under construction at one time. He reported that NRCS has rescinded several watershed agreements and is shutting down the watershed program as a result of Congress not funding it in FY2007. He said there are 52 full-time NRCS employees in Oklahoma paid with watershed funds, and he encouraged conservation districts to communicate the importance of the watershed program to our Congressional delegation.

Oklahoma Association Of Conservation Districts

Clay Pope, OACD executive director, reported that the 2008 OACD State Meeting will be held at the Reed Conference Center in Midwest City. He stated that Senate Bill 704 authorizes OCC to partner with county commissioners on watershed, roadside erosion and invasive species projects. House Bill 1520, the controlled burning indemnity fund bill, passed with some language changes. HB 1829 is a measure to encourage energy reduction in the state and allows OCC to trade carbon credits generated. Kim Farber, Garfield County CD, and Savoy Alexander, Creek County CD, have been named to the OACD board, representing Areas 1 and 3 respectively.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ron Hilliard, NRCS state conservationist, stated that Christina Muedeking, NRCS Central Region assistant chief, toured Guthrie, met staff at OCC and attended Agriculture Day activities at Poteau. He stated that Oklahoma's NRCS budget and administration had been audited and a civil rights review was performed. An audit of the watershed program was scheduled. Hilliard stated that students are being hired to work at Pauls Valley, Woodward, Perry, El Reno, Waurika, Wilburton and either Jay or Claremore.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on June 4, 2007, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

SHE Found At Statewide Women in Ag & Small Business Conference

Discover Oklahoma's **S**trength, **H**eart, and **E**legance at the fourth annual statewide Women in Agriculture and Small Business Conference on Sept. 20-21 at the Moore-Norman Technology Center, at SW 134th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in Oklahoma City. The continuing theme for the conference is to empower the women of rural America by sowing seeds of success. A great line up of speakers, presentations, and exhibits is in store for participants.

OACD State Meeting moves to Reed Center in Midwest City



(Standing, from left) OCC staff members Kim Tweed, Lisa Knauf and Ben Pollard smile as Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts executive director, signs a contract to hold the OACD State Midwest City, Feb. 24-26, 2008.

Groundwater Screening at Woodward



Woodward County Conservation District, OCC's Blue Thumb Program and the Woodward Rotary Club sponsored a groundwater screening event in April. Mead Ferguson, Woodward County CD director and Rotary Club member, gave a Power Point Presentation. Kim Shaw (above, left) Blue Thumb education coordinator, led the groundwater screening. Carson Love and Christina Richards of Harper County CD helped with the event.

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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COMMISSION MEMBERS :

Area I	Matt Gard	Fairview
Area II	Rick Jeans	Tonkawa
Area III	George Stunkard	Coweta
Area IV	Dan Lowrance	Duncan
Area V	Virginia Kidd	Poteau

Mike Thralls, Executive Director
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