

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

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Outstanding Conservation District Hosts Conservation Commission

East Woods County Conservation District hosted the September 2007 meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission in Alva on Sept. 5. EWCCD was named Outstanding Conservation District for 2007 in the OACD Conservation Awards sponsored by Chesapeake Energy and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. At the meeting Chesapeake and OACD presented the district with a new sign commemorating the district's achievement.

During Conservation Day at the Capitol on March 19 the district had been honored for carrying out a wide variety of activities to promote and support conservation of natural resources.

EWCCD activities included education opportunities for students and sponsoring trees for Washington School and bird feeders for Longfellow School. Both schools are in Alva. The district makes conservation-related implements available to farmers and cosponsors the Northwest Oklahoma Land Judging Contest for area 4-H and FFA members.

Tracie Leeper, named as Outstanding Educator for Congressional District III in the Chesapeake/OACD Conservation Educator Awards, also attended the September Commission meeting. Leeper was nominated by EWCCD and also honored at the Capitol. Leeper is the principal of Washington Early Childhood Center in Alva, which serves Pre-K through second grade. The faculty and staff at the center begin the pupils' education with lessons about respecting themselves and their health and extending that to respecting the natural world around them. Several projects have been implemented to encourage students to spend more time outdoors and to value and conserve natural resources.

After the meeting, state Rep. Jeff Hickman paid a visit to congratulate the district on its achievement. During the Conservation Day at the Capitol event, Rep. Hickman had presented EWCCD with a formal Legislative Citation.

Sugar Creek L-44: Dam Danger Averted

As the remainder of Tropical Depression Erin swept across Oklahoma on the weekend of Aug. 18-19, rainfall amounts greatly exceeding that of a 100-year frequency storm fell in parts of Caddo County. Preliminary results of the rainfall in the drainage area above Sugar Creek Dam L-44 indicate that over eight inches of rain fell in less than 12 hours. The Caddo County flood control dam is one of 51 in the Sugar Creek Watershed Project.

The dam was designed as part of a series of dams that collect water during heavy rainstorms and slowly release it over a period of days to control flooding downstream from dams and from downstream rivers such as the Washita. They are usually designed for 100-year frequency storms. The Sugar Creek L-44 Dam was designed to store and safely pass flood waters from a six-and-a-half inch rain within a 24-hour period.

Water under most conditions flows out of the structure through a pipe in the dam. When the pipe



Above, from left, are Area II Commissioner Mike Rooker, EWCCD Programs Coordinator Reva Maddox, Area IV Commissioner Dan Lowrance, Area I Commissioner Matt Gard, Area V Commissioner Virginia Kidd, EWCCD Directors Jay Leeper, David Lyon, Tom McDowell, and Clint Olson, and Area III Commissioner George Stunkard.

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Celebrating the Oklahoma Statehood Centennial and the 70th anniversary of the Conservation District Enabling Act!



www.conservation.ok.gov

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.

Conservation Calendar

For more events and information, click on “Calendar” at www.conservation.ok.gov

Monthly Conservation Commission Meeting

Oct. 1, Agriculture Building Board Room, Oklahoma City

National Association of AML Programs Annual Conference, Oct. 7-10, Bloomington, Ind.

Blue Thumb Volunteer Training

Oct. 11-12, Norman

Greater Oklahoma Farm Show

Oct. 12-13, Grady County Fairgrounds, Chickasha

GROW: Oklahoma Biofuels Conference, Oct. 16-17, Sheraton Downtown, Oklahoma City

Governor’s Water Conference

Oct. 23-25, Cox Convention Center, Oklahoma City

AML Inspectors Workshop

Oct. 23-25, Embassy Suites, Tulsa

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Convention

Nov. 9-10, Renaissance Hotel, Oklahoma City.

Veterans’ Day Holiday

Nov. 12

Centennial Holiday

Nov. 16

OACD Area Meetings

Area I, Oct. 31,

Chishom Trail Conference Center, Enid

Area III, Nov. 1,

Northeast Technology Center, Pryor

Area IV, Nov. 6, Simmons Center, Duncan

Area II, Nov. 7, Shawnee Expo Center, Shawnee

Area V, Nov. 16, Pittsburg County Expo, McAlester

In Our Thoughts

Lonnie Stone, Kay County CD secretary, lost her grandmother Aug. 23. She would have been 88 on Aug. 26.

Sherman B. Branom, a Coal County CD 48-year board member, passed away Sept. 8 at the age of 102.

Wendell Black, Hughes County CD director, passed away Sept. 13 after a long battle with cancer.

Johnny Pelley, OCC/CP watershed technician, lost his mother.

Jeremy Burrows, Grady County CD engineering aide, is recovering from first- and second-degree burns from an on-the-job accident.

Congratulations!

Jerry and Darlene Pigg have a new granddaughter, Whitley Beth Pigg, born Aug. 31. Jerry is district manager and Darlene is secretary of the Johnston County CD.

Please inform **Mark Harrison** at OCC of district directors or employees who have been ill, passed away or had babies. **Please include dates!!!!!!!**

Attorney General Holding Open Meetings/Records Seminars Across State

Attorney General Drew Edmondson, the Oklahoma Press Association, Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation and Freedom of Information Oklahoma (FOI) are currently holding seminars across the state on the Open Meetings and Open Records Acts.

The seminars are designed to answer questions concerning the state’s open meeting and records laws and inform elected or appointed officials about their responsibility under the acts. Edmondson will also discuss requirements on access to public records and the conduct of public meetings.

“We have found in the past that government and school officials want to comply with the law, but there is some uncertainty about how to do that,” Edmondson said. “These seminars provide a thorough review of the law and allow participants to ask questions about its practical application.”

Assistant Attorney General Gay Tudor, one of the state’s foremost authorities on the openness laws, will assist Edmondson in presenting the seminars and answering questions.

The seminars are free of charge and open to the public. No reservations are required.

Each session will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. at the following locations:

Oct. 9, Pioneer Technology Center, Ponca City.

Oct. 25, Miami Civic Center, Miami.

Oct. 30, Frisco Conference Center, Clinton.

Nov. 6, Pontotoc Technology Center, Ada.

Nov. 13, Metro Tech, Oklahoma City.

Dec. 6, Southeast Expo Center, McAlester.

This is the fifth time Edmondson’s office has traveled the state in an effort to educate Oklahomans about these laws. Previous seminars were held in 1998, 2001, 2003 and 2005.

The Open Meetings and Open Records Acts are designed to bring government closer to the people and to allow citizens maximum access and input to the actions of public bodies.

“Government operates best when it is done in the full purview of the people it represents,” Edmondson said. “We are pleased to again work with the Oklahoma Press Association, the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation and FOI Oklahoma to promote government the way we think it should be – open and accountable.”

AML Inspectors Workshop

Each year OCC’s Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program staff conducts a workshop for project inspectors. This year the workshop is scheduled for Oct. 23 - 25 at the Embassy Suites in Tulsa.

Staff from the Office of Surface Mining’s Tulsa Field Office will attend part of the workshop to address the 30th anniversary of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act and the reauthorization of the AML Program.

Other topics that will be covered are: Updates on Reclamation Projects; Revisions in the State Purchasing Rules; Inspector Responsibilities - Project Documentation and Reporting; AML Field Information Handbook Updates; and reports on the Office of Surface Mining’s National Technical Training Courses and the 2007 National AML Conference. A tour of active, completed, and proposed projects will be conducted in Rogers and Wagoner Counties.

Please Note:

Conservation Commission Monthly Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the monthly meetings of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, once approved, are available on-line at <http://www.conservation.ok.gov>. Click on “Commission Meeting Schedule, Agendas & Minutes” in the left menu. Anyone who would like to have a printed copy may contact Mark Harrison in the OCC office.

spillway can not handle all the water flow, it flows through the earthen auxiliary spillway, as was the case with this dam. Even the earthen spillway could not handle all the water and that caused the erosion in the spillway and to the dam.

On Sunday, Aug. 19, at approximately 10:00 a.m., Caddo County Sheriff Gene Cain contacted Roy Green, South Caddo Conservation District manager, and informed him the dam was at flood stage and was suffering critical erosion on its face. Green asked Cain to begin warning area residents of the potential hazard of a breach and to encourage people to evacuate. That was the beginning of the implementation of the emergency action plan designed for each of the 2,105 upstream flood control structures in the state. The emergency action plan was implemented by the South Caddo CD and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to ensure the safety of those downstream if the dam were to fail, and staff from those two agencies immediately went to the site to monitor conditions. Larry McDuffey, Caddo County Emergency Management director, enacted the county's emergency action plan and began evacuating residents.

Throughout the week the dam was continually monitored by district staff, NRCS engineers and Oklahoma Conservation Commission watershed technicians. Dale Vineyard, an area contractor, immediately redirected earth moving equipment to dig a ditch in the earthen spillway to help the lake drain faster and reduce pressure on the dam. He also built a road to the dam to allow OCC to bring in two large water pumps to speed draining the lake. With financial assistance from the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program, concrete barriers were hauled in and placed around a residence to protect it should the dam have failed.

"A lot of people pitched in to help avoid a high risk situation," said Ron Walzer. Walzer sits on the South Caddo CD board of directors and was on site representing the district as well as providing local advice and counsel. "Benny Bowling, our county commissioner, provided equipment and material and rebuilt the road needed to flood-proof the house that could have experienced five feet of flood water if the dam had breached," Walzer said. "Dale Lasley, the county flood plain manager, provided the forms needed for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program," he said. "And landowners like David Nault and Stephen Quoetone helped with communications, equipment and easements. And we sure appreciate state Rep. Phil Richardson for making a site visit to assess the situation," Walzer added.



Men standing on the dam provide perspective to the size of the eroded area. (Robert Toole, OCC)



In the photo above the arrows indicate 1. the washed out auxiliary spillway, 2. the eroded gouge in the face of the dam, and 3. the washed out county road. (Mark Harrison, OCC)

Recent Flooding Again Shows Need for Upstream Flood Control

Over 300 new dams have been planned statewide but not funded

Recent flooding in Oklahoma has once again shown the need for the upstream flood control structures in our state, said Scotty Herriman, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. Oklahoma is home to more flood control dams than any other state in the nation but many planned dams have remained on the drawing board due to the lack of federal funding.

"Once again we see the need for the upstream flood control program in Oklahoma," Herriman said. "Earlier this spring and summer we saw how our existing flood control dams help reduce the effects of flooding where they're located. Now we are not only seeing this benefit again but we are also witnessing what happens when you have massive rains in areas were dams were proposed to be built but where funding was never available. Clearly we have more work to do."

According to Herriman, over 300 dams are currently on the books statewide awaiting funding for construction. This in addition to a study in the 1980s that outlined a series of 17 dams to be built west and south of Kingfisher. All of the proposed dams have suffered from the effects of the reduction in federal funding for new construction and planning of upstream flood control projects, Herriman said.

"For the last three years the administration in Washington, D.C., has proposed eliminating funding for the upstream flood control program," Herriman said. "Starting in 2004 the Bush Administration proposed eliminating funding for this program, effectively killing any chance of building any of these important structures. Thankfully, Congress hasn't agreed with them, but it has been an uphill battle."

While the 17 dams proposed west of Kingfisher wouldn't have prevented the flooding from the massive storm that swept across Oklahoma on Aug. 18, Herriman said, it would have reduced the effects of the deluge, possibly saving hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Another stream that flows into Kingfisher, Uncle John Creek, has 12 flood control dams that each year provide over \$580,000 in savings from flooding that doesn't occur," Herriman said. "Uncle John Creek did flood this weekend, but it caused



Flood-damaged cropland in Kingfisher County. (Michael Sheik, NRCS)

Sugar Creek, continued from page 3

The dam is located three miles north of Anadarko on Highway 81 and three and a half miles west. The dam discharges into Lost Creek which flows approximately one mile before entering the Washita River four miles west of Anadarko. The dam was constructed in 1971 as a low hazard dam to protect rural agricultural land from flooding. It was reclassified as a high hazard dam in 2005 due to the construction of homes downstream that would be affected if the dam were to breach.

South Caddo CD is working with NRCS to form plans for repairs to the dam.

Recent Flooding, continued from page 3

nowhere near the damage that Kingfisher Creek, a creek with no flood control dams, did. Nothing could stop all flooding from the Aug. 8 rain, but a series of structures west and south of Kingfisher would greatly reduce and possibly eliminate the 'normal' flooding that periodically affects Kingfisher. These dams should be planned and the other 300-plus dams that are already on the drawing board for other watersheds in our state need to be built if we are to adequately protect the public."

In addition to these new dams, Herriman said that over 1,000 existing Oklahoma flood control dams will be in need of rehabilitation in our state during the next 10 years because of age and development issues. In an effort to address this issue, the 2007 Oklahoma Legislature and Gov. Henry approved a record \$6.5 million for rehabilitation of aging existing dams, which was then matched with federal funding to generate \$19.5 million.

According to Clay Pope, OACD executive director, this funding represented a "shot in the arm" for flood dam repair, but much more needs to be done.

"We are very appreciative of the support we received from the state of Oklahoma for flood control rehabilitation this spring," Pope said. "But when it costs on average \$1 million to fix a dam and we have over 1,000 dams that need to be fixed in the next 10 years, it's clear we are just getting started."

According to Pope, an example of these additional needs is one dam downstream from Kingfisher that during the last storm event reduced additional flooding in the town of Guthrie. This dam, which must be rehabilitated soon, will cost over \$10 million to fix.

"Clearly the need for new construction of dams in areas like those around Kingfisher and the need to repair our existing dams before one breaks and kills someone shows that the upstream flood control program needs to become a priority for the government at all levels," Pope said.

Mailing Tab Area

WORKSHOPS & TRUNKS

Project WET Workshops

Karla Beatty, (405) 521-2384



Project Learning Tree Workshops or Trunks

Christina Stallings, (405) 521-3864



Project WILD Workshops or Trunks

Lisa Anderson, (405) 521-6704



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