

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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Oklahoma's 2012 Water Quality Success Stories

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission held a joint news conference on May 7 to announce 11 new success stories on improving the state's water quality. The press conference was held at the state Capitol.

Monitoring and assessment efforts by OCC have led to the proposal to add 11 Oklahoma streams to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Nonpoint Source Success Stories. Upon approval by EPA these 11 will join the 16 existing Oklahoma stories highlighted on EPA's website at: <http://www.water/epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319>. These 11 streams are located in nearly every area of the state and are the result of voluntary participation in conservation programs offered through partnerships among local, state and federal entities. OCC's Water Quality Monitoring Program measured improved water quality in the streams, including decreased turbidity, higher oxygen content, reduced fecal bacteria contamination and reductions in visible oil and grease, according to Shanon Phillips, OCC's Water Quality division director. Phillips also stated that in the latest EPA review, Oklahoma is number one in the nation for nutrient reductions for 2011.



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USDA Celebrates 150th Anniversary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture celebrated its 150th anniversary on May 15 with a series of events at both national and state levels. In Washington, D.C., President Barack Obama issued a proclamation in honor of the event. The Presidential Proclamation begins:

"On May 15, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation to establish the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and codified a commitment to the health of our people and our land. One hundred and fifty years later, USDA continues to realize that vision of service by applying sound public policy and science to an evolving food and agriculture system."

In Oklahoma, state leaders of USDA agencies gathered in the Blue Room at the state Capitol to commemorate the event. Also attending and participating were legislators and leaders and representatives of partner agencies and agricultural organizations. State Sen. Eddie Fields and Rep. Phil Richardson, chairmen of the Senate and House of Representatives Agriculture Committees, read a Legislative Citation they co-authored in honor of the anniversary. Garrett King, field representative for U.S. Congressman Frank Lucas, read a message from Lucas congratulating USDA and commending its role in the history and success of the nation.

Clay Pope, executive director of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, was among the speakers featured at the event. Pope spoke about USDA's conservation legacy and the critically important role that conservation has played in Oklahoma history. "Oklahoma has been a leader in conservation,

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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
<http://conservation.ok.gov>

Conservation Commission Meeting,

July 2, Oklahoma City

Independence Day Holiday, July 4

SWCS Annual Conference,

July 22-25, Fort Worth, Texas

4-H Water Quality Camp,

July 31, Illinois River

NACD South Central Region Meeting,

Aug. 5-7, Hot Springs, Ark.

Conservation Commission Meeting,

Aug. 6, Oklahoma City

Statewide Women in Ag & Small Business,

Aug. 9-10, Oklahoma City

Labor Day Holiday, Sept. 3

Conservation Commission Meeting,

September 10, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,

Nov. 5, Oklahoma City

NACD Auxiliary National and Regional Photo Contests

The NACD/Auxiliary Photo Contest is open to amateur photographers who are residents of the U.S. or its territories. Participants can enter as many as five photos in each year.

NACD has provided a complete description of how to submit photographs, accepted photo formats, judging, use of the photos and prizes at the website below. Guidelines must be followed carefully to ensure eligibility in the contest. Changes in the process for submitting photos via email for the national contest are also described at the following link: <http://www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/photo>. The deadline for the national contest is Dec. 1, 2012.

The South Central Region Photo Contest is only open to youth photographers, 18 years of age and younger and accepts 5"x7" photo prints only, mailed to Grace Vining, 1651 Highway 18, Edgard, La. The deadline for the regional contest is July 2, 2012.

In our thoughts...

Dennis Boney, OCC/CP watershed technician, lost his mother on May 10.

Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, is recovering from surgery on May 15.

Congratulations!

Tashina Kirk, OCC/WQ Illinois River Project coordinator, and husband Albert have a new son, Eli Mathew Kirk, born May 17

The steams announced were the following:

- Pennington Creek, Johnston County
- Stinking Creek, Caddo County
- Tepee Creek, Kiowa County
- Salt Creek, Lincoln and Creek Counties
- Camp Creek, Lincoln and Creek Counties
- Lagoon Creek, Pawnee and Creek Counties
- Turkey Creek, Woods County
- Doga Creek, Osage County
- Beaver Creek, Kay and Osage Counties
- Duck Pond Creek, Beaver County
- Clear Creek, Beaver County

WQ Success Stories, continued from page one

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. However, the success of this partnership would not be fully evident without the additional partnership of EPA, who provides the funding through Clean Water Act Section 319 to enable this water quality monitoring, Phillips said.

Jim Reese, Sec. of Agriculture, credited the state's monitoring program for effectively documenting improvement. OCC monitors approximately 500 streams statewide on a rotating basis. The data is assessed to determine if waterbodies are attaining standards or are impacted by pollutants, particularly from nonpoint or diffuse sources.

"It is those monitoring and testing efforts that give proof to the efforts that landowners are making through these voluntary programs," Sec. Reese said.

"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.

Also speaking at the press conference were state Sen. Ron Justice; Rep. Don Armes; Ron Hilliard, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service state conservationist; and Joe Parker and Clay Pope, president and executive director, respectively, of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. Also participating but not speaking were representatives of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, American Farmers and Ranchers, Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association and other farm and ranch organizations.

Little River Conservation District Honors Terry Baker

Submitted by Frank Acker, Little River Conservation District

Terry Baker, former Little River Conservation District director, was recently honored by the conservation district's board of directors for 25 years of service to the district and the state.

Baker was honored at the district's May board meeting. Baker resigned from the board in February, citing health issues as the reason. He joined the board in 1987.

Clarence Pratt, Little River CD chairman presented Baker with a plaque and Kevin Varner, OCC District Services district liaison, presented him with a 25-year gold pin service award. Baker also received a Conservation Commendation from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission "For 25 years of dedicated service championing the cause of conservation in the Little River Conservation District and the State of Oklahoma."



The Little River Conservation District board of directors honored former board member Terry Baker at the May 2012 district board meeting. From left are Dennis Ward, Heath Bundy, Terry Baker, Clarence Pratt, Don Scott and Bill Jennings.

Awards & Recognition

Dennis Boney, OCC/Conservation Programs watershed technician, was recognized at the June Commission meeting for being named Employee of the Year.

Stacey Day, OCC/WQ senior technical writer, was recognized at the June Commission meeting for being named Employee of the Quarter.

Jill Ashbrenner, OCC/WQ Spavinaw Project coordinator, was recognized at the June Commission meeting for five years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

“Six Million Tons: Earth’s Revolt that Inspired Reform”

Canton Sixth Graders Perform Dust Bowl Dramatization

At the monthly meeting of the Conservation Commission on June 5, 2012, three sixth-grade students from Canton Elementary School performed a dramatization representing the cause and effects of the Dust Bowl. The performance, “Six Million Tons: Earth’s Revolt that Inspired Reform,” outlined the events that led to the creation of the Dust Bowl and the beginning of the conservation movement that led to the area’s recovery. Debi Carnott, OCC/WQ staff member, introduced the presentation.

The students were Hanna Hood as “the Earth,” Brock Hutchison as “a Farmer,” and Donovan Rogers as “Hugh Hammond Bennett, father of soil conservation.” They were accompanied by Dora Fuqua, history teacher; Penny Heath, history day coordinator; and Tina Rogers, science teacher. Tina Rogers is also the mother of Donovan Rogers and was named as Outstanding Conservation Educator for Congressional District III during Conservation Day at the Capitol in 2010.

The group of students began their research in October 2011 and has thus far accumulated a 21-page list of annotated bibliographies. They performed the dramatization at district and state levels in the National History Day program and were named State Champion for a Junior Group Performance. They also performed at the Oklahoma History Center during an event in which producers Ken Burns and David Duncan screened segments of their new documentary “The Dust Bowl” to be debuted in November on OETA television and other PBS stations across the nation. The students are headed to the University of Maryland to compete in the National History Day contest the week of June 11, 2012. OETA is scheduled to film the performance for inclusion in the “The Dust Bowl” DVD set.



From left, Hanna Hood, Brock Hutchison and Donovan Rogers perform their Dust Bowl dramatization.

Blaine County Progressive Agriculture Farm Safety Day 2012

Submitted by **Katie Scheihing, Central North Canadian River Conservation District**

Blaine County Fairgrounds hosted the sixth annual Blaine County Progressive Agriculture Farm Safety Day on April 25. Lisa Garrison and Scott Hoar, Blaine County Conservation District, and Jay Rhoads, OSU Extension Service, led planning for the event. Mary Rusch, Cimarron Valley CD, and Katie Scheihing, Central North Canadian River CD, assisted with planning and helped with the day’s activities.

Fourth-grade students from all Blaine County schools participated in this year’s Farm Safety Day. Throughout the day more than 140 students and their teachers attended eight different learning stations aimed at helping to reduce the number of rural children who die or are injured in farm accidents. The sessions demonstrated how children can take responsibility for their own safety, respect parents’ safety rules, and share safety tips with their family and friends. Hands-on experiences led by local community members taught participants lifelong farm safety lessons.

Mark Walker, Blaine County game ranger, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), taught sessions on gun safety, demonstrating the importance of gun locks and how to safely handle guns at home. The Farm Bureau operated a “Fire House,” showing students how to get through a house filled with smoke. Brandon Webb, farmer, rancher and Blaine County Conservation District director, taught animal safety, teaching students to respect and use caution around farm animals. Mike Mier, Western Equipment, and Glenn Smoot, Blaine County Conservation District director, demonstrated the correct safety practices around a tractor or mower, including the rule to never have or be a passenger on a tractor.

The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics spoke to the students about illegal drug labs, everyday items used in illegal drug production and about the dangers of illegal substances and their production. Cimarron Electric representatives taught about using safety precautions around electricity at home and on the farm. Lorne Geisler, Blaine County OSU Extension Service, talked about being careful around grain and grain handling equipment. Dana Bessinger, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, taught about healthy lifestyles and healthy eating. OGE presented a safety lesson on using the Oklahoma One Call system to mark underground utility lines before digging or excavating land.

Each student who participated in the daylong event received a Farm Safety Day t-shirt and a goody bag filled with safety information and worksheets. Steve House and Barry Bessinger of Farm Credit and members of the Blaine County Oklahoma Home and Community Education Organization (OHCE) prepared and served lunch and snacks. Volunteers from the Blaine County Conservation District board of directors assisted during the day along with employees from neighbor conservation districts.

The Progressive Agriculture Foundation sponsors the events nationally and presents training for coordinators each year. Attending the training sessions helps secure insurance and signs for the events as well as goody bags and t-shirts. Corporate and local sponsor donations also support the events. Corporate and local sponsors for the Blaine County Farm Safety Day included Devon Energy, Central North Canadian River Conservation District, Bank of Western Oklahoma, Cornerstone Bank, Watonga Lions Club, End-O-Main Catering, Blaine County OHCE members, Wheeler Brothers Grain, Farm Credit, Chesapeake Energy, Pioneer Telephone, Oklahoma Energy Resources Board, Okeene Milling, ODWC, Bureau of Indian Affairs Fire Division, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Cimarron Electric, OGE Corporation, OSU Extension Service, State Farm Insurance and Sonic Corporation. The sponsors’ donations provided lunch, snacks and goody bags for all event participants and volunteers.



(USDA Anniversary, continued from page one)

since the days of the Dust Bowl,” Pope said. “And without that legacy of conservation, Oklahoma could not be the productive, beautiful state that we enjoy today,” he said.

“The Oklahoma Conservation Commission applauds the U.S. Department of Agriculture on its 150th anniversary,” said Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director, “and USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, the agency that we and local conservation districts work with most closely.”

Pollard went on to say, “This year, 2012, also marks the 75th anniversary of the Conservation District Enabling Act that paved the way for the creation of Oklahoma’s 87 local conservation districts. For the most recent half of USDA’s existence, — since the days of the Dust Bowl — NRCS success has been achieved through voluntary cooperative programs with local landowners through local conservation districts and other partners,” Pollard said.

Ron Hilliard, NRCS state conservationist, noted that after President Lincoln signed legislation to create the U.S. Department of Agriculture, over the next two months — in the midst of the Civil War — he signed additional legislation to expand and transform American farming, including the Homestead Act and the establishment of the Land Grant agricultural university system.

“President Lincoln was being true to his farm boy roots as he enacted a vision shared earlier by Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in committing federal government to assist farmers and ranchers in their role of producing food for our growing nation,” Hilliard said.



State USDA leaders with the authors of a Legislative Citation. From left are Ryan McMullin, Rural Development state director; Ron Hilliard, NRCS state conservationist; Francie Tolle, Farm Service Agency state executive director; Sen. Eddie Fields and Rep. Phil Richardson.

CONSERVATION & TRAILS

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Project Learning Tree
Workshops or Trunks
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Project WILD Workshops
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