

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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Virginia Kidd Retires as Area V Commissioner

Virginia Kidd, LeFlore County Conservation District director, is retiring from her post as Area V Conservation Commissioner as of June 30, 2010, completing three terms.

Kidd has served on the board of directors of the LeFlore County Conservation District since 1986. In 1996 Gov. Frank Keating appointed her to serve as Area V Commissioner on the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Gov. Keating reappointed her in 2000 and Gov. Brad Henry reappointed her in 2005. Prior to her service at the Conservation Commission Virginia served nine years on the Department of Human Services Commission, appointed by Gov. Henry Bellmon.

At the 2010 Annual State Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Kidd received a Governor's Commendation from Gov. Brad Henry. Jeanette Nance, Governor's liaison, presented the Governor's Commendation that read: "Governor's Commendation is hereby presented to Virginia Kidd in appreciation of your more than 22 years of public service to the State of Oklahoma, 14 of which have been spent championing the cause of natural resource conservation in southeast Oklahoma as Area V Conservation Commissioner, and for your 24 years of service on the LeFlore County Conservation District board of directors.

Ms. Kidd, a resident of Poteau, was raised on a farm and continued as an adult in the farming and ranching business before entering a marketing and public relations career from which she retired. In addition to service on the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the Department of Human Services Commission, she has served as a trustee on the Carl Albert State College Foundation, on the boards of the Oklahoma Heritage Association and the Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma.

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U.S. Deputy Sec. of Ag Visits Oklahoma

U.S. Deputy Sec. of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan visited Oklahoma on May 13, 2010, to talk with Oklahoma farm and tribal leaders about current USDA programs and services and needs to be addressed in the next Farm Bill.

Her first stop on Thursday morning was at the Pioneer Telephone Cooperative headquarters in Kingfisher, where she announced the recipients of loans and grants that USDA is providing through Rural Development programs to spur economic development and create or save jobs in rural areas. Pioneer Coop is also a recipient of funding through the Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP). As a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Pioneer was awarded \$1.81 million BIP loan and a \$1.78 million BIP grant earlier this year. The cooperative will use the funding to design, engineer, and construct a fixed wireless broadband network that will extend from Kansas to the Texas border along the western quarter of the state.

Kerrigan then traveled to the Jack Stuteville farm in Kingfisher County for a "closed barn door" roundtable discussion with farmers and farm organizations leaders. State Sec.



U.S. Deputy Sec. of Ag Kathleen Merrigan, standing at right, listens to a question posed by Sac and Fox Second Chief Cheryl McClellan, seated at left. Seated behind the panelists' table, from left, are state Sec. of Ag Terry Peach, OACD Executive Director Clay Pope and OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls.

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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,
July 1, Oklahoma City

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food,
July 1, El Reno

Independence Day Holiday, July 5

Blue Thumb Training for Volunteers,
July 13-14, Geary

OK Invasive Plant Council Annual Meeting, July 14, Oklahoma City

Summer Fire Field Day,
July 17, Cheyenne

Inter-Tribal Environmental Council,
July 27-28, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Aug. 2, Oklahoma City

Conservation Cost-Share Program Year 11B Ends, Aug. 31

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Sept. 2, Oklahoma City

Labor Day Holiday, Sept. 6

Women in Ag & Small Business,
Sept. 14, Muskogee

Blue Thumb Training for Volunteers,
Sept. 18-19, Tulsa

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Oct. 4, Oklahoma City

Women in Ag & Small Business State Conference,

Oct. 14-15, Oklahoma City

Renewable Energy Funding Workshop,

Oct. 27, Oklahoma City

In our thoughts...

Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, lost his mother on May 31.

Max Dominick, NRCS retiree and father of Darrel Domminick, NRCS retiree and OCC employee, suffered a stroke in May.

Lavada Moffatt, widow of Harold Moffatt, NRCS soil scientist, passed away on June 4.

James Roy “J.R.” Johnson, Muskogee County CD director 1994-2006 and former OACD board member, passed away on June 7.

John David Burnett, Little River CD technician, lost his mother on June 8.

Congratulations!

Dee Surber, Grady County CD programs coordinator, has a new grandson, Karson Garrett Surber, born May 21.

Darlene and Jerry Pigg, Johnston County CD employees, have a new granddaughter, Preslie Janae Pigg, born May 27.

Doris Anderson is retiring after 30 years of service as secretary at Payne County CD.

Commissioner Virginia Kidd, continued from page 1

During Ms. Kidd’s 14-plus years on the Commission many conservation milestones occurred. The state Conservation Cost-Share Program, now in its 12th year, was initiated. OCC’s Water Quality Program expanded and made great strides in reducing nonpoint source pollution in the state. Last year the Legislature passed an historic \$25 million conservation bond issue to primarily address watershed operation and maintenance, watershed rehabilitation and repair of flood damaged areas.

Commissioner Kidd always championed the abandoned mine reclamation program during her tenure. One of her proudest accomplishments was the completion of a major mine reclamation project near the town of McCurtain. Commissioner Kidd was always a positive ambassador for conservation in Area V and the state of Oklahoma. She was always willing to talk with elected representatives to ensure conservation issues were addressed.

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of Agriculture Terry Peach organized the roundtable and invited Oklahoma Conservation Commission Executive Director Mike Thralls, and Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director Clay Pope to participate.

Thursday afternoon Kerrigan made a visit to a meeting of the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council in Shawnee. She was accompanied by Janie Hipp from the U.S. Sec. of Ag’s Office of Tribal Relations. Chickasaw Chief Bill Anoatubby and Sac and Fox Second Chief Cheryl McClellan were among tribal leaders in attendance, along with members of the Kiowa Nation Tribal Conservation District. Peach, Thralls and Pope participated in a panel discussion with Kerrigan, as did Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service state conservationist; Francie Tolle, Farm Service Agency state executive director; and Ryan McMullen, Rural Development state executive director. Pope is a member of the advisory council, as is OCC Assistant Director Ben Pollard.

OCC Budget and Allocation Committee 2010

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission Budget and Allocation Committee held its first meeting at the Agriculture Building in Oklahoma City on May 21, 2010, and met again on June 3. The committee was authorized at the May Commission meeting to make recommendations on how best to fill the general revenue budget cuts experienced last fiscal year and the one scheduled for FY 2011, which begins July 1, 2010. The first goal of the committee is to provide input to the OCC on the conservation district allocations for FY 2011, scheduled for Commission review and approval on July 1.

The Challenge — the size of the budget hole: The Commission’s general revenue appropriations were reduced by \$614,902 from FY 2009 to FY 2010. During FY 2010, the current fiscal year, another \$642,914 was reduced from the budget as rescissions. In the FY 2011 budget another \$307,307 of general revenue reductions is anticipated. So, the Commission has lost over 1.5 million dollars of general revenue appropriations over two years. The Budget and Allocation Committee will look at ways to fill this hole through cuts and/or recommending use of other sources of funds.

The authorization for the committee set out that it would consist of two OCC commissioners, two members of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and one representative from the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees. The authorization also called for support from four OCC staff members, one OACD employee and one USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service employee.

Committee members are OCC Commissioners Mike Rooker and George Stunkard, OACD President Trey Lam and Vice President Kim Farber, and OACDE Past President Bradley Hamilton. Staff support will come from Mike Thralls, Ben Pollard, Steve Coffman and Lisa Knauf for OCC, Clay Pope for OACD and Gary O’Neill for NRCS.

The committee is authorized through June of 2011 and will also provide input into the FY 2012 budget. By most accounts the FY 2012 state general revenue appropriations will be at least as challenging, if not more so, than the past and current years.



The Budget and Allocation Committee members are, from left, standing, OCC Commissioner George Stunkard, OACD Vice President Kim Farber; seated, OCC Commissioner Mike Rooker, OACDE Past President Bradley Hamilton, and OACD President Trey Lam.

Okie One-Call Now to Include Watershed Flood Control Dams

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) now has an agreement in place with the Okie One-Call System to include all Watershed Flood Control Program dams in Oklahoma, with conservation districts as the Okie One-Call points of contact.

Oklahoma One-Call System, Inc., is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1979. It is a communication link between the excavators and operators of underground facilities to help prevent damages to public services. The Call-Okie program is designed to promote public awareness and to eliminate potential hazards posed to excavators, general public, vital underground facilities and the environment, when excavation is performed.

Beginning in June 2010, conservation districts with watershed dams will begin receiving "Locate Tickets" by email for any excavation that is going to occur within one-half mile of the watershed dam. Districts will have 48 hours to "locate" the watershed dam for the excavator prior to the start of excavation. Districts should review the Locate Ticket thoroughly and contact the excavator to alert them of the watershed dam and the existence of an easement.



There are over 2,100 Small Watershed Upstream Flood Control dams in Oklahoma.

"Getting watershed dams and associated conservation districts on the Okie One-Call System is a tremendous achievement," said Mike Thralls, OCC executive director. "It positions districts to be proactive in addressing any and all potential hazards to the watershed dam before excavation occurs," Thralls said.

In previous years the cost of adding the state's watershed dams into the Okie One-Call system would have been exorbitant because of the need to manually enter legal descriptions for each of the more than 2,100 dams in the state. But with the advent of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for identifying locations and Geographic Information Systems databases for storing the location information, the cost is greatly reduced.

"Being able to load our GIS database of locations for every watershed dam in the state made the effort very cost effective and efficient. We must also commend Okie One-Call for establishing a feasible membership rate for government entities and recognizing conservation districts as subdivisions of state government," said Robert Toole, director of OCC's Conservation Programs division.

When a conservation district receives a Locate Ticket, a district representative will examine the location of the proposed excavation site in relation to the entire easement of the watershed dam including the land that is only under water during flood events – the flood pool. The representative will determine not only possible impacts to current operation and maintenance of the flood control dam, but also possible impacts should the dam be rehabilitated in the future. The need for dam rehabilitation often results from a raised hazard rating for a dam because of new residential or business development downstream, and commonly calls for increasing the height and spread of the dam to increase the flood storage capacity. If the conservation district representative determines that the excavation or future location of the proposed installation could impact the watershed dam or appurtenances, he or she will contact the contractor and arrange for an on-site consultation.

"Even if there is no impact indicated, it would still be a good practice for the conservation district to meet with the contractor to educate them about watershed dams and watershed easements," Toole said.

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food is conference to provide information to consumers, producers and agency personnel on sustainable agricultural, speciality crops, food safety regulations, farm-to-school and more.

Facilitated by Great Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council. Thursday, July 1, 2010, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. plus an optional gala dinner event. Contact Larry Wright, 580-832-3661, <http://www.greatplainsrcd.org>, for more information.



Pontotoc Ridge Prescribed Burn Association

Pontotoc County Conservation District, in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Nature Conservancy, formed the Pontotoc Ridge Prescribed Burn Association in March 2010 and formally organized in April. Since then the members have been spreading the word and membership is growing.

The group's principal goal is to curb the invasion of eastern redcedar trees in the area. Working cooperatively, with neighbor helping neighbor, the association helps landowners perform prescribed



Prescribed burning helps control invasive plant species.

burns on their property. The association works with other agencies to develop prescribed burn plans and conduct the fires.

The group meets monthly on the first Monday at the Coca Cola Bottling Company conference room in Ada. Landowners from as far as Tulsa and Fort Worth have attended. More information is available by emailing the Pontotoc County Conservation District Office at pontotoccd@conservation.ok.gov.

Awards & Recognition

Tammy Sawatzky, OCC/CP deputy director, was recognized at the June 2010 Commission meeting for 25 years of service to OCC.

Jeanette Lamb, OCC/WQ water quality specialist, was recognized at the June 2010 Commission meeting for five years of service to OCC.

Water Quality staff members Stacey Day, Brooks Trammel, Candace Cunningham Greg Kloxin, Jeanette Lamb, Andrew DeCandis, Shanon Phillips, and NRCS employee Gary O'Neill were recognized at the June 2010 Commission meeting for two Quality Oklahoma Team Awards and a Celebrating Success Award at the state Capitol in May.

Billy B at Rogers Conservation Education Reserve for 18th Year

The Rogers County Conservation District hosted Billy B, “the natural science song and dance man,” at the Rogers State University Conservation Education Reserve for the 18th year on May 3, 2010. Approximately 1,200 fourth graders from across northeastern Oklahoma attended. The students and teachers had a great time dancing, singing and learning about conservation.



Billy B on stage at the Rogers State University Conservation Education Reserve in Claremore on May 3.

After the concert, for the first time ever, the district invited students to stay and join in natural resource activities that were set up across the Reserve. Almost 1,000 students stayed, had sack lunches and learned about the importance of our natural resources and the need for conservation.

Mailing Tab Area

The activities were led by employees from city, state and federal agencies from across Oklahoma. These agencies included the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, OSU Extension, Tulsa County Conservation District, Mayes County Conservation District, Ottawa County Conservation District and the City of Catoosa. Claremore High School MASH club, Biology students from Rogers State University and Pre-Service Teachers from Cameron University also lent their assistance.

“It was an exhausting, yet exhilarating day,” said Robert Gibbs, education coordinator. “We received many compliments from presenters and fourth grade teachers who attended the event,” she said. “One of the fourth graders, however, summed it up best when he said, ‘This was awesome. I hope we get to come back next year!’”

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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