

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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Mountain View and Kiowa County Conservation Districts Consolidate History Made as Conservation Districts combine

For the first time since 1995, two of Oklahoma's conservation districts have voted to consolidate into one district. At its November 2009 meeting, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission reviewed a consolidation plan submitted by the Mountain View and Kiowa County Conservation District boards. The Commission issued an administrative order approving the consolidation plan effective Dec. 1, 2009. The new district will retain the name Kiowa County Conservation District. The action will reduce the number of conservation districts in Oklahoma that receive state funding from 88 to 87.*

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"The 'Best' Hard Time"

2009 Area Meetings of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts,
Cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

"The 'Best' Hard Time," the theme for the OACD 2009 Area Meetings for conservation district directors and employees, reflected the idea that in the midst of the hard times of a declining state budget there have been significant conservation accomplishments in the past year. The state legislature authorized a \$25 million bond in the 2009 legislative session to provide districts with funds to repair the conservation infrastructure damaged by recent natural disasters. In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) federal stimulus initiative provided over 16 million dollars of new conservation funding to OCC and conservation districts for needed work including the rehabilitation and repair of aging upstream flood control dams. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service reported it had delivered in the past year a record number of federal conservation dollars in the state, over 81 million dollars, through programs it administers. These positive developments were tempered by the challenges faced by declining state funds to support the day-to-day operations of districts. Conservationists were encouraged to maximize all state and federal funds to continue the indispensable work of conserving Oklahoma's vital resources.



Spotlight on Conservation Districts

"Spotlight on Conservation Districts" featured local success stories at each meeting. At some meetings, special recognition was given for outstanding efforts.

Area I, Taloga, Oct. 29.

Dewey County Conservation District, represented by Jimmy Emmons, chairman; Coleta Bratten, secretary; and NRCS district conservationist Paul Clark, along with Junior Salisbury, county commissioner, presented photos and discussed the wildfire that swept across Dewey County on March 5, 2009, forcing the evacuation of Taloga. Blaine County CD director Brandon Webb introduced Tina Rogers, a local teacher, who described the development of a Blue Thumb volunteer water quality monitoring team with a group of her students. Dale Milacek, Garfield County CD chairman, and Jason Skaggs, district manager, provided suggestions for communicating with legislators about district activities.

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Responsible care for Oklahoma's natural resources.

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To conserve, protect and restore Oklahoma's natural resources, working in collaboration with he 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,
Jan. 4, Oklahoma City

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Jan. 18

NACD 2010 Annual Meeting,
Jan. 31 - Feb. 3, Orlando, Fla.

Conservation Commission Meeting,
Feb. 4, Oklahoma City

President's Day, Feb. 15

OACD 2010 Annual Meeting,
Feb. 21-23, Oklahoma City

Conservation Commission Meeting,
March 8, Oklahoma City

Conservation Day at the Capitol,
March 8, Oklahoma City

GIS Day at the Capitol, March 10,
Oklahoma City

In our thoughts...

Clyde Pratt, retired SCS and North Caddo CD manager, passed away on Oct. 31.

Madge Sprangel, Wagoner County CD/SCS secretary for 24 years, passed away Nov. 27 at age 93.

Congratulations!

Iris Imler, Cimarron County CD programs coordinator, has a new granddaughter, Harlea Ann Miller, born Sept. 30.

George Townsley, NRCS ag. economist, and wife Jody, NRCS fiscal specialist, have a new granddaughter, Elizabeth Jaymes Townsley, born Oct. 5.

Jacob Worley, NRCS soil conservationist, Eufaula, and Lisel Worley, soil conservationist, Tahlequah, have a new grandson, Hollister Lane, born Oct. 6.

Kathie Scheihing, Central North Canadian River CD secretary, and husband Chad have a new daughter, Caleigh Lou, born Oct. 13.

Jon Lillie, NRCS construction inspector, and wife Luann have a fifth grandson, Jax Jacob Wilkerson, born Oct. 13.

Kim Tweed, OCC executive secretary, and husband Randy have a new grandson, Kaden Jace Fields, born to daughter Ashleigh and her husband Josh Fields on Oct. 17.

Steven Suanny, Washita County CD equipment manager, and wife Cody have a new son, Coy Wyatt Suanny, born Oct. 20.

Brandon Reavis, NRCS soil conservationist, Pawhuska, and wife Sarah have a new son, Grant Andrew Reavis, born Oct. 24.

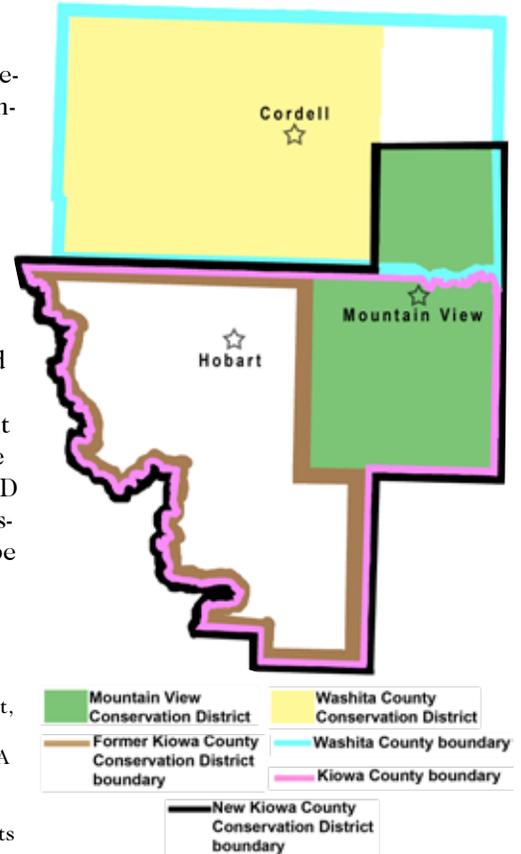
Clay Pope, OACD executive director, and wife Sarah, OK Carbon Initiative director, have a new daughter, Madeleine Marie Pope, born Oct. 29.

Jerrold Price, NRCS technician, Anadarko, and wife Noelle have a new daughter, Madilyn Kate Price, Nov. 27.

Kiowa County CD, continued from page 1

The new district boundaries will include all of Kiowa County and the portion of Washita County that was previously included in Mountain View Conservation District. The district office will remain at the Kiowa County CD office at 802 W. 11 in Hobart. Three current directors from Kiowa County CD will serve on the new district board – Manuel Quintero, Ben Meindert, and Justin Krieger – along with two from the Mountain View CD board – Jim Leitner and Robert Fobes. Two Kiowa County CD employees, a district manager and secretary, along with the watershed aide from Mountain View CD will all be retained. All property and assets from both previous districts will be transferred to the new district as well as upstream flood control structure easements and responsibilities.

*Since December 2007 there also exists the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma Conservation District, the 29th tribal conservation district in the nation organized in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The tribal conservation district is a member of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts but receives no state funding from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.



Blue Thumb Wins “Keep Oklahoma Beautiful” Award

The Oklahoma Blue Thumb Water Pollution Education Program received the Keep Oklahoma Beautiful’s “Environmental Excellence” award in the State/Tribal Government category on Nov. 17. Keep Oklahoma Beautiful is a statewide nonprofit organization that supports efforts to improve the aesthetic, environmental and sustainable quality of life in Oklahoma. The organization has been recognizing exceptional environmental efforts for 19 years.

Blue Thumb Coordinator Cheryl Cheadle said that Blue Thumb is an educational program that uses volunteers to monitor streams and teach the public about pollution prevention. “It is an awesome thing to have a top notch organization like KOB recognize our efforts,” Cheadle said, adding “about 500 active volunteers are at work within the Blue Thumb program, making it much easier to accomplish big things.” The year 2009 saw the Blue Thumb Program add their 100th stream site to their monitoring list.



Blue Thumb staff (from left) Bill DeShazo, Kim Shaw, Cheryl Cheadle and Jean Lemmon.

Awards & Recognition

Jean Lemmon, OCC/WQ Blue Thumb Program quality assurance officer, was recognized as Employee of the Quarter at the October Commission meeting.

Caney Valley Conservation District received a Governor’s Commendation from Gov. Brad Henry and a Conservation Commendation from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission at the October Commission meeting having the first entire watershed project in the nation to complete rehabilitation.

Steve Coffman, OCC/FMHR director, was recognized at the November Commission meeting for 25 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

Area Meetings, continued from page 1 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), represented by USFWS employee Luke Bill, received a Conservation Commendation from OCC and OACD “For supporting conservation districts and utilizing the conservation district delivery system to promote prescribed burning in Oklahoma to enhance and restore native ecosystems and for commitment to the conservation of natural resources in the State of Oklahoma.” USFWS and OCC recently agreed to continue and expand an agreement to help support prescribed burn associations in northwest Oklahoma.

Area IV, Lawton, Nov. 5

Gloria Stearns, South Caddo Conservation District associate director, and Danielle Whaley, NRCS district conservationist, explained how the three conservation districts in Caddo County – North Caddo, South Caddo and West Caddo CDs—worked together to inform county commissioners and gain support for the important work they do for the county. Carol Stayer, a volunteer for the Comanche County CD, talked about the district’s Blue Thumb volunteer water quality monitoring program. Kirk Schreiner, NRCS state co-coordinator for the Earth Team volunteer program, discussed how volunteers can help fill needed gaps in conservation activities.

Eddie Brown, Washita County CD, told how the South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA) used Rural Economic Action Plan grants to help conservation districts acquire equipment to use for operation and maintenance of flood control dams. Following that, SWODA, represented by employee Jana Harris, received a Conservation Commendation from OCC and OACD.

Area III, Bartlesville, Nov. 10

Adair County CD was featured for the first small watershed flood control dam in the nation to be rehabilitated using federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Sallisaw Dam No. 18M. Tulsa County CD was featured for its use of the state-funded Conservation Cost-Share Program to help local land users install practices that help conserve natural resources. Caney Valley CD was recognized for having the first entire flood control project in the nation, the Double Creek Watershed Project, to have rehabilitation of all dams completed.

Additionally, John Beasley, a Tulsa County CD board member and Tulsa Memorial High School teacher, described the Blue Thumb volunteer water quality monitoring team of high school students he leads. Kirk Schreiner again spoke about districts using Earth Team volunteers. Finally, Dale Tullis, Craig County CD board member, told how his district had acquired equipment to help local landowners conserve their natural resources.

Steve Clark, resource specialist at the NRCS Claremore Technical Service Office, received a Conservation Commendation from OCC for assisting OCC water quality staff in obtaining Level II Conservation Plan Writing certification. OCC and OACD jointly commended USFWS, represented by employee Jontie Aldrich, for working with conservation districts to promote re-establishment of native grasses in northeast Oklahoma.

Area II, Shawnee, Nov. 17

Jeff Kuhn, Payne County CD manager, explained how the district worked with the Tallgrass Resource Conservation and Development Council to obtain equipment to help with operation and maintenance on flood control structures. Trey Lam, Garvin CD chairman, described challenges and accomplishments of his district in working with oil and gas drilling activities on flood control dam locations.

Colleen Smith, a teacher at Southeast High School in Oklahoma City described the Blue Thumb volunteer water quality monitoring team of students she leads. Susan Henning, Kay County CD manager, and Dianne Jeans, an Earth Team volunteer at the district, presented a puppet show about how volunteers can help fill needed gaps in conservation activities.

Area V, Idabel, Nov. 19

Frank Acker, Little River CD manager, and Jim Grego, Latimer County CD chairman, each discussed how they seek out and combine local resources to expand conservation activities in their respective areas. Kirk Schreiner again spoke about districts using Earth Team volunteers. Ralph Mitchell, Little River CD chairman, introduced Dennis Wilson, a Blue Thumb Program volunteer team leader, who explained the water quality monitoring activities of his team made up of local FFA club members.

Youth and Director Service Awards

The OACD Area Meetings include contests cosponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE) for youth in categories of speeches, essays and posters. Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) sponsors the OACD/OACDE Awards. 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. 21-23, 2010, in Midwest City. Awards were presented at each meeting to conservation district directors for five, 10 and 15 years of service on their local boards. Service awards for more than 15 years of service will be presented at the OACD Annual State Meeting.

At the Area V Meeting in Idabel, at the Mary H. Herron Conference Center and Red River Museum, Ben Pollard won the unofficial “Name the Dinosaur” contest and for the day the dinosaur skeleton was named “Ben.” Below, from left are, Little River CD (host district) staff John David Burnett, Karen Beck and Frank Acker with OCC Assistant Director Ben Pollard (in museum T-shirt) and Executive Director Mike Thralls.



Henry Bellmon —Farmer, Statesman, Conservationist Recollections from Mike Thralls, OCC Executive Director

Henry Louis Bellmon, former Oklahoma Governor and U.S. Senator, passed away Sept. 29, 2009, in Enid at the age of 88 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. Bellmon served one term in the Oklahoma House of Representatives, 1946-1948, then one term as Governor, 1963-1967. He served two terms in the U.S. Senate, 1969-1981, then served a second term as Governor, 1987-1991.

OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls grew up in Billings as a neighbor of Gov. Bellmon and has memories of the farmer and statesman dating back to Mike's childhood. He added the following thoughts to the other eulogies and praises for Gov. Bellmon.

"In addition to the significant accomplishments you have read in recent days, you should know Governor Bellmon was also a conservationist. When he returned from World War II one of the first purchases he made was a surplus Caterpillar dozer that he used to build conservation terraces, waterways and ponds both as a contractor and on the family farm. During his tenure as Governor, he signed the bill designating Port Silt Loam as the state soil. He also designated the Commission as the lead agency for section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

"A longtime supporter of the USDA-NRCS Small Watershed Program, and after reaching the milestone age of 80, he wanted to see an additional dam built in the Upper Red Rock Watershed to help prevent flooding with resulting closing of Interstate Highway 35 in Noble County. So he worked with Congressman Frank Lucas to obtain the funds for construction of Site 52 Upper Red Rock Creek and attended the groundbreaking in October 2004.

"This last year I had the opportunity to look at a portion of his land he was offering for lease. As we drove over a half section of grass fenced for rotational grazing and, with Henry at the wheel, he talked about the new stand of native grass that he wanted to make sure would not be overgrazed, the pecan orchard that needed continuing care, and how to manage the Bermuda grass along Red Rock Creek by haying rather than grazing.

I agree with Governor Brad Henry's statement that Henry Bellmon was more about doing than talking. He is certainly an example of character, ability and perseverance worthy of emulation. We will honor his memory by conducting ourselves with the same level of personal integrity and dedication to service."

Mailing Tab Area

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Project Learning Tree
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