



Conservation Conversation

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

Volume 47 No. 2, February 2002

2002: Double Our Conservation Commitment

Large Numbers Turnout For OACD State Meeting

Over 600 people participated in the 64th Annual State Meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City, Feb. 24-26. The Oklahoma Conservation Commission cosponsored the event.

Ken Root, farm broadcaster and writer, gave the keynote address and was featured in a concurrent session titled "Telling Our Story." Root provided insight into the changing face of production agriculture and the new Farm Bill, as well as a "behind the scenes" perspective of the news and information media.



Ken Root



Mike Thralls

OACD President Rick Jeans discussed current natural resource conservation issues during the Monday morning session as well. Thralls and Jeans both emphasized the importance of a continuing effort to bring the salaries of local conservation district employees up to a level commensurate with state employees doing similar jobs. Thralls also expressed encouragement that despite current state budget cuts, Governor Keating had endorsed continued full funding for the state Conservation Cost-Share Program.



Rick Jeans

U.S. Sixth District Congressman Frank Lucas spoke to the general assembly at a luncheon on Monday, expressing confidence that the final version of the new federal Farm Bill will be close to the version recently passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. He stated that a wide variety of groups provided input for the legislation, and he believes the expansion of conservation programs will be included in the final bill. Lucas, who chairs the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research, was recently named as a conferee on the committee that will work out the differences between House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill.



U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas



Rep. Clay Pope

State Rep. Clay Pope spoke at a Monday mid-morning concurrent session addressing state water sale issues, and Ernie Shea, chief executive officer of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), spoke at a conservation district director orientation session on Monday.

NACD Vice President Billy Wilson, a Haskell County Conservation District director, spoke at the Tuesday morning general session. From the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Conservationist Darrel Dominick and Regional Conservationist



Darrel Dominick

Humberto Hernandez also addressed session participants. Dominick recommended that conservation districts and district conservationists hold "Locally Led" public meetings to gather input in preparation for the next Farm Bill and referred to Oklahoma author Ralph Ellison's book, "The Invisible Man," urging the audience not to be



Billy Wilson

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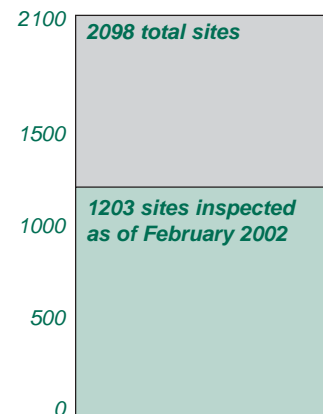
Our vision:

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, on behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma.

2100 in 2002! Oklahoma Statewide Watershed Inspection Team



Conservation Calendar

Conservation District Week

March 10 - 16



GIS Day at the Capitol
March 12, Oklahoma City



Conservation District Director Elections,
Position No. 1, March 12



Agriculture Day at the Capitol
March 20, Oklahoma City



Oklahoma Farm Show
April 18-20, Oklahoma City Fairgrounds



7th Annual Forest Utilization Conference
& Equipment Exposition, April 23-25, Wagoner
(Contact Ouachita Mountains RC&D
for information, 918/423-2479)



Soil & Water Stewardship Week
April 28 - May 4



National Land & Range Judging Contest
May 7-9, 2002, Oklahoma City



Soil & Water Conservation Society
Annual Conference
July 13-17, 2002, Indianapolis, IN

In Our Thoughts

Randy Peck, son of Garfield County CD Director Ivan Peck and a former NRCS employee at the Medford Field Office, died Feb. 2.

Larry Wornam, former OCC Commissioner and Lincoln County CD director, lost his wife in January.

Vernon McNally, East Woods County CD director, has been hospitalized in intensive care following recent surgery.

Congratulations

Shanon Phillips, OCC/WQ staff, and husband John have a new baby son, Cooper John, born Feb. 23.

Lee Roy & Sylvia Hudson will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary March 21. They invite all their friends to help them celebrate at a reception Saturday, March 23 from 2-4 p.m. in the First Baptist Church Family Activities Center, 201 E. Jones Street, Hollis. Their mailing address is 906 W. Vivian, Hollis, OK 73550, for those who wish to drop them a note of congratulations.

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

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Humberto Hernandez

"invisible conservationists." Hernandez praised Oklahoma's national leadership, particularly in the watershed program and the state's Conservation Cost-Share Program, and said, "I would like to see the other states in the region catch up with what Oklahoma has accomplished in the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative." It will be necessary to increase the number of NRCS personnel to keep pace with the Farm Bill, and training will be a critical component in order to replace the experience of the retiring workforce, Hernandez said. He pledged to work to ensure that all new programs included funding for technical assistance.

Conservation Awards

Awards for outstanding contributions to conservation of Oklahoma's natural resources were presented to individuals and organizations during the OACD State Meeting.

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission established the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame in 1985. Each year, one or more friends of conservation and conservation district directors are inducted in recognition of a positive influence on Oklahoma's conservation programs.

Jack Penner of Mill Creek, Okla., was inducted into the Conservation District Director Hall of Fame. A lifetime cattleman and owner of Penner Angus Ranch, he was appointed as Area 2 Commissioner to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission in 1993, Penner was reappointed to a second term by Gov. Keating in 1998. His term as commissioner will end on June 30, 2002. He signed his first cooperative agreement with the Murray County CD almost 50



Jack Penner Family

years ago and has served on that conservation district's board of directors since 1968. He has served as OACD Area 2 Director, president of the Murray County Farm Bureau, chairman of Fun Country Resource Conservation and Development Council, president of the Mill Creek School Board, and as a member of the Rural Water Corporation, Murray County Industrial Board, Bank of Southern Oklahoma board of directors, and the National and Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, where he held several posts. The great grandson of Cyrus Harris, five-time governor of the Chickasaw Tribe, Penner remains an active member of the Chickasaw Tribe. He studied animal science at OSU before serving in both the Eighth and Ninth Air Force in Europe during World War II.

Wayne Smith of Mangum was also named to the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame, receiving the Friend of Conservation award. He served as a conservation district director for 24 years, from 1977 until 2001 when he retired from the Greer County CD board. For over 20 years he served the OACD executive board as treasurer, donating many hours of his time to OACD events and activities, including the OACD Speech, Poster and Essay Contest for youth and the National Land and Range Judging Contest.



Wayne Smith Family

Jeans presented the OACD President's Award this year to Dr. Dan Sebert, director of the Conservation Programs division in the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, for his 27 years of work in conservation. He is known in Oklahoma and across the nation for his work in the small watershed program. The tools and methods Sebert and his staff have developed to help watershed sponsors carry out operation and maintenance on Oklahoma's 2,100 flood control dams are used as a model for similar programs in other states.



Rick Jeans (left) with Dan Sebert

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Highlights of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Feb. 11, 2002, in the Commission Conference Room, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

District Director Resignations

W.A. Gilliard – Creek County

Jack Taylor – Murray County

District Director Appointments

Arbuckle – Creede Speake Jr.

*Comanche County – Jerry Pettijohn

Creek County – Robert Campbell

*Creek County – Wanda Foster

Custer County – Jack Carpenter

Garfield County – Joe Peepers

Greer County – John Birdwell

Haskell County – Jerry Terrell

*Haskell County – Charles Henry Roye

Shawnee – Cecil Barnett

Shawnee – Mike Rooker

*Tulsa County – Patrick Baker

Upper Washita – Wesley Harden Jr.

*New Director

Claims/Financial Statement

Steve Coffman, FM/HR director, presented the claims and financial statement, reporting that 387 claims were paid for a total of \$979,565.15.

Director Elections

Commissioners approved a motion to authorize OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls to certify eligibility of candidates and to approve polling places for the election of Conservation District Director, Position No. 1.

Contract With Tulsa County CD

Commissioners approved a contract with Tulsa County CD to provide assistance in implementing the Statewide Nonpoint Source (Blue Thumb) Education Program and to provide office space for OCC/WQ staff.

Governor's FY2003 Executive Budget Proposal

Mike Thralls provided a summary of the Governor's FY2003 Budget Proposal as it pertains to OCC.

FY2002 Transfer Of REAP Funds

Steve Coffman provided a summary of the FY2002 transfer of Rural Economic Assistance Program (REAP) funds to OCC's Cost-Share Fund and the Small Watershed Fund. Transfer to these funds has dropped considerably. OCC will receive the full amounts appropriated to each fund, but the full amounts may not all be deposited by the end of this fiscal year, June 30, 2002.

Carver School Of Governance

Mike Thralls stated that Commissioners and staff were scheduled to participate in the Carver School of Governance Workshop in Atlanta, Ga., in September 2001. However, because of the events of Sept. 11, the trip was canceled. The workshop is being offered again on March 22-23. Commissioners approved a motion for OCC not to participate in the workshop due to the current budget situation.

Report On NACD Annual Meeting

The National Association of Conservation Districts held its annual meeting on Feb. 3-8 in Reno, Nev. Attending from OCC were Commissioners Drummond and Wyatt, and Dan Sebert, OCC Conservation Programs director. Sebert stated his time at the meeting was spent addressing the President's budget release and the lack of funding for watershed rehabilitation and upstream flood control. He did attend National Association of State Conservation Agencies sessions where water quality and TMDLs were discussed. Commissioner Wyatt attended the session

where the Elementary Teacher of the Year was honored.

Commissioner Drummond attended several sessions including the district operations forum.

Book Project: "The History of Conservation..."

Mark Harrison, OCC information officer, gave a presentation on the book project, "The History of Conservation in Oklahoma in the Twentieth Century." Target date for distribution of the book is February 2003. Members commended Harrison on his work on this project.

Commission Members Report

Commissioner Sandra Drummond stated that the Grazing Lands Conference scheduled earlier in the month was canceled due to the ice storm. Commissioner J.T. Winters attended the Enid Farm Show, and shared an article, written by Mike Thralls, printed in the event program. Commissioner Jack Penner stated the same article was featured in the *High Plains Journal*.

Staff Reports

Administration: Mike Thralls, executive director, introduced Marie West, assistant attorney general on contract with OCC. He stated that the Carbon Sequestration Advisory Committee met in Tulsa last month. The OCC supplemental budget request includes \$25,000 for district liability insurance. OCC may receive up to \$800,000 to assist with the Tar Creek project with \$300,000 for GIS management and \$500,000 for mine shaft closures and remediation and re-vegetation.

Ben Pollard, assistant director, reported on meeting with the new director of Risk Management and anticipates a possible 50 to 300 percent increase in cost of coverage for the next fiscal year. OCC may be able to package its coverage with the state bid. Pollard reported that OCC received 72 applications for the Water Quality director position and narrowed the applicants to 13. Staff will schedule phone interviews for some applicants prior to scheduling formal interviews.

Conservation Programs: Dan Sebert, CP director, reported that the CP watershed technicians have been participating in watershed team inspections across the state and will have inspected over 1200 by the end of the week. Karla Beatty, education coordinator, has been working on grants to districts.

Water Quality: Shanon Phillips, WQ technical writer, introduced new Water Quality Program technical writer Cheryl Ormston. Phillips reported that the Water Quality Program is closing out 1995 grant projects this month and is working on the 2001 annual report. The division has advertised for an education coordinator and a project coordinator for the new 319 priority watershed project (Cobb Creek).

Abandoned Mine Land Program: Mike Kastl, AML director, provided copies of the AML 2001 Annual Report. He will attend a final inspection on the LeFlore County Underground Mines-4 (LCUM-4) project in LeFlore County. Kastl attended a meeting and tour of Tar Creek examining use of a wetlands approach for remediation. He reported that OCC asked the Department of Central Services to accept the second low bid for the Carter-259 project in Rogers County due to issues about the lowest bid submitted.

Information and Technology Division: Shellie Willoughby, GIS specialist, reported that Chris Dunlevy, data base administrator, met with NRCS regarding placement of new computers in district offices.

District Services: Lisa Knauf, DS director, met with the NRCS Quality Leadership Team in Stillwater and

attended the Team 1 meeting in Arnett. She prepared budget information for the Senate fiscal staff and assisted with updates to the conservation district handbook.

Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Don Bartolina, OACD executive director, reported on attending the NACD Annual Meeting in Reno, and stated that the NACD regional meetings will now be optional and that when regions hold a meeting the host state will be in charge of it. OACD Legislative Days have been scheduled as follows: March 11-12; March 25-26; April 8-9; April 22-23, and May 7-8. The May dates are in conjunction with the National Land and Range Judging Contest. A bioenergy conference is scheduled March 12 in El Reno, funded by the Department of Energy through NACD. Rick Jeans, president, and Dan Lowrance, vice president, will attend the NACD Spring Legislative Conference in March.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Darrel Dominick, NRCS state conservationist, reported on attending the NACD Annual Meeting, and commended Bill Wilson, NACD vice president, for his leadership. NRCS is conducting damage assessment reports from the recent ice storm; however, no emergency watershed program (EWP) money is currently available.

USDA Farm Service Agency

Rod Wanger, FSA Conservation Program chief, stated that 12 to 15 counties are expected to be approved for assistance under the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) due to the ice storm. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will not have a general signup at this time, but contracts due to expire Sept. 30 can be extended for up to one year.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held March 4, 2002, in the Commission conference room beginning at 9:30 a.m.

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He had a key role in Oklahoma receiving the first watershed rehabilitation project in the nation in 1999, with two more projects currently underway. Sebert has represented Oklahoma as a member and officer of the National Watershed Coalition.

In Environmental Information Awards, cosponsored by OACD and the Oklahoma Press Association (OPA), the Best Conservation-Related Feature Story honor went to Shaun Schafer of the *Tulsa World* for "Pesticides Can Harm Stream Life, So Use With Common Sense," published in the *Tulsa World* on Friday, April 6, 2001. The *Herald Democrat*, Beaver, Okla., received recognition for Outstanding Advertising Series Promoting Conservation.

Shawnee, LeFlore County, Latimer County and Kay County CDs received awards for outstanding news clipping scrapbooks featuring local conservation activities.

Rita Niece, district secretary, West Caddo

State Meeting, continued on page 4

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CD, received the Adeline Laird Award. Established in memory of Adeline Laird, finance officer at OCC from 1974 until her death in 1984, the award is presented to recognize district secretaries or programs coordinators who typify Laird's hard work, dedication, enthusiasm and caring attitude.

Fredia Rice, district secretary, Cotton County CD, received the



Fredia Rice

Chickasha, was named Elementary Teacher of the Year. She was nominated by the Grady County CD. Tiner also was named National Elementary Teacher of the Year. Robert Coffey, a science teacher at Wyandotte Junior and Senior High Schools was named



Rita Niece (left) with Mike Thralls Outstanding Conservation District Employee Award from the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees.

Latimer County CD was named District of the Year in the Conservation Education Program sponsored by Syngenta and NACD. Jyme Tiner, a third grade teacher from Southwest Elementary,

Latimer County CD/ Wilburton F.O. basks in the glory, shown with OPA/OACD Information Program, Earth Team Honorable Mention and Syngenta/NACD Education District of the Year Awards. From left are OACD President Rick Jeans, Latimer County CD Chairman DeRoy Forwoodson and Programs Coordinator Donna Hannebrink, NRCS District Conservationist Cindy Ward, OCC Water Quality Specialist Nicole Norris, NRCS State Conservationist Darrel Dominick, and OCC Area V Commissioner Virginia Kidd.



Secondary Teacher of the Year.

Darrel Dominick presented Earth Team Awards. NRCS field offices at Sayre (North Fork of Red River CD) and Oklahoma City (Oklahoma County CD) both received awards for most volunteer hours. The Wilburton field office (Latimer County CD) received honorable mention for outstanding recruiting efforts, and Jimmy W. Smith was named Volunteer of the Year for time and effort contributed to the Sayre field office (North Fork of Red River CD).

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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Area III SANDRA DRUMMOND Hominy

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