

# 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 Leads the Region in Nonpoint Water Quality Success Stories

### EPA Announces Most Successful Year in History for Nonpoint Source Water Quality Program

Dov Weitman, chief of the Nonpoint Source Control Branch of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Washington, D.C., announced that 2010 was the most successful year in the history of the Nonpoint Source (NPS) Program. The NPS Program, — Section 319 of the Clean Water Act — provides funding to states to address nonpoint source water pollution issues. Nonpoint source pollution occurs when substances such as fertilizer, animal wastes, oil, and other pollutants run off the land into streams, rivers and lakes during rainfall events.

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) serves as the lead technical agency for the Nonpoint Source Program in Oklahoma. Working in collaboration with the state's local conservation districts and other agencies, OCC's Water Quality Division, led by Shanon Phillips, has been helping landowners install practices on their land to reduce the impact of nonpoint source pollution for over two decades. These practices include, among others, installing fencing to reduce livestock impacts to streams, converting from conventional tillage to no-till to reduce soil erosion, and upgrading septic systems to prevent leaking sewage from polluting nearby waters. Practices are installed on a cost-share basis, with the landowner contributing a certain percentage of the cost, and state and federal funds paying the rest.

*Water Quality Success Stories, continued on page 2*

## “Navigating Through Troubled Waters” Local Conservation Representatives Attend Area Meetings of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Conservation leaders discussed issues relevant to Oklahoma at the 2010 Area Meetings of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts held in five locations across the state during October and November. The meetings are sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) and cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). More than 800 conservation district directors and employees, NRCS employees, students and guests attended the five meetings. OACD President Tray Lam, and OCC Chairman Mike Rooker and Executive Director Mike Thralls participated in all five meetings. OACD President Christina Richard represented the employees' association at Areas I, II and V and Vice President, Trish Kloeckler represented the group at Areas III and IV.

Rogers County Conservation District hosted the Area III Meeting in Claremore on Oct. 27, Beaver County Conservation District hosted the Area I Meeting in Beaver on Nov. 4, and Grady County Conservation District hosted the Area IV Meeting in Chickasha on Nov. 10. Oklahoma County Conservation District hosted the Area II Meeting in Oklahoma City on Nov. 16 and Latimer County Conservation District hosted the Area V Meeting in Wilburton on Nov. 18.

*OACD Area Meetings 2010, continued on page 2*

## In this Issue

“Oklahoma Leads the Region in Nonpoint Water Quality Success Stories”

“Navigating Through Troubled Waters” OACD 2010 Area Meetings”

“Blue Thumb Receives Golden Paddle Award



## 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](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)

**Conservation Commission Meeting,**  
Dec. 6, Oklahoma City  
**Tulsa Farm Show,** Dec. 9-11. Tulsa  
**Christmas Holiday,** Dec. 23-24  
**New Year’s Day Holiday,** Dec. 31

### In our thoughts...

OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls’ brother-in-law, Richard Cinnamon, was killed in a farm accident on Sept. 16.

Billy Wagner, retired NRCS state soil scientist, passed away Oct. 6.

Bobby Cline, NRCS district conservationist, Sulphur FSC, is recovering from a heart attack on Oct. 17.

Paul Sutton, husband of Rachel Sutton, retired Pontotoc County CD secretary, passed away Oct. 18 after battling cancer.

Following his heart attack in September, George Fraley, Rogers County CD director, OACD Area III director and past president, was hospitalized again for complications in October. (See below.)

Former Kiamichi CD board member John Bodine (1974-2003) and father of Jim Bodine, current board chairman, passed away in October.

Debi Carnott, OCC/WQ plan writer/ education coordinator, lost her father, Garland Conry, Nov. 2.

Stephens County CD secretary Alisa Marshall’s husband Randy suffered a heart attack Nov. 1 Her father-in-law, Clifford Marshall, passed away Nov. 11.

Rod Shaw, NRCS district conservationist, Oklahoma City FSC, lost his mother-in-law, Wanda Gibson, on Nov. 8.

Linda Bone, secretary at the Valliant Conservation District, lost her mother, Alice Todd, on Nov. 20 after a long illness.

Brandee Williams, NRCS range management specialist in Palmetto, Fla., is awaiting a lung transplant in a long battle with illness. Originally from Forgan, Okla., Brandee had worked in Taloga and Idabel.

### Congratulations!

Jim Leach, OCC/WQ Cost Share and Finance director, has a seventh grandchild, with the birth of grandson Carter Jo on Nov. 16.

Bullit Farris, OCC/WQ plan writer, and wife Holly have a new son, Jake, born Nov. 12.

### Thank You!

Wilma and I and our entire family are sending our appreciation to our conservation friends for all the kindnesses and concern that continues to be shown us since my second health emergency in October. It is very gratifying to know that so many people are praying for my recovery and for the welfare of our family and are thinking of us as we go through this difficult time. All expressions of concern will be in our hearts forever. I am doing better each day and am trusting to regain full strength before long. —George Fraley

*Water Quality Success Stories, continued from page 1* Education is another component of the nonpoint source program in Oklahoma. OCC’s Blue Thumb Program provides outreach, teaching students and other citizens how to reduce pollution locally and by facilitating volunteers in monitoring their local streams.

In terms of documenting improvement in streams, Oklahoma is leading the way in EPA’s Region 6, which consists of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Louisiana. With nine success stories posted on the EPA website and an additional ten stories pending, Oklahoma is among the best performing states in the nation and helped the region exceed its yearly goal for documented water quality improvement.

Oklahoma Secretary of Environment J.D. Strong applauded the success of Oklahoma’s program. “I am extremely proud of the high quality work done by the Conservation Commission and local conservation districts,” he said. “They continue to lead the nation in implementing the programs that reduce the impact of nonpoint source pollution and improve the quality of waters in our state.”

The EPA defines Nonpoint Source Program success as restoring the quality of NPS-impaired water bodies such that they are no longer considered impaired based on rigorous standards determined and set in law by each state. To date in 2010, the EPA has documented success in 68 water bodies, eclipsing previous annual numbers of approximately 50 each in 2008 and 2009. Currently, the total number of success stories published on the EPA website is 200. Once the newest stories are posted later this year, Oklahoma will account for nearly 10 percent of the successes in the nation. Go to <http://www.epa.gov/nps/success> to see what Oklahoma and other state nonpoint source management programs have achieved.

*OACD Area Meetings 2010, continued from page 1*

### Navigating Through Troubled Waters

The theme for the meetings, “Navigating Through Troubled Waters,” reflected the challenges faced by natural resource conservation entities to continue to provide essential local services despite severe budget cuts and a trend to reduce the numbers of both state and local agencies and the personnel who staff them. The number of natural resource conservation programs has continued to increase in recent years, yet the number of personnel to service the programs has declined. State, federal and local conservation leaders provided insight into future possibilities of consolidation of services and encouraged local directors and workers to continue to provide high quality service to local constituents.

### Spotlight on Conservation Program Delivery

“Spotlight on Conservation Program Delivery” featured outstanding success stories about local conservation districts in each area of the state.

At the Area I Meeting Blaine County Conservation District received a Conservation Commendation for “outstanding support of the North Canadian River Water Quality Project and the Carbon Pilot Program.” Cimarron County Conservation District was commended for successfully adapting the state Locally-Led Conservation Cost-Share Program to address unique local natural resource needs. NRCS commended the Texas County Conservation District and NRCS Field Service Center for assisting farmers and ranchers to implement Farm Bill programs.

At the Area II Meeting Arbutle Conservation District received a Conservation Commendation for “successfully obligating more Locally-Led Cost-Share Program funds than any other district and for extremely effective implementation despite limited personnel.” Logan County Conservation District was commended for “support of the Oklahoma Carbon Program and no-till agriculture.” NRCS commended the Pawnee County Conservation District and NRCS Field Service Center for assisting farmers and ranchers with Farm Bill programs.

At the Area III Meeting, Adair County Conservation District was commended for “outstanding delivery of conservation programs to protect water quality in the Illinois River Watershed.” Rogers County Conservation District was commended for leadership and commitment to promoting conservation education in the conservation district and

*OACD Area Meetings 2010, continued on page 3*

### Awards & Recognition

**Judith Wilkins**, OCC/WQ environmental coordinator, was recognized at the October 2010 Commission meeting for 10 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

**Mike Kastl**, OCC/AML director, was recognized at the November 2010 Commission meeting for receiving the Stan Barnard Award from the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs during the National AML Conference in September.

other areas of the state. NRCS commended the Muskogee NRCS Field Service Center for its outreach programs including a recent Women in Agriculture and Small Business Conference cosponsored by the Muskogee County Conservation District.

At Area IV Upper Washita Conservation District received a commendation for “being a leader among conservation districts with the most extensive watershed program in the state and for preemptively addressing challenges not yet faced by other conservation districts.” Deer Creek Conservation District was commended for “outstanding delivery of conservation programs to protect water quality and for exceptional service to the constituents of the district and the State of Oklahoma through support of Priority Watershed, Blue Thumb and Conservation Education Programs.” NRCS commended the Jackson County Conservation District and NRCS Field Service Center for help with Farm Bill programs.

At Area V Kiamichi Conservation District received a commendation for “For creativity in effectively addressing watershed operation and maintenance and being the first and most consistent in the use of inmate labor in those efforts.” Hughes County Conservation District was commended for “outstanding delivery of conservation programs to protect water quality and leadership in environmental pollution awareness, conservation education, and outstanding participation with the Blue Thumb program.” NRCS commended the LeFlore County Conservation District and Poteau NRCS Field Service Center for assistance with Farm Bill programs.

### Scholarships, Contests and Grants

Additionally, Dianne Jeans of Tonkawa, president of both the OACD Auxiliary and the NACD South Central Region Auxiliary, discussed scholarships and contests offered by the Auxiliaries including a conservation photo contest in the south central region consisting of Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas that is open only to youth. Cheryl Cheadle, OCC Blue Thumb Program state coordinator, announced information about grants available to conservation districts for water quality education activities.

### OACD Conservation Awards

Area winners of the OACD Conservation Awards were recognized at each meeting who will be considered among entries from the other areas of the state in the categories of Outstanding Conservation District, sponsored by Chesapeake Energy; Outstanding District Director, sponsored by the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation; and Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator, sponsored by the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. The state winner will be recognized during Conservation Day at the Capitol on March 22, 2011, in Oklahoma City.

The Area I honorees were Garfield County Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; Jimmy Purvine, Dewey County Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and Jim Whittrock, Kingfisher County Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator.

The Area II honorees were Kay County Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; Walt Freese, Noble County Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and Steve Cagle, Oklahoma County Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator.

The Area III honorees were Craig County Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; John Clayboard Seward Jr., Wagoner County Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and Mark and Sue Rendel, Ottawa County Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator.

The Area IV honorees were Washita County Conservation

District, Outstanding Conservation District; Glenn Dickey, Deer Creek Conservation District, Outstanding District Director; and Loren Liebscher, Deer Creek Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator.

The Area V honorees were Little River Conservation District, Outstanding Conservation District; and Randy Clifton, Kiamichi Conservation District, Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator.

### Youth Contests

The OACD Area Meetings include poster, essay and speech contests for youth cosponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE). Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) sponsors awards for the OACD/OACDE Youth Contests. First place winners in the essay and poster contests, as well as first and second place winners in the speech contest, are eligible to compete at the state level during OACD’s Annual State Meeting to be held Feb. 27 – March 1, 2011, in Midwest City.



Monty Ramming, Fort Cobb Project coordinator (right), presented a Conservation Commendation to Blaine County CD at the Area I Meeting.

Rogers County CD received a Conservation Commendation at the Area III Meeting for “for leadership and commitment to promoting conservation education in the conservation district and other areas of the state.”



OACD President Trey Lam and Vice President Kim Farber presented the OACD Area II Outstanding District Award to Kay County CD. Winners from each Area will be consider for honoring as state winner at the OACD State Meeting.

At the Area IV Meeting Greg Kloxin, OCC/WQ assistant director, presented a Conservation Commendation to Deer Creek CD for “outstanding delivery of conservation programs to protect water quality and for exceptional service to the constituents of the district and the State of Oklahoma through support of Priority Watershed, Blue Thumb and Conservation Education Programs.”



Mike Rooker, OCC chairman, and Cheryl Cheadle, OCC/WQ Blue Thumb coordinator, commended Hughes County CD at Area V for “outstanding delivery of conservation programs to protect water quality and leadership in environmental pollution awareness, conservation education, and outstanding participation with the Blue Thumb program.”



Dianne Jeans, OACD Auxiliary president and South Central Regional Auxiliary president (left), discussed scholarships and contests offered by the Auxiliary.



Christina Richard, OACDE president (right), represented OACDE at Areas I, II and V in panel discussions and youth awards presentations. Trish Kloeckler, OACDE vice president, represented the group at Areas III and IV.

# Blue Thumb Receives Golden Paddle Award

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Blue Thumb Program received the Golden Paddle Award from the Illinois River Watershed Partnership. IWRP presented the award to the Blue Thumb water education program on Nov. 9 at its annual Stakeholders Meeting in Springdale, Ark.

Delia Haak, executive director of the IRWP, explained that six awards are given annually to individuals or entities that exemplify "good stewardship in the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the water quality and wildlife habitat in the Illinois River watershed in Arkansas and Oklahoma." The Blue Thumb Program received the conservation category Golden Paddle. Currently, Blue Thumb volunteers monitor eight stream sites in the Oklahoma portion of the watershed.



(From left) Delia Haak, executive director of the Illinois River Watershed Partnership, presented Cheryl Cheadle and Jean Lemmon of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Blue Thumb water pollution education program with the 2010 "Golden Paddle Award" for conservation.

## 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

Blue Thumb coordinator Cheryl Cheadle said "We have very dedicated volunteers at work in the Illinois River watershed. Without these volunteers, and Jean Lemmon, who takes a leadership in this part of the state for Blue Thumb, we could not have a strong monitoring and education effort." Cheadle said that recent work in the watershed included:

- Stream education events for Northeastern State University education students and Tahlequah Alternative High School students.
- Macroinvertebrate and fish collections over the summer.
- Educational activities during the recent Illinois RiverFest.

### Mailing Tab Area

#### Commission Members

- Area I Matt Gard
- Area II Mike Rooker
- Area III George Stunkard
- Area IV Dan Lowrance
- Area V Jim Grego

Editing and Layout — Mark Harrison  
email: [Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov](mailto:Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov)  
Proofreading and Reviewing — Charlotte Stieber and Ben Pollard

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