

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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Conservation Commission Commended at Quality Oklahoma Team Day 2010

Two Oklahoma Conservation Commission Water Quality projects received Governor's Commendations during Quality Oklahoma Team Day 2010 at the state Capitol on May 6, 2010. One project also received the Celebrating Success Award for the best media campaign promoting Oklahoma's good work out of 75 projects reviewed.

State agencies were asked to submit team projects showing how state personnel demonstrate initiative, collaboration and accomplishments improving efficiency, reducing costs and improving services.

The two projects submitted by OCC's Water Quality Division included one that focused on an effort to empower Water Quality field personnel to answer landowners' questions about the quality of the streams monitored on their land. The other project was a collaborative news media campaign with the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to showcase the fact that there are many good streams across the state due to conservation efforts implemented through the partnership of state and federal agencies with local conservation districts and landowners. Both projects received Governor's Commendations and the media campaign project received the Celebrating Success Award.

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Conservation Commission Water Quality staff with their Governor's Commendations and Celebrating Success Award at the state Capitol on May 6, 2010. From left are Wes Shockley, Andrew DeCandis, Jason Ramming, Stacey Day, Brooks Trammell, Jeanette Lamb and Shanon Phillips.

NRCS Chief Dave White Visits Oklahoma

NRCS Chief Dave White Marks Agency's 75th Anniversary at State Capitol

Dave White, chief of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, spoke at a press conference at the Oklahoma state Capitol on April 19, 2010. The conference, held in the Capitol's Blue Room, commemorated the 75th anniversary of the agency. NRCS came into existence on April 27, 1935, when the bill creating it was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The agency was created in response to the Dust Bowl, a natural resource disaster that ravaged Oklahoma and surrounding states and impacted the entire nation.

"I am honored to be in Oklahoma to kick off the anniversary celebration of the NRCS," said White. "The partnerships that NRCS has with Oklahoma's conservation districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the state's farmers and ranchers continue to set examples for the entire nation."



Lt. Gov. Jari Askins (right) presented Chief Dave White with a Governor's Proclamation that designated April 19, 2010, as Natural Resources Conservation Day in Oklahoma.

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Going Green?

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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

- Memorial Day Holiday, May 31**
- Conservation Commission Meeting,**
June 7, Oklahoma City
- Forestry and Wildlife Camp,**
June 7-12, Beaver’s Bend State Park
- Land Management 101,**
June 8-29, Oklahoma City
- NRCS Oklahoma All Employees Meeting,** June 15-17, Oklahoma City
- Conservation Cost-Share Program Year 10 Ends,** June 30
- Conservation Cost-Share Program Year 12 Allocation Ends,** June 30
- Conservation Commission Meeting,** July 1, Oklahoma City
- Independence Day Holiday, July 5**
- Blue Thumb Training for Volunteers,** July 13-14, Geary
- OK Invasive Plant Council Annual Meeting,** July 14, 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,** Oct. 14-15, Oklahoma City
- Conservation Commission Meeting,** Nov. 1, Oklahoma City
- OACD Area IV Meeting,** Nov. 9, Chickasha

In our thoughts...

Tom Neumeyer, NRCS district conservationist, lost his mother who was also grandmother to Donna Neumeyer, NRCS district conservationist, on April 23.

Tommy Gray, retired NRCS soil conservation technician, passed away May 6.

Leonard Moore, OCC/WQ water quality specialist, lost his father on May 4.

Congratulations!

Karla Stephens, DC, Medford, and her husband, Josh, have a new baby boy, Ethan Edwards Stephens, born April 30.

Jeremy Dennis, NRCS soil scientist, and his wife Sharon, have a new baby boy, Shad Brian Dennis, born May 10.

Quality Oklahoma Team Day, continued from page 1

In the “Media Campaign: Spotlighting Good Streams in Oklahoma” project, OCC and OACD collaborated on a series of news releases, news conferences, interviews and handouts to reverse a negative image of Oklahoma’s waters. The media campaign resulted in support for federal and state funding for water quality efforts, and the partnership between OCC, OACD and NRCS was strengthened. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published four of OCC’s water quality success stories on its website and named Oklahoma as one of the top five states in the nation for documenting reductions in nonpoint source pollution. In addition to the Governor’s Commendation, this project received the Celebrating Success Award for documenting a proactive effort to promote a positive message to change public perception, and involving other agencies.

The “Landowner Outreach: Know Your Stream Handouts” project came about as a result of field experiences of OCC’s Water Quality staff. Frequently the water quality monitoring staff would be taking samples in streams when landowners would approach with questions about the status of the water as indicated by the tests performed on samples. The requested information was stored in databases and not readily available to answer landowners’ questions spontaneously. To resolve this situation, Water Quality staff summarized data from 100 streams monitored in the state and compiled them into informational handouts. Stream monitoring staff now carries this stream-specific information with them into the field to provide to landowners when asked. The project has resulted in the benefits of improved relationships with landowners and landowners’ awareness of their streams. That, in turn, has made the job easier and more rewarding for Water Quality monitoring staff and improving their morale. This project received a Governor’s Commendation as a Quality Oklahoma Team project.

NRCS Chief, continued from page 1

Acknowledging the invaluable service NRCS has provided to Oklahoma since the Dust Bowl, Gov. Brad Henry issued a Governor’s Proclamation designating April 19, 2010, as Natural Resources Conservation Service Day in Oklahoma.

“I want to thank Gov. Henry for this proclamation,” White said. “Oklahoma has a special place in the heart of all of us at NRCS. We’ve done a lot of pioneering work here over the years that’s benefited folks all over the country.”

Chief Dedicates Turkey Creek Dam No. 3

Chief White also attended a dedication ceremony for the Turkey Creek Site 3 Upstream Flood Control Dam in Garfield County, near Enid — the first new dam completed through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a conservation first for Oklahoma.

“We are pleased that Chief White has come to Oklahoma to dedicate the first upstream flood control dam built with federal stimulus funds,” said Trey Lam, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. “Oklahoma has been the leader in building upstream flood control dams, having more than any other state,” Lam said. “We are also excited that stimulus funds are being directed to the repair and rehabilitation of many of our dams. This is critical if we are to keep our flood control infrastructure properly maintained,” he said.

In addition to new dam construction, other ARRA projects being administered by NRCS in Oklahoma include repair and rehabilitation of existing dams and a floodplain easement program.

“NRCS plays a major role in the economic and environmental life of our state,” said Matt Gard, chairman of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. “The agency, working through conservation districts and the Commission, delivered record amounts of federal conservation dollars this past year, providing important economic benefits to rural Oklahoma while having a positive impact on our environment,” Gard said.

NRCS delivered nearly \$100 million in financial and technical assistance in Oklahoma during the past year. A study last year by Oklahoma State University found that each dollar spent on conservation in local areas can multiply as much as two-and-a-half times as it is spent and circulated through the local economy.

Awards & Recognition

Wes Shockley, OCC/WQ water quality specialist, was recognized at the March Conservation Commission meeting for being named Employee of the Quarter.

59th National Land and Range Contest Held Near El Reno

Six hundred and fifty teenage FFA and 4-H members in 173 teams competed in the 59th annual National Land and Range Judging Contest, held May 4-6, 2010. The El Reno Federal Corrections Institution hosted the event on its FCI Farms near El Reno on May 6. Redlands Community College hosted luncheon for participants at its Darlington Farm Agricultural Education near the contest site. Total registration for the event exceeded 860 with coaches, sponsors, officials and group leaders in addition to the contestants. With unregistered volunteers from over 30 sponsoring organizations, total participation exceeded 1,000 people.

The 4-H and FFA teams qualified for the national event by placing among the top five teams at contests held in their home states. The teams match skills in judging the adaptability of land for various purposes including farming, ranching, range management, and homesite construction, using principles that can be valuable in career fields like environmental and agricultural management,



and construction.

The contest is capped off in the evening with an awards banquet in the Great Hall of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum when the day's freshly-tabulated results are announced. Jeanette Nance, liaison to Gov. Brad Henry, welcomed all the participants and Oklahoma Conservation Commission Executive Director Mike Thralls offered the invocation. Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts President Trey Lam presented awards and Kendell Brashears, executive director of the Oklahoma FFA Foundation, emceed the program. National championship trophies were awarded to team and individual winners in each category of competition including land judging, range judging, and homesite evaluation. Each category included FFA and 4-H awards.

In Land Judging, FFA competition, the North Miami, Ind., chapter won in the team category. In the first place individual category there was a tie with two perfect scores, and both Jacob Nall, Roland, Okla., FFA and John Schultz, Hitchcock Tulare FFA, S.D., received first place trophies. In the 4-H competition the Benton, Ind., chapter was the winning team, and Chelsea Stemler, Barbour County, W.Va., was the 4-H individual winner.

In the Range Judging Contest, the Jacksboro, Texas, chapter won the FFA team competition, and Braydan Besselaar of that team won the FFA individual award. The Butte County, S.D., chapter won the 4-H team category, and Jacob Renfro, Young County, Texas, placed first in the 4-H individual category.

In Homesite Evaluation, the Hot Springs, N.M., chapter won the FFA team competition. In the Homesite Evaluation individual category there was another tie with both Michelle Shivers of Hot Springs FFA, N.M., and Kasey Strube, Jackson Heights FFA, Kan., receiving first place awards. The Barbour County, W.Va., chapter won the 4-H team category, and



Members of the OCC staff visited the contest practice site as an Employee Recognition Week activity. Greg Scott, NRCS state soil scientist, explained how the contest works and how contestants identify soil properties. From left are Candace Cunningham, Stacey Day, Jim Leach, Greg Scott, Brooks Trammell, Greg Kloxin and Mike Thralls.

Chris Davis, Scott County, Kan., placed first in the 4-H individual category.

The 2010 National Land and Range Judging Contest Honoree Award was to Kevin Hackett, Northwest District program specialist for the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service. Contest cochairman and co-emcee Russell Pierson, age 98, was recognized with a standing ovation for participating in 58 of the 59 years of the contest.

Sponsors include local conservation districts, the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Auxiliary, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Employees, Oklahoma Farm Credit, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, Sirloin Club of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, American Farmers & Ranchers, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, National Conservation Foundation, Biltmore Hotel Oklahoma and numerous other businesses and organizations.



ScienceFest 2010 at OKC Zoo

More than 5,000 fourth- and fifth-graders visited the Oklahoma City Zoo for the largest Earth Day celebration event in the state — ScienceFest 2010. Jan Kunze, Oklahoma County Conservation District board member, is chairwoman of the ScienceFest steering committee.

Oklahoma County Conservation District and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission participated in ScienceFest 2010 at the OKC Zoo by facilitating a “Soil Critters” activity station. Becky Inmon and Don Bartolina, Oklahoma County Conservation District, and Karla Beatty and Dianne Ireton, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, staffed the station. Using magnifying glasses and small boxes containing compost, they helped the students



On the left side of the table in light blue shirts, from the top, Becky Inmon, Oklahoma County Conservation District, and Karla Beatty and Dianne Ireton, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, help students at the “Soil Critters” activity station.

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

Oklahoma Conservation Conversation
Oklahoma Conservation Commission
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 160
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-4201
405.521.2384, FAX: 405.521.6686
<http://www.conservation.ok.gov>

Mailing Tab Area

dig through compost in search different types of living organisms such as springtails, nematodes, mites, centipedes, beetles, sowbugs, etc. that live in the soil and help decompose organic matter.

ScienceFest, which began in 2003, is designed to promote scientific diversity. Hands-on activity stations use basic geology, biology, physical science, health and environmental sciences to teach the children how science impacts everyday life. The event provides opportunity for the students to be exposed to science in a fun and different setting. The demonstrations and activities are designed to educate children about protecting the environment, conserving natural resources, and using alternative fuels and technologies. Examples of alternative fuel vehicles are also on location for the students to view.

This year’s event was attended by school districts from all across the state and included Oklahoma County schools in Oklahoma City, Midwest City-Del City, Edmond and Bethany.

Principal ScienceFest sponsors are OGE Corporation and the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Commerce.

Commission Members

Area I Matt Gard
Area II Mike Rooker
Area III George Stunkard
Area IV Dan Lowrance
Area V Virginia Kidd

Editing and Layout — Mark Harrison
email: Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov
Proofreading and Reviewing — Charlotte Stieber
and Ben Pollard

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