

# 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

Volume 54, Issue No. 5, May 2008

## Conservation District Act Revised!

### Director Election Dates Changed and Much More

Senate Bill 1766, by Sen. Charles Wyrick and Rep. Dale DeWitt, updates the Conservation District Act with changes and additions. Gov. Brad Henry signed the Bill into law on May 2, becoming effective immediately.

"This bill makes some positive changes that should advance the cause of conservation in Oklahoma. We will now begin updating our rules to comply with the new law," said Mike Thralls, OCC executive director.

Here are some highlights:

1. Authorizes (but does not fund) a revolving fund for districts to purchase equipment.
2. Authorizes (but does not fund) a revolving fund to help with expenses incurred if districts choose to consolidate.
3. Authorizes OCC to make rules for the Carbon Sequestration Certification Program and to charge fees if necessary.
4. Changes district board position titles from "chairman to chair," from "vice chairman" to "vice chair" and from "secretary/treasurer" to "treasurer."
5. Establishes that conservation district employees are "at will" employees.
6. Changes elected-director three-year terms to begin on July 1 and end on June 30.
7. Changes appointed-director two-year terms to begin on July 1 and end on June 30.

*Conservation District Act, continued on page 2*

## Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program Closes

Due to the overwhelming participation in the OCC Water Quality Division's Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program, OCC realized in April that the budgeted funds would soon run out. For that reason, OCC's Water Quality division sent out notice on April 30 to all conservation districts that pre-approval for incentive agreements would be required beginning May 5. The result was an "avalanche" of applications that quickly depleted the remaining funds. On May 6 OCC announced that all funds had been expended and that there were no incentive funds for litter ordered after May 5.

It took over three years to spend the first grant of \$480,000, but when the program of moving litter was put in the hands of conservation districts the process sped up significantly — it took less than three months to spend the more recent grant of \$300,000. "I believe that even the poultry industry itself has been surprised at how quickly litter moved when the job was put in the hands of conservation districts," said Dan Butler, OCC Water Quality Division director.

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*"I consider the soil conservation districts movement one of the most important developments in the whole history of agriculture."*

*~Hugh H. Bennett*

#### 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)

**Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting**, June 2, Agriculture Bldg., Oklahoma City

**Blue Thumb Training**, June 6-7, Grove

**Blue Thumb Training**, June 26-27, Geary

**Independence Day Holiday**, July 4

**Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting**, July 7, Agriculture Bldg., Oklahoma City

**Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference**, July 26-30, Tucson, Ariz.

**Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting**, Aug. 4, Agriculture Bldg., Oklahoma City

**NACD South Central Region Meeting**, Aug. 15-17, Hot Springs, Ark.

**Labor Day Holiday**, Sept. 1

**Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting**, Sept. 8, Deer Creek Conservation District, Weatherford, location details tba

**Blue Thumb Training**, Sept. 13-14, Tulsa

**Statewide Women in Ag Conference**, Sept. 18-19, Moore/Norman Tech Center, Oklahoma City

## In our thoughts...

Woodward County CD board member Jerry Hunter's wife Cynthia is recovering from major surgery.

Karen Potts, OCC/FMHR accountant, lost her mother-in-law, on April 23.

Gene Bollinger, OCC/AML engineer, lost his wife Billie on April 24.

Lisa Young, Blaine County CD secretary, lost her husband Shayne on April 25.

Cindy Ward, Garvin CD secretary, and her family lost their house and possessions due to a tornado on May 7. Donations to help may be made to the Ward Family Relief Fund at the Pauls Valley National Bank.

Cindy Beirig, Major County CD secretary, lost her mother on May 9 after a long battle with cancer.

## Congratulations!

Todd Goodall, Upper Washita CD engineering aide, and wife Mindy, became parents of a daughter, Mykenzie Fayth, May 14.

*Conservation District Act*, continued from page 1

8. Changes directors' per diem for attending monthly board meetings from \$25 to "not to exceed \$50 per meeting."

9. Changes the director election date from the second Tuesday of March to the first Tuesday of June, and changes the filing period to the first three weeks in January.

10. Establishes that, except as otherwise provided by state or federal law, conservation districts' flood control structure operation and maintenance responsibilities shall not be deemed to include maintaining, protecting or improving the quality of any soil, air, groundwater or surface water or biota (living things) affected by, near or comprising any part of the structure.

11. Allows directors to purchase health insurance in the insurance plan offered to district employees.

12. Establishes that a conservation district employee who transfers to a state agency will not lose service time accrued for calculating longevity and leave benefits.

*Poultry Litter Transfer*, continued from page 1

OCC is applying to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for more money to go into the incentive program. "We expect that the incentive rate will drop to \$.03/ton/loaded mile, but the districts who handle the claim will still receive \$1.00/ton for processing the claim," Butler said. "This means that the next allotment of funds will move more tons of litter so there will be more money for conservation districts. We will do everything we can to ensure that additional money is available as soon as possible," he said.

"Thank you very much," Butler said, speaking to Oklahoma's conservation districts, "for all your hard work helping poultry growers move litter out of sensitive watersheds."

## 2008 Land Judging Contest Goes On Despite Rain Carolyn Tucker and Fredia Rice Honored

Oklahoma City — Over 170 teams of teenage FFA and 4-H members competed in the 57th National Land and Range Judging Contest, held May 5-7, according to contest cochairman Scotty Herriman. Herriman is president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, the contest's principal sponsor. "We had teams from 35 states competing this year, including Hawaii," he said.

The contest proceeded despite rainstorms blanketing most of the state. El Reno, the city nearest the contest site, reported 2.43 inches of rain for the May 7 contest day. The contest was delayed approximately one hour to allow the most intense part of the storm to pass. Some of the trenches for participants to examine subsoil profiles held ankle-deep water. The contestants, who had competed in their own states and traveled to Oklahoma for the national competition, persevered despite the weather.

The 4-H and FFA participating teams qualified for

*Land Judging*, continued on page 3



Contestants were undaunted by pouring rain and standing water. (Photos by Ken Biddle, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.)

Land Judging, continued from page 2

the event by placing among the top five teams at contests held in their home states. Teams match skills in judging the adaptability of land for various purposes including farming, range management, and homesite construction. The principles involved can be valuable in career fields such as environmental and agricultural management, natural resource conservation, home building and construction.

The actual contest site remains a secret until contest day, so no one has an unfair advantage. Contestants and coaches gather on contest morning to find out the official contest location. They then travel to the site, with a police escort, in a caravan of over 100 cars spanning several miles. This year the Concho Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency near El Reno hosted the contest on May 7.

The event ended Wednesday night with an awards banquet in the Great Hall of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum when the day's freshly-tabulated results were announced. Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Jari Askins gave the keynote address before the awards presentation began. National championship trophies were awarded to team and individual winners in each category of



Lt. Gov. Jari Askins spoke at the banquet. Each category included FFA and 4-H.

In Land Judging, FFA competition, the Pleasant Hope, Mo., chapter won in the team category, and the first place individual winner was Emily Cashman, Montezuma, Ind. In the 4-H competition the Medina County, Hondo, Texas, chapter was the winning team, and Dustin Lilie of that team was the individual winner.

In the Range Judging Contest, the Gans, Okla., chapter won the FFA team competition, and Daniel Merrill of that team took the first place individual FFA award. The Butte, Newell, S.D., chapter won the 4-H team category, and Sammi Shaykett of that team placed first in the individual category.

In Homesite Evaluation, the Oklahoma Union, South Coffeyville, Okla., chapter won the FFA team competition, and Justin Van Brundt, New Orleans, Ind., took the first place individual FFA award. The Hamilton Southeastern, Denver, Ind., chapter won the 4-H team category, and Chelbey Welchel, Fisher, Ind., placed first in the individual category.

Herriman presented the 2008 National Land

and Range Judging Contest Honoree Award to Carolyn Tucker and Fredia Rice. Carolyn Tucker, Hinton, Okla., served as secretary at the North Caddo Conservation District for 35 years until her retirement in 2006. She continues to volunteer to help with registration at the Land and Range Judging Contest as she has for more than 20 years. Fredia Rice, Duncan, Okla., is the secretary at the Cotton County Conservation District and has helped with the contest for almost 20 years.

Herriman credits the OACD Auxiliary, conservation district employees association and state conservation districts for helping make the contest a success.

"I would like to thank all the conservation districts, businesses and associations who sponsored this educational contest," Herriman said. "It takes a tremendous amount of time, effort and money to put on an annual event like this."

"Special thanks goes to the Concho Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency for hosting the contest sites." Herriman said, "Thanks to the Noble Foundation for sponsoring the printed program and the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum for hosting the awards banquet."

Herriman said the Auxiliary of the National Association of Conservation Districts sponsored the Social Hour and Dance this year, hosted by the OACD Auxiliary. Members of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Employees assist with the very vital contest tabulating, which takes place in the few hours between the end of the contest and the beginning of the awards banquet.

Contest cosponsors also include the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma Farm Credit, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Oklahoma Farmers Union, Oklahoma Farm Bureau and numerous other businesses and organizations.



OACD President Scotty Herriman (left) with the Gans, Okla., FFA team.

## Near Breach on Kadashan Bottom Dam No. 2 Shows Need for Maintenance, Repair and Rehab

During April 8-10 over eight inches of rain fell in the Kadashan Bottom Dam No. 2 watershed, more water than the principal spillway could handle in that time period. The continuous flow through the secondary spillway created a headcut that eroded its way back up the spillway into the lake. While the spillway received significant damage, the dam held and did not fail.

The Kadashan Bottom Dam No. 2, approximately four miles west of Coweta and one mile east of the Tulsa County line, was constructed in 1979 by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954. Wagoner County Conservation District serves as the local sponsor. The dam is 36 feet tall, has a 33-acre reservoir and a 1,946-acre drainage area.

As the secondary spillway began to flow, the county emergency management agency and the sheriff's department blocked off roads downstream from the dam. Classified as a low hazard dam, with no homes or businesses immediately downstream, a threat for loss of lives was not indicated if the dam had breached.

"This dam was in good working order but still suffered the effects of this major storm event on top of heavy rains earlier this spring and the massive amount of rain our state experienced in 2007," said Scotty Herriman, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. In 2007 more than 25 other dams suffered similar damage from storms and heavy rains, he said. "Our flood control structures are in desperate need of rehabilitation work, especially in light of this record rainfall," Herriman said.

OCC submitted to the state Legislature an emergency funding package of \$30 million including \$8.8 million for dam rehabilitation, \$7.1 million for operation and maintenance and \$11 million to repair other conservation practices such as terraces, waterways, ponds and riparian areas.

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