

**Oklahoma Conservation
Commission**

presentation to the

**House Committee on
Natural Resources**

Performance Review

OKLAHOMA
CONSERVATION

COMMISSION

**Performance Review -
House Committee on
Natural Resources**

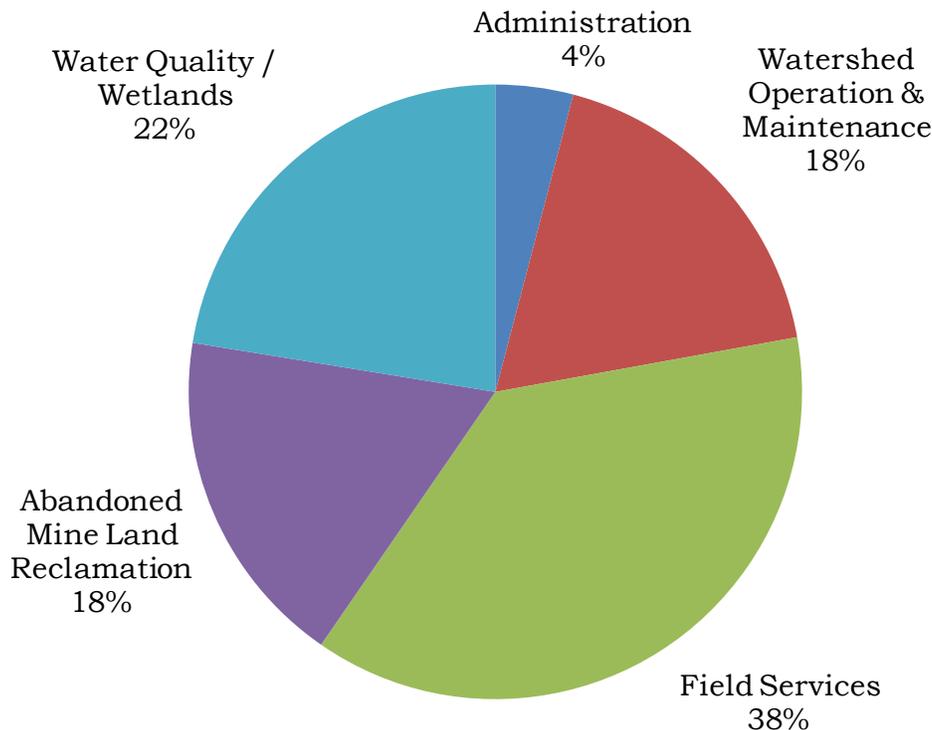
January 23, 2008



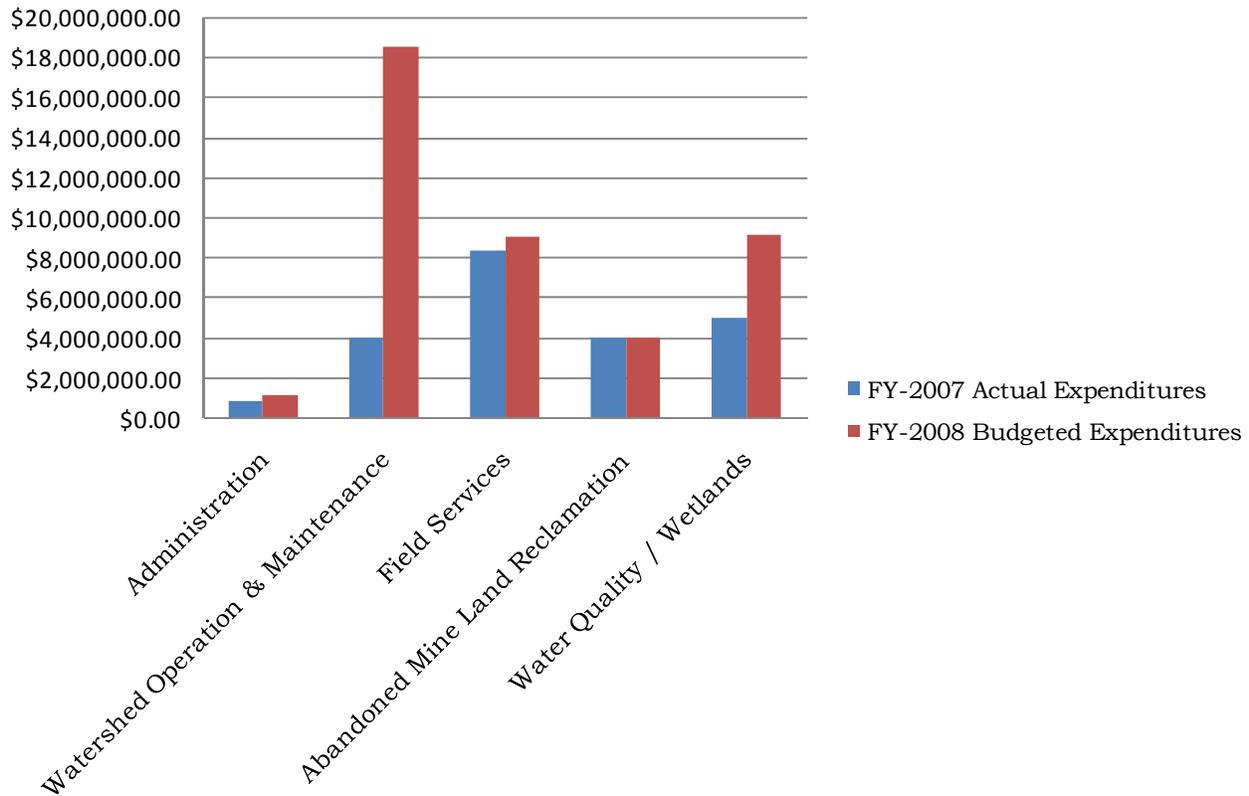
Our Mission -

The Conservation Commission, working through 88 local conservation district offices, is unique among state natural resource management agencies in that it is the only agency that is exclusively a non-regulatory agency. Conservation programs are delivered to land owners and land users in a voluntary manner. The Conservation Commission provides technical assistance, financial incentives and educational information to promote and sustain private land conservation, prevent flooding and protect the state's water resources. The State Conservation Cost Share program, Flood Control Dam Operation, Maintenance and Rehabilitation program and Scarred Land Reclamation program are integral and valuable components of this unique service delivery system. This state-private partnership has proven to be very successful and has dramatically improved Oklahoma's environment and natural resources since the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

FY-2007 Actual Expenditures by Program



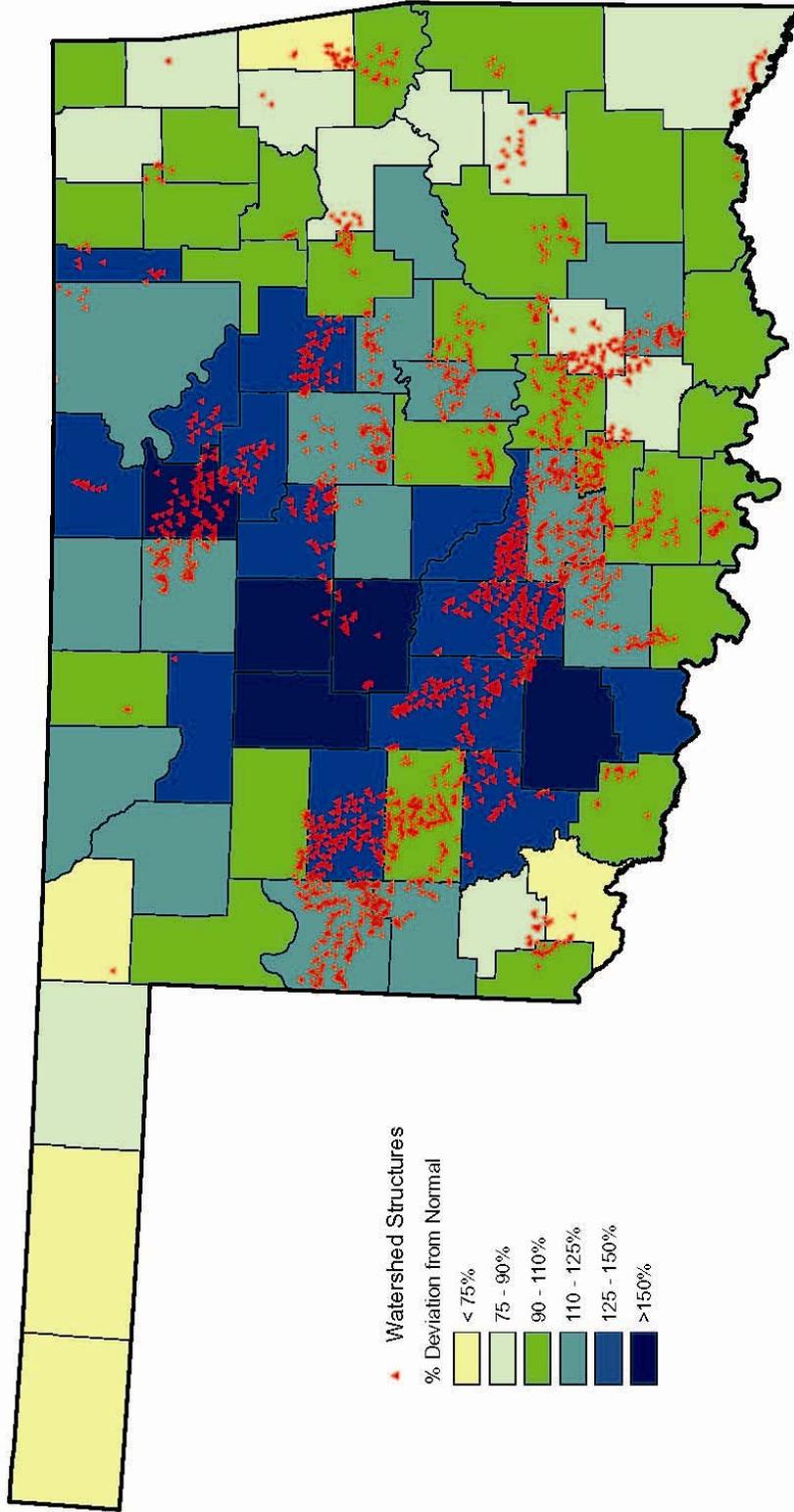
FY-2007 & FY-2008 Expenditures by Program



Fiscal Year 2007 -

During 2007 Oklahoma experienced significant natural disasters from ice storms to record precipitation that resulted in flooding that impacted many parts of the state. The federal government issued a record eight disaster declarations during the year. Because of Oklahoma’s 2105 upstream flood control dams, many areas in the state were successfully protected from catastrophic damage during the spring and summer flood events. USDA economists determined that over \$300 million dollars in flood damages to homes, cities, towns, roads, bridges and agricultural lands was prevented because of the state’s flood control infrastructure. This was a remarkable achievement reinforcing the importance of the conservation infrastructure to the state. While the dams functioned as designed, many received significant damage from the record rainfall and runoff. Consequently, the Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts have a big job ahead to repair and rehabilitate damaged dams as well as continue the annual operation and maintenance of the dams so that they will continue to provide valuable flood protection benefits.

Watershed Structures and Percent Deviation from Normal Annual Precipitation through December 1, 2007



\$340 Million in Flood Damage Prevented in 2007

Source: Oklahoma Mesonet



Caddo County Flooding, Chalkie Opitz



Caddo County Flooding (Photo by Chalkie Opitz)



Sugar Creek L-44 (Photo by Mark Harrison, OCC)



Sugar Creek L-44, Roy Green, district manager, and Rod Walzer, district director, South Caddo Conservation District
(Phone by Robert Toole, OCC)



Sugar Creek L-43 (Photo by Mark Harrison, OCC)



Sugar Creek L-43 (Peck's photo No. 5)

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) -

The first Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in the state was authorized in 2007 by Governor Henry and USDA Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner. Success in achieving phosphorus loading reductions of at least 31% in the Beaty Creek subwatershed of the Lake Eucha Watershed and 70% in the Peach eater Creek subwatershed of the Illinois River Watershed led to the award of a \$20.6 million dollar (CREP) from the USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA). The program is a partnership among the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Local Conservation Districts, the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission, the City of Tulsa, the OCC, U.S. EPA, and the Office of the Secretary of Environment. The first landowner contract for CREP was signed in the fall of 2007.



Streams in the watershed have become shallower and wider due to bank erosion.



Areas that were once heavily forested have been cleared for pastures.



Before BMP implementation, cattle often had access to streams. After implementation, cattle were fenced out of streams and provided alternative water sources.

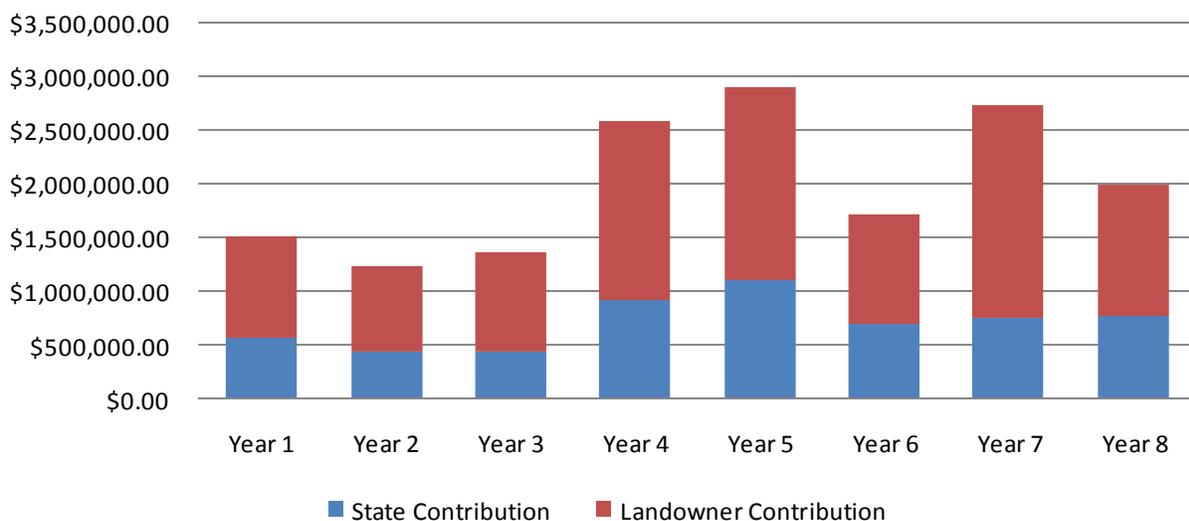
Delivery of Federal Conservation Programs -

The Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts work in partnership with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to deliver federal conservation programs to Oklahoma land users. The 2002 federal farm bill dramatically increased federal conservation funding. This increased emphasis on conservation has been a tremendous benefit to the state. Significant work has been accomplished on soil erosion control, water quality improvement, wildlife habitat, wetlands protection, and farmland protection. The past year the NRCS working through conservation districts in Oklahoma provided \$34.1 million in financial assistance and assisted a total of 12,769 land users.

Conservation Cost-Share -

Since FY 1999 the Conservation Commission has managed a locally led conservation cost-share program to assist landowners with the installation of conservation practices to reduce soil erosion and protect water quality. The program is managed by conservation districts and provides the opportunity for conservation district boards to address local conservation priorities. During the past program year a total of 1007 conservation practices were installed. The state invested \$789,089 while landowners matched these funds with \$1,218,773.

Cost-Share Program - Contribution Source



Water Quality (Nonpoint Source) Program and Priority Watershed Cost-Share Program-

In recognition of the Commission's Nonpoint Source Program success, the EPA awarded the OCC \$1 million in additional Clean Water Act Section 319 funds to begin a 3 year project to implement additional water quality protection strategies in the Illinois River Watershed.

Completed and ongoing Priority Watershed Non-point Source Projects and the totals for best management practice implementation include:

- Fort Cobb Watershed (\$4.3 million) completed in FY-2007
- Stillwater Creek Watershed (\$1.1 million) completed in FY-2007
- Spavinaw Creek Watershed (\$2.8 million) except for Beaty Creek
- Grand Lake Watershed – Phase I (\$2.1 million)
- Honey Creek (Grand Lake) Watershed (1.7 million)
- Illinois River Watershed Riparian Project (\$1.6 million)
- North Canadian River Watershed (\$1.1 million)

These Priority Watershed Projects include implementation and demonstration of best management practices. The projects also include education programs to encourage watershed residents to help reduce nonpoint source pollution. Other grant tasks include:

- Technical support of the Non-point Source Management Program
- Funding for a Rotating Basin Monitoring Program
- Non-point Source Total Maximum Daily Load Development
- Development of watershed-based plans for priority watersheds
- Continuation of Statewide Blue Thumb Educational Programs
- Task coordination and management by the Office of the Secretary of Environment

Upstream Flood Control Dam Rehabilitation -

The rehabilitation of four upstream flood control dams was completed at a cost of \$2.26 million in cooperation with NRCS and local conservation district sponsors. Five other dams will be rehabilitated under contracts managed by the Conservation Commission.

For Fiscal Year 2007, the value of contributions from each partner was as follows:

Conservation Commission (state)	\$2,300,000	17.0%
NRCS (federal)	\$9,015,000	66.5%
Conservation Districts (local)	\$204,000	1.5%
Private landowners	\$2,000,000	15.0%
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Total	\$13,519,000	100.0%

For Fiscal Year 2008, the Conservation Commission received \$6.5 million from the Constitutional Reserve Fund to match federal funding for the rehabilitation of the following dams:

Watershed Site	County	Total Cost	State Match	Federal Match
Double 3	Washington	\$ 785,722.66	\$ 275,002.93	\$ 510,719.73
Sallisaw 33	Sequoyah	\$ 719,605.00	\$ 251,861.75	\$ 467,743.25
Salisaw 20	Adair	\$ 721,000.00	\$ 252,350.00	\$ 468,650.00
Caney Coon 2MI	Coal	\$ 3,826,320.00	\$ 1,339,212.00	\$ 2,487,108.00
Sallisaw 15	Adair	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 175,000.00	\$ 325,000.00
Sallisaw 16	Adair	\$ 1,120,200.00	\$ 392,070.00	\$ 728,130.00
Cottonwood 54	Logan	\$ 2,500,000.00	\$ 875,000.00	\$ 1,625,000.00
Sallisaw 34	Sequoyah	\$ 540,038.00	\$ 189,013.30	\$ 351,024.70
Sallisaw 32	Sequoyah	\$ 3,762,759.00	\$ 1,316,965.65	\$ 2,445,793.35
Cobb 1	Washita	\$ 2,600,000.00	\$ 910,000.00	\$ 1,690,000.00
Sugar L-44	Caddo	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 350,000.00	\$ 650,000.00
Sugar L-43	Caddo	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 350,000.00	\$ 650,000.00
		\$ 19,075,644.66	\$ 6,676,475.63	\$12,399,169.03

Land Reclamation -

The Commission’s Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Division completed reclamation work on four projects in the past year. The projects reclaimed 91.5 acres of abandoned coal mine land and eliminated dangerous high walls and hazardous water bodies. The Commission also addressed four emergency projects involving the subsidence of underground mines.

The Commission worked with the state’s congressional delegation in support of needed amendments to the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. The amendments which were passed by Congress and signed by the President will extend the Abandoned Mine Land Program through 2021 and will increase the amount of federal reclamation funds coming to the state. By extending the program through 2021 the Commission will be able to continue the work of reclaiming the remaining public health and safety hazards posed by abandoned coal mines.



Haileyville School Subsidence

Work was also completed on two lead and zinc reclamation projects in the Tar Creek area. The West Commerce project, at \$2.3 million, is the largest single construction project in the history of the Commission. To date the Commission has reclaimed nearly 300 acres of hazardous and unsafe land in the Tar Creek area at a cost of \$4.9 million.



McNeely AML Tar Creek Project before construction



McNeely AML Tar Creek Project after construction

The Oklahoma Climatological Survey's Official Stance on Climate Change

We conclude the following to be true:

- The earth's climate has warmed during the last 100 years
- The earth's climate will continue to warm for the foreseeable future
- Much of the global average temperature increases over the last 50 years can be attributed to human activities, particularly increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere
- **Oklahoma will be impacted.**



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Climate Change Implications for Oklahoma

- Summer becomes longer and spring arrives earlier.
- Winters warm and shorten leading to longer frost-free periods and a longer growing season.
- Earlier maturation of winter wheat and orchard crops leave them more vulnerable to late freeze events.
- Increased year-round evaporation from the ground and transpiration from green vegetation.
- Drought frequency and severity increases.
- Drier and warmer conditions will increase the risk of wildfires, especially during summer.
- **Rain-free periods will increase, but individual rainfall events will be more intense. More flash flooding would result.**



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