

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 57, Issue No. 9 September 2011

EPA Adds Nearly \$1 Million to Water Quality Projects

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission announced at its September Commission meeting that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is providing additional funding to Oklahoma for water quality projects. The funds originate from the federal Clean Water Act, Section 319, and come through the state Office of the Secretary of Environment to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Water Quality Division.

Unused funds for projects in other states in EPA Region 6 are being redirected to two ongoing projects in Oklahoma. EPA redirected them to Oklahoma because of the Conservation Commission's Water Quality Division's proven track record for putting funds to work in protecting and improving water quality, according to Mike Thralls, Conservation Commission executive director.

The funding will supplement ongoing projects working with agricultural producers and other landowners to establish best management practices to reduce nonpoint source water pollution. The Oklahoma Conservation Commission, in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, works through local conservation districts in voluntary, locally-led efforts. *EPA Adds Funds, continued on page 2*



Illinois River

Conservation Cost-Share Program helps landowners recover from drought

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission has announced Program Year 13 of the state's Locally-Led Conservation Cost-Share Program. The agency approved guidelines for the latest program at its Sept. 1 meeting. The program began in 1997 with the goal of reducing soil erosion and improving water quality by providing financial assistance to landowners for applying soil and water conservation practices. A few changes were made this year with the goal of going further to help landowners recover from the effects of the current exceptional drought.

One change is that the program is being opened up earlier than most years. The Cost-Share Program overlaps years because it is designed to extend through two growing seasons to allow ample opportunity, under normal conditions, to install conservation practices. In past years the program has opened at different times of the year from October to February, and has run for 16-24 months for completion of installation of the practices. Only once before has it begun in September and only once has it begun earlier. The first year of the Cost-Share Program, 1997, it began in August, also a year of exceptional drought. Another change is that the maximum allowable cost-share rate was raised from 50 percent to 70 percent.

"With the losses the state's agricultural producers have endured this year, it's important we help them recover and the conservation cost-share program will be of great assistance," said Gov. Mary Fallin. "I appreciate the



Creating new ponds will help store more water for future use.

Cost-Share Program, continued on page 2

In This Issue

EPA Adds Nearly \$1 Million to Water Quality Projects

Conservation Cost-Share Program Helps Landowners Recover from Drought

OACD to Receive Conservation Grant for Wildlife Credit Program

Coal County Conservation District Holds Open House

Cleveland County Conservation District Cosponsors eCycles Day



Going Green?

Want to receive the electronic newsletter instead of the paper one? Just email Mark.Harrison@conservation.ok.gov asking to be moved to the email subscription list!

Also— See "QR Code" on page two!

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

Conservation Commission Meeting,

Oct. 3, Oklahoma City

OACD Area II Meeting,

Nov. 1, Oklahoma City

OACD Area IV Meeting,

Nov. 2, Fort Cobb

Conservation Commission Meeting,

Nov. 7, Oklahoma City

OACD Area III Meeting,

Nov. 10, Muskogee

Veterans Day Holiday, Nov. 11

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Annual Meeting,

Nov. 11-13, Oklahoma City

OACD Area I Meeting,

Nov. 15, Woodward

OACD Area V Meeting,

Nov. 17, Wilburton

Thanksgiving Holiday, Nov. 24-25

Conservation Commission Meeting,

Dec. 5, Oklahoma City

Christmas Holiday, Dec. 26-27

2012

New Year's Day Holiday, Jan. 2

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday

Jan. 16

NACD Annual Meeting,

Jan. 29-Feb. 1, Las Vegas, Nev.

QR (Quick Response) Code

Scan the QR Code below with the QR Reader on your smart phone to go to our website. Bookmark it as a Favorite to stay up-to-date on Conservation in Oklahoma.



<http://conservation.ok.gov>

(Free QR Reader applications are available are available for iPhone, Android and other smart phones.)

In our thoughts... Army Specialist Jordan M. Morris, son of FSA employee Nita Morris, was killed in action in Afghanistan Aug. 11.

Darrel Dominick, OCC tribal outreach coordinator, underwent surgery to repair a detached retina in August.

Congratulations!

Cole Callaway, NRCS soil conservationist at Pawnee County CD, and wife Sherry have a new daughter, Allison Clare Callaway, born Aug. 26.

EPA Adds Funds, continued from page 1 The money will allow additional efforts to be implemented in the existing Illinois River and North Canadian River Projects, according to Shanon Phillips, OCC/WQ director. In certain areas that work has resulted in reductions of nutrients as high as 60 to 70 percent and led to the delisting of several Oklahoma stream segments from the state's impaired waters or 303(d) list. Of the redirected \$934,573, approximately \$834,000 will be used in the North Canadian River watershed and \$100,000 in the Illinois River watershed.

Plans for the funds include implementation of a demonstration farm in the North Canadian River watershed to demonstrate the techniques of no-till and low tillage farming and other best management practices. The farm will also serve to demonstrate the benefits of those practices in reducing the amount of sediment in runoff and resulting improvements in water quality. The funding will also allow continuing research in the watershed on measuring the sequestration of carbon into soil and plants achieved through no-till farming and other land management practices. In the Illinois River watershed the funds will ensure continued water quality monitoring at selected U.S. Geological Survey stations in the Oklahoma portion of the Illinois River watershed and continued maintenance of public facilities and trash collection along recreational areas of the river.



North Canadian River



Lake Thunderbird

Cost-Share Program, continued from page 1 Commission expediting these funds more quickly than normal to help producers prepare for the next rain event," she added.

"This is a great time to expand our water holding capacity on farms for when it does rain," said Jim Reese, state Sec. of Agriculture and Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

"We want to open up this year's program as soon as possible so that local conservation districts can make it available to help landowners, farmers and ranchers, who have been impacted by the severity of the drought," said Mike Thralls, Conservation Commission executive director.

Another change that might be of help during dry weather is allowing the installation of a pipeline to move water from a supply source to a point of use for livestock. Previously, installation of pipelines was only covered in the creation of a new watering facility. Now as a stand-alone practice, a pipeline can be installed in an existing watering system. This change is intended to help rotational grazing operations by providing additional locations to water livestock.

Funding for Program Year 13 in the amount of \$1,150,527 is made up of \$739,391 appropriated for that purpose by the state Legislature for fiscal year 2012 along with \$411,136 in funds not spent from previous program years.

Practices in the Conservation Cost-Share Program vary across the state according to priorities set by the local conservation district board of directors. Some of those available that also provide benefits during dry weather include constructing ponds, installing water troughs or tanks and drilling new wells.

Practices that help reduce soil erosion during wetter periods are also included in the Conservation Cost-Share Program. Those practices are terraces, grassed waterways, diversions, critical area planting and grade stabilization structures. Additional practices available are brush management including removal of eastern redcedar, fencing, pasture and hay planting, range planting, nutrient management and pest management.

OACD to Receive Conservation Grant for Wildlife Credit Program Modeled after Oklahoma Carbon Credit Program, grant's goal is to encourage landowners help the Lesser Prairie Chicken

Farmers, ranchers and other landowners in northwest Oklahoma will soon have the option to receive stewardship payments for work done to protect and expand the habitat of the Lesser Prairie Chicken under a new program that will be partially funded by a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant that has been awarded to the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. According to OACD Executive Director Clay Pope, this new initiative builds off of the success of the Oklahoma Carbon Credit Program and is designed to put dollars directly into the pockets of landowners who take action to protect this vulnerable species.



Lesser Prairie Chicken. Image source:Wikimedia Commons. Author: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/larry1732/>

Authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill, the Conservation Innovation Grant program (CIG) is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies for agriculture production. CIG promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, technologies, and facilities among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. Under CIG, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds are used to award competitive grants to non-federal governmental or non-governmental organizations, tribes or individuals. OACD will receive more than \$412,000 to develop a credit program to help mitigate the loss of the habitat of the Lesser Prairie Chicken under a program similar to OACD's Carbon Credit Program.

Under the terms of this new initiative, landowners who sign a contract to undertake a wildlife management plan including improvements such as improved pasture management, cross fence removal, invasive species control and native grass plantings and who also agree to forego activities that significantly harm Prairie Chicken habitat for the term of their contract will qualify for this program. According to Pope, this new influx of money by NRCS for this program builds off of an earlier agreement between the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and OACD.

"Last fall ODWC and OACD took the initial steps to build this program and get it started," Pope said. "ODWC has already been working with other partners to sign up landowners to establish permanent easements for Prairie Chicken habitat. And they are working to secure refuge areas for this and other species through land purchases. But habitat management is a big issue that requires multiple solutions and many producers are uncomfortable with permanent easements," Pope said. "We feel this new approach will work well with those landowners who are interested in working on a multi-year agreement to protect and expand the habitat of this critical species. This will offer them a contract that would reward them financially for good stewardship work while allowing them a chance to review their options every few years," he said. "We think this new agreement fits well into this niche and will allow more work to be done to keep the Lesser Prairie Chicken off the endangered species list," Pope said.

According to OACD President Joe Parker, this partnership is another way the Oklahoma conservation partnership of local conservation districts, OACD, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and NRCS is helping landowners conserve the state's natural resources. "By creating this new market for wildlife credits, we are helping protect a critical species we all want kept off the endangered species list while rewarding the efforts farmers, ranchers and other landowners are doing to protect our environment," Parker said.

Coal County Conservation District holds Open House in New Building

Approximately 50 people attended Coal County Conservation District's Open House on Sept. 7 in Coalgate. State Reps. Paul Roan and Donnie Condit attended along with Ben Pollard representing the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and Ron Hilliard and Jamey Wood representing the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Numerous conservation district and NRCS employees from surrounding districts and field offices paid a visit as did local county commissioners, county employees, local citizens and retired district and NRCS employees.

The Coal County Conservation District board of directors had discussed building a new office for several months but were hesitant because of the challenges to the state and national economy during the last few years. But they proceeded with the sale of the district's old shop that was several blocks away from the office at that time. Needing a place to store district equipment motivated them to proceed with construction of a new building.

The sale of the shop helped purchase the land where the new office and attached shop are located. Construction began in early July 2010 on a 125- by 40-foot building with a 75- by 40-foot shop and 50- by 40-foot office space. At first only the inside of the shop was finished and the office remained in a shell state. NRCS acceptance of the district's bid for office space allowed the interior of the office to be completed June 17. The district and NRCS began moving into the new space on June 29.

"It was a challenge for us, but in the end it was worth it," said Melissa Williams, Coal County Conservation District secretary. "We have a beautiful office to enjoy and we have also sold our old office building as of Friday, Sept. 9. We didn't have to finance any of this building — we used our local funds to construct it," she said.



Coal County Conservation District's new building

Cleveland County Conservation District Cosponsors eCycles Day “Electronic devices can live forever”

Cleveland County Conservation District cosponsored an e-waste recycling event recently and three other conservation districts pitched in to help. There was no cost to drop off electronic devices from 7:30 a.m. to noon on July 30 at the “Oklahoma eCycles Day” held at Marc Heitz Chevrolet in Norman. Desktop and laptop computers, monitors, fax machines, printers, televisions, clocks, stereos and cell phones were all accepted.

The accepted items will be recycled through a partnership between Marc Heitz Chevrolet, Keep America Beautiful, Keep Oklahoma Beautiful, LG Electronics, Waste Management, Cleveland County Conservation District and the City of Norman. According to a spokesperson from the car dealership, people in 377 vehicles dropped off electronic items during the event. Chris Ward, Cleveland County Conservation District secretary, said more than 2,000 pounds of electronics were collected.

In addition to Ward, Patti Christian, McClain County Conservation District secretary; Becky Inmon, Oklahoma County Conservation District secretary; and Amanda Boatwright Burch, Pushmataha County Conservation District secretary; also volunteered to help at the event.

“In addition to assisting farmers and ranchers, conservation districts in urban settings like Cleveland County Conservation District get involved a variety of activities to serve the community in natural resource conservation,” Ward said.



More than 2,000 pounds of electronic items were collected at the Oklahoma eCycles Day.

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>

Commission Members

Area I	Karl Jett
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

This publication is issued by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission as authorized by Mike Thralls, Executive Director. Eight hundred copies are printed at a cost of \$0.13 each. This publication is also available electronically on the agency website. All programs and services of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and Oklahoma's Conservation Districts are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, marital status or physical disability.

Published by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 160, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-4201



PRSRTD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OKLAHOMA
CITY OK
PERMIT NO.
317