

# 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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## “Planting the Seeds for the Future”

### 2008 Area Meetings of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Conservation leaders discussed issues relevant to Oklahoma at the Area Meetings of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts held in five locations around the state Oct. 31 - Nov. 18. Alfalfa County, Payne County, Wagoner County, Deer Creek, and Pittsburg County Conservation Districts hosted the meetings, 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).

“Planting the Seeds for the Future,” the theme for the meetings for Oklahoma’s conservation district directors and employees reflected plans for growing and renewing efforts for natural resource conservation activities that have played a vital role in Oklahoma since the era of the Dust Bowl.

OACD and OCC representatives explained new programs for carbon offsets in the state to help benefit the environment. Sarah Love, director of OK Carbon Initiative (OCI), an OACD program, explained how the organization will act as an aggregator. OCI will contract to sell offsets for landowners who practice conservation agriculture with no-till, pastureland management, rangeland management, and riparian protection. The increased vegetation of these practices removes more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere than traditional agricultural practices. Stacy Hansen, director of OCC’s Carbon Sequestration Verification Program, explained the agency’s role as the entity that will verify the existence of carbon offsets and quantify the carbon value. She stated that a training session is scheduled at the OACD annual meeting for conservation districts who want to begin training to be carbon offset verifiers.

At each meeting a Resource Conservation and Development Council member and coordinator presented an overview of RC&D programs and projects entitled “Partnerships for Oklahoma’s Future.”

At the Area II Meeting in Stillwater on Nov. 12 Susan Henning, Kay County CD manager, and Jolene Sparks, Noble County CD secretary, presented a costumed skit entitled “Poultry Litter Sisters.” The skit, which closed with the music of the “Chicken Dance,” poked good-natured fun at OCC’s recently concluded Poultry Litter Transfer Program. At the Area III Meeting in Wagoner on Nov. 13 Gina Levesque, OCC Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program coordinator, presented a program status report.

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 sponsors awards for the OACD/OACDE Awards Program. 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. 22-24, 2009, in Midwest City.



Jolene Sparks (left) and Susan Henning as the “Poultry Litter Sisters.”

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*“Good character is more to be praised than outstanding talent. Most talents are, to some extent, a gift. Good character, by contrast is not given to us. We have to build it piece by piece — by thought, choice, courage and determination.”*

*John Luther*

### 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)

### Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting,

Jan. 5, Agriculture Building, Oklahoma City

**KNID AgriFest**, Jan. 9-10, Chisholm Trail Expo Center, Enid

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday**, Jan. 19

**NACD Annual Meeting**, Feb. 1-4, Sheraton Hotel, New Orleans, La.

### Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting,

Feb. 9, Agriculture Building, Oklahoma City

**Presidents Day Holiday**, Feb. 16

### OACD State Meeting,

Feb. 22-24, Reed Center, Midwest City

### Oklahoma Conservation Commission Meeting,

March 2, Agriculture Building, Oklahoma City

**GIS Day at the Capitol**, March 11, State Capitol Building, Oklahoma City

**Conservation Day at the Capitol**, March 25, State Capitol Building, Oklahoma City

**Janet Stewart**, OCC/CP general counsel, was recognized at the November meeting of the Conservation Commission for 10 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

**Karen Potts**, OCC/FMHR accountant, was recognized at the December meeting of the Conservation Commission for 10 years of service to OCC and the state of Oklahoma.

**Eldon Merklin**, OCC/CP Cost-Share Program coordinator, received the Distinguished Service to Oklahoma Farm Bureau Award at the OFB Annual Meeting in November

**Arnold Hamilton**, OCC/AML vegetation specialist, received the Outstanding District Cooperator Award at the Pittsburg County CD Bankers Award Banquet in October.

## In our thoughts...

Kenneth Handy, former Delaware County CD director, passed away in October.

Randy Johnson, NRCS/SCT, Ardmore FO, lost his stepfather Leonard Martin, age 98, on Nov. 17

Teresa Boswell, Creek County CD secretary, suffered a stroke Dec. 2.

Erwin Leaverton, former OCC/AML engineer, passed away Oct. 14.

## Larry Caldwell Nominated for Engineer of the Year

From *The Oklahoma News Trail*, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Larry Caldwell, watershed specialist, has been selected as the Natural Resources Conservation Service's nominee for the 2009 Federal Engineer of the Year Award (FEYA).

Sponsored by the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), FEYA is awarded to an engineer employed by a federal agency that employs at least 50 engineers worldwide. Candidates are nominated by their employing federal agency. The Federal Engineer of the Year is selected by a panel of judges established by National Society of Professional Engineers - Professional Engineers in Government who consider engineering achievements, education, continuing education, professional/technical society activities, NSPE membership, awards and honors, and civic and humanitarian activities.

Caldwell has been recognized twice as the recipient of the NRCS National Awards for superior leadership, growth, and development of the NRCS National Watershed Rehabilitation Program that protects countless lives and properties across the nation. His most recent recognition was the National Award of Merit. This is the Association of State Dam Safety Officials' (ASDSO) most prestigious award, given to individuals who have advanced the dam safety cause nationwide. This award, given by the ASDSO Board of Directors, was enthusiastically conferred to Caldwell in 2008 for "his efforts to ensure the safety of those living downstream of potentially dangerous dams".

Caldwell will attend the FEYA ceremony and luncheon, scheduled for February 19, 2009, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., where the 2009 award winner will be announced.

"Larry has been a great partner to work with on many projects for OCC and conservation districts and has been especially instrumental in the Watershed Rehabilitation Program," said OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls. "We are very pleased to see him nominated for this award."

## District Dateline

### Pawnee County Bankers' Awards

Pawnee County Conservation District hosted the 53rd Annual Pawnee County Bankers' Awards Meeting on Oct. 21 at the county fairgrounds. The First National Bank and Security Bank of Pawnee and the Cleveland Bank and American Heritage Bank of Cleveland sponsored the event.

Bankers' Awards were presented to four landowners, two 50-year cooperators were recognized and the district presented one Outstanding Cooperator award. OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls presented a Governor's Conservation Award to Harold Mullins. A founding member of the Red Rock Creek Conservancy District, Mullins spoke at the 2006 Annual State Meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and at the dedication of Upper Red Rock Creek Dam No. 52 in Noble County on Oct. 4, 2005. He is a cooperator with the Pawnee County Conservation District.



Harold Mullins (left) received a Governor's Conservation Award presented by Mike Thralls.

## Kindergarten Natural Resource Day in Okmulgee

In October Rhnea Stoy, Okmulgee County CD, and Lori Jones, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, held a natural resource presentation event for kindergarten pupils at Okmulgee Elementary. Stoy spoke to the children about contaminants that get into the water and how it effects aquatic creatures. She showed them samples of fish and macroinvertebrates. Jones brought animal hides to show the students



Okmulgee kindergarten pupils examine animal skins brought by Lori Jones, U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

## Mason Mungle Former OCC Executive Director Named Water Pioneer

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board named Atoka native Mason Mungle to its prestigious list of Oklahoma Water Pioneers at the Governor's Water Conference on Oct. 28. The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) nominated Mungle for his career contributions to the state in care and control of water resources.

Mungle served as executive director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission from January 1986 to October 1997. Previously he had served on the board of directors for the Atoka County Conservation District from 1978 to 1985 and during that time had served on the OACD executive board.

During his tenure as Conservation Commission executive director, Mungle was instrumental in developing an effective state nonpoint source pollution water quality management program and fostered partnerships with numerous other agencies to address the issue as it grew in importance in the eyes of the public. At the same time he championed flood protection in the state by improving the operation and maintenance of Oklahoma's 2,100 upstream flood control structures. He worked with Congress to develop a program to rehabilitate flood control dams so they can continue to provide Oklahoma with flood control benefits. That work came to fruition with the Watershed Flood Control Amendments Act of 2000 authored by Oklahoma Congressman Frank Lucas.

Mungle also pursued a vision of the beneficial impact that Geographic Information Systems (GIS) hold for natural resource conservation management today and in the future. That vision led to the creation of the State Geographic Information Council and the Office of the State Geographic Information Coordinator.

Other achievements Mungle made to conserve and protect the quality of water in the state of Oklahoma include the following:

- The Conservation Commission was directed by the Governor to write the state's first nonpoint source assessment report and management program.
- For the first time in Oklahoma history, the state legislature appropriated money to the Conservation Commission for cost-share assistance on water quality projects.
- Statutes were changed through legislative action establishing the Conservation Commission as the lead technical agency for nonpoint source programs, including nonpoint source monitoring and assessment of streams. The agency was also given responsibility for directing the activities of the Nonpoint Source Working Group.
- Partnership activities increased in addressing water and environmental issues. Those partnerships include universities, environmental groups, cities and towns, state and federal agencies and Native American tribes.
- The Conservation Commission promoted the first urban conservation program in Tulsa by introducing the "Blue Thumb" urban water quality monitoring program into the state.
- The Conservation Commission promoted erosion and sediment control workshops for engineers, city inspectors, home builders and Department of Transportation personnel.
- Water Quality Division staff increased from 6 to 20 and the division's budget increased from \$200,000 to \$1.5 million to help carry out increased activities and programs to conserve and protect Oklahoma's nonpoint water quality.
- The Conservation Commission became a leader in promoting the use of higher technology approaches to management of the state's natural resources, including Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and the Internet.
- Early on Mungle realized the importance of GIS in environmental analysis. Of particular note are Mungle's efforts to apply GIS technology to analyze and manage the impact of confined animal feeding operations (CAFO) on Oklahoma's water quality. As chairman of the 14-member state GIS Council, Mungle actively promoted interagency cooperation in the areas of data sharing and standardization.
- Mungle also directed creation of maps of the Cimarron River Watershed, Washita River Watershed, and Peacheater Creek Watershed. These maps were prepared for such purposes as pollution analysis, Scenic River designation and flood control analysis.
- Before leaving the Conservation Commission, Mungle served as the original chairman of Governor Frank Keating's Animal Waste and Water Quality Task Force.

After leaving the Conservation Commission Mungle worked for 10 years for the Oklahoma Farmers Union as a liaison to the state Legislature. In that role, as he worked for the benefit of farmers, ranchers and rural development, he continued to promote the care of our soil and water resources. In his current position as executive director of the Oklahoma Farmers Royalty Company he continues to spread the idea that agriculture, rural development and industry can walk hand-in-hand with wise use and conservation of the state's natural resources.



With Mason at the Water Pioneer Award luncheon were OCC Area I Commissioner Matt Gard (left) and Area II Commissioner Mike Rooker (right).



Above, from left are OCC FMHR Director Steve Coffman and Executive Director Mike Thralls, Mason and his wife Renee and their sons Heath Green and Miles Mungle, and OCC Assistant Director Ben Pollard.

## Cleora Outdoor Classroom

A dedication ceremony was held Nov. 7 for the Cleora Outdoor Classroom in Delaware County. Cleora Public School teaches kindergarten through eighth grade on 130 acres near Ketchum.

The facility includes the Cardinal Nature Trail, a covered pavilion, pond deck and rain garden. The project was funded through OCC's Grand Lake Watershed Implementation Project (CLEAR GRAND) with funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided under the federal Clean Water Act. Other sponsors include the Delaware County Conservation District, OSU Cooperative Extension and Cleora Public School Board. Cleora School students were also present for the dedication ceremony.

"Steve Knox, a Cleora School teacher, definitely deserves credit for the vision and the labor that made this happen," said Kevin Gustavson, OCC's Grand Lake Project coordinator.

For pictures of the site go to [cleargrand.glaok.com](http://cleargrand.glaok.com) and click on "Cleora Outdoor Classroom."



## 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

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## Mailing Tab Area

Students from Cleora School, shown here in the outdoor classroom's pavilion, attended the dedication on Nov. 7. Grand Lake is visible in the background.

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