



Conservation Conversation

Weather Fails to Dim State Meeting

2003: The Next Golden Age of Conservation

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) held its 65th Annual State Meeting at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City Feb. 23-25. The meeting was cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Despite cold wind, snow and ice "checking in" on Sunday, approximately 300 were on hand for the Monday opening session.

Oklahoma's Third District U.S. Congressman Frank Lucas and former state Representative Mike Mass were featured speakers in the opening session, as well as OACD President Rick Jeans. Congressman Lucas emphasized the struggle to maintain the conservation funding level intended by Congress when the Farm Bill was passed.

All of the speakers' topics revolved around the opportunity for expanded conservation programs made possible by increased federal funding under the new Farm Bill and the possibility of Oklahoma missing out on some of those programs. Most federal conservation programs require a proportion of matching funds from the state, made difficult at this time because of the weak economy and state budget shortfalls.

At the Monday luncheon Oklahoma Conservation Commission Executive Director Mike Thralls discussed the budget cuts endured by all state agencies during the current and previous fiscal years. In sessions on Tuesday Thralls' counterpart from Kansas, State Conservation Commission Executive Director Tracy Streater, explained how a portion of a tax on water usage goes toward conservation programs in that state.

Awards for outstanding contributions to conservation of Oklahoma's natural resources were presented to individuals and organizations during the meeting. This year the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board (OERB) presented awards to OACD and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (Oklahoma) in appreciation of the assistance provided to OERB in its efforts to reclaim abandoned oil and gas production sites.

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.

George Fraley of Chelsea was inducted into the Conservation District Director Hall of Fame. Fraley has served on the board of directors of the Rogers County CD since 1975 when he replaced his father who had served on the board since 1941. Fraley is a past president of both OACD and the National Rural Abandoned Mine Coalition. He was appointed by Governor Frank Keating to the Oklahoma Mining Commission and still serves on that board.

Mike Mass, former state representative, was honored as a Friend of Conservation, as was Oklahoma Farmers Union Government Relations Director Mason Mungle.

Mass worked for the Pittsburg County CD before being elected to the state House of Representatives in 1990, and was cited for his constant support of agriculture, conservation and rural issues during five terms in office, including the small water shed upstream flood control programs and the Rural Economic Action Program (REAP). He previously received the OACD President's Award in 1994.

Mungle served 11 years as executive director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission before stepping down in October 1997. Previously he had served as Conservation Commissioner

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OACD State Meeting 2003: The Next Golden Age of Conservation

Congressman Tours Flood Control Research Lab

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.



*Keep them in our thoughts.
There are district directors, district
OCC and NRCS employees who
are themselves or have friends or
family serving in the military.
Always, and in these uncertain times
especially, let us remember them with
gratitude and wishes for their
safe return*

Conservation Calendar

Ag Day at the Capitol
Oklahoma City, March 25

Oklahoma Farm Show
Oklahoma State Fairgrounds
Oklahoma City, March 28-30

Conservation Day at the Capitol
Oklahoma City, April 17

Forestry on the Grow
Western Hills Guest Ranch, Sequoyah State
Park, Wagoner, OK, April 29-30 & May 1

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

District Dateline

Tulsa County CD held its Resource Management Conference, "Storm Water Quality Phase II for Builders, Developers and Municipalities," Feb. 26

Latimer County and LeFlore County CDs shared a display at the Robbers Cave Fall Festival

District Dateline
All Conservation Districts: Please mail, email or fax one-line items about district activities to Mark Harrison/OCC for District Dateline. Thanks!

In Our Thoughts

Beaver County CD Director Dale Long's father passed away Feb. 7.
North Caddo CD Programs Coordinator Carolyn Tucker's mother passed away.
Arbuckle CD Director Creede Speake's wife passed away.
Hughes County CD Director Dorothy Biddle has been hospitalized.
Cimarron County CD Director and past Area I Commissioner Hal Clark's mother, Nell Clark, passed away Feb. 8.
OCC/DS director Lisa Knauf's mother underwent surgery and is hospitalized.

Congratulations

Cimarron County CD Director Hal Clark and his wife Pat celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary Feb. 1.

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

A Note of Thanks

The family of Leonard A. Solomon would like to say "thank you" to the OCC and NRCS staff and the district directors and employees for your kind and thoughtful expressions of sympathy. Your flowers, thoughts, memorials, prayers and attendance at the memorial service will always be remembered and appreciated.

Watershed Rehabilitation Author Inspects Home of Dam Research Congressman Lucas Tours ARS Flood Control Lab

U. S. Congressman Frank Lucas used part of his five-day Congressional Work Period to tour the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Engineering Hydraulic Laboratory near Stillwater. Lucas toured the lab, located just downstream from Lake Carl Blackwell, on Feb. 20 to become more familiar with facilities in areas recently added to the Third Congressional District.

"We wanted to use this tour to introduce the congressman to the research that has been carried out at the ARS lab for the past 60 years and its benefits to conservation programs and to the design of flood control dams," said Dan Lowrance, vice-chairman of the National Watershed Coalition (NWC). Lowrance is also a board member of Stephens County CD and vice president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. Congressman Lucas has a special interest in flood control dams—he authored legislation approved by Congress in 2000 that provides USDA assistance to rehabilitate aging flood control dams across the nation.

The ARS research facility is the only lab of its kind in the nation and provides research used by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop conservation practices such as grass waterways, rock chutes and others. Research at the lab has also resulted in improved designs for flood control dams, including principal and auxiliary spillways and basins. Research is currently being conducted to assist NRCS in plans to rehabilitate aging dams that are becoming possible safety and health threats.

The lab is unique according to Darrel Temple, lab research leader, because it uses water from the 3,000-acre Lake Carl Blackwell in large outdoor structural models to research the effects of flowing water under different conditions. The water is siphoned from the lake using gravity flow, so there is no expense of pumping the water, which makes the research more economical. The lab has been at its current location since 1941. Scientists at the lab also use indoor hydraulic and computer models in their research.

"Not many people are aware that the ARS lab exists," said Lowrance. "It's a place with dedicated and talented people quietly going about research that greatly benefits the people of Oklahoma and the nation. We certainly want Congressman Lucas to know this work is going on in his district."

The National Watershed Coalition, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and Oklahoma Conservation Commission cosponsored the tour with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Would These Guidelines Work For Your District?

Logan County Names First Director Emeritus

Logan County CD named retiring director Elmer Downey as its first Director Emeritus. Last summer the board set guidelines for Director Emeritus status—a retired director with at least five years service on the board who has a desire to continue to contribute time, energy and resource to the district as a non-voting member. The Director Emeritus is invited to attend all district meetings and activities and share knowledge and experience in the protection of natural resources.



Congressman Lucas (second from left) inspects one of the indoor watershed models at the research lab, accompanied by ARS staff. Also on the tour are Darrel Temple, ARS lab research leader (far left), OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls (on the walkway bridge) and NRCS Deputy State Conservationist John Glover (second from right).



(From left) NWC Vice Chairman Dan Lowrance, NRCS National Watershed Rehabilitation Coordinator Larry Caldwell, ARS staff and Congressman Lucas (far right) examine the impact of water on an unvegetated slope in this outdoor model.

A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Feb. 3, 2003, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

District Director Resignations

Calvin Crenshaw - Creek County
Gery McBride - Creek County

District Director Appointments

Adair County - Micky Longshore
Atoka County - Roger Don Richardson
Cimarron Valley - Terry Strader
*Creek County - Frank Paullus
*Creek County - Sam Henderson
Custer County - Lonnie Haggard
Garfield County - Richard Wuerlein
*Kiamichi - Bob Holley
Love County - Larry Taliateno
Major County - Trent Martens
Ottawa County - Earl McVay
Tulsa County - Craig Thummond
Upper Washita - E.L. Fowler

*New Director

Claims/Financial Statement

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement submitted by Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources director, who reported that 302 claims were paid for a total of \$875,941.21.

Agreements

Commissioners approved the agreements listed below, as presented by Ben Pollard, assistant director:

1. Office of Surface Mining to amend the FY2002 Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Simplified Grant to add \$50,000 to the AML emergency cost categories, and
2. Logan County Conservation District to provide payroll costs for Emergency Watershed Program Inspectors not to exceed \$50,000.

Elections

To meet requirements for Conservation District Director Elections for Position No. 2, Commissioners approved a motion to authorize the executive director to certify eligibility of candidates for district director, position No. 2, and approve polling places in those conservation districts that will be holding elections.

NACD Spring Legislative Conference

The National Association of Conservation Districts will host a Spring Legislative Conference on March 17-19, 2003, in Washington, D.C. Mike Thralls recommended that two commission members and two staff members be approved to attend, providing that no additional budget shortfalls are announced. Commissioners approved a motion as recommended, and delegated Commissioners Sandra Drummond and Rick Jeans to attend along with two OCC staff members.

DEQ: Water Quality 303(d) and 305(b) Report

Jon Craig, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Water Quality Division director, gave a status report on the 303(d) list and the 305(b) report. The 303(d) list and 305(b) report are references to sections of the Clean Water Act that became law in 1972. The law said that states would identify the quality of all surface water and submit to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for consolidation with other states' reports. The report would be known as the 305(b) report. However, states did not have to provide the 303(d) list (which is a list of waters that do not meet water quality standards) until EPA identified pollutants for states to consider. Oklahoma's list was in 1991. The list has now

been revised with the assistance of DEQ, OCC, Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Office of the Secretary of Environment, Department of Wildlife Conservation and Department of Mines and would be made public in March. Craig stated the new list is the most accurate the state has produced and will provide a reliable benchmark upon which to base our future cleanup efforts.

Oklahoma Conservation Commission Members

Commissioner Jeans reported visiting with legislators on conservation issues and attending the funeral of Leonard Solomon, former OCC executive director. Commissioner Drummond stated there had been several news articles in the *Tulsa World* about the work of OCC.

Staff Reports

Administration: Executive Director Mike Thralls reported attending the funeral of Leonard Solomon and stated that Commissioner Terry Wyatt was in Houston, Texas, where her daughter was undergoing her medical treatment. Thralls reported meeting with Sen. Rick Littlefield twice the previous month regarding OCC's budget and to provide information on federal funding and on the state cost-share program. Rep. Randall Erwin is sponsoring a bill pertaining to conservation district employees' retirement. Thralls will attend another meeting in Arkansas to discuss the Stamper poultry waste utilization project. He attended an ethanol meeting and the Speaker's Ball. Thralls met with Miles Tolbert, newly-named Secretary of Environment. Thralls presented a newspaper article from the *Daily Oklahoman* about watershed rehabilitation in Roger Mills County.

Assistant Director Ben Pollard attended budget meetings the previous month. Staff also met with state Risk Management personnel to discuss continued coverage for districts and directors. Pollard commended Kim Tweed, executive secretary, on her assistance to conservation districts with director elections. He also commended Mark Harrison, information officer, and Dan Sebert, Conservation Programs division director, on their assistance with the news article on the Roger Mills County watershed rehabilitation project. Staff is working with districts on new confidentiality requirements in the federal Farm Bill related to Oklahoma's Open Records Act and Open Meeting Act.

Financial Management and Human Resources: Steve Coffman, FM/HR director, prepared several financial documents for and attended two meetings with Sen. Rick Littlefield. He also attended meetings on risk management. His staff continues to assist the Shawnee CD with review of financial resources.

Conservation Programs: Tammy Sawatzky, CP administrative officer, reported that the Double Creek Site 4 rehabilitation project in Caney Valley CD is 25 percent complete and the Sandstone Site 17A project in the Upper Washita CD is 45 percent complete.

Water Quality: Larry Edmison, WQ director, stated that in Oklahoma nonpoint source water quality compliance is voluntary, but House Bill 1728 would place total maximum daily load (TMDL) requirements on nonpoint sources in the future and could require regulation. Edmison reported that at its next meeting the Oklahoma Water Resources Board will formally review wetland water quality standards and permanent rules for phosphorous standards in the Illinois River. Water quality staff attended an EPA Region 6 briefing to discuss new Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO)

rules. They will attend a meeting of the Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators (ASIWPCA) in Washington, D.C.

Abandoned Mine Land: Mike Kasl, AML director, reported on an emergency in Willburton. A house sank into a large subsidence that appeared in the early morning of Jan. 6. Another emergency was reported in Haileyville. OCC is examining how subsidence insurance programs work in other states. Kasl attend a meeting in St. Louis, Mo., to discuss reauthorization of the AML program, which is scheduled to end in 2004.

Information Technology: Mike Sharp, IT director, stated that a subsidence was found in the Tar Creek area, but is ineligible for OCC's emergency program since it is not coal mining-related. Sharp stated that staff has completed a draft pollution complaint report.

District Services: OCC Assistant Director Ben Pollard gave the DS report, stating that Lisa Knaufl, DS director, is still assisting the Creek County CD on director appointment issues. Knaufl has been assisting with the OACD State Meeting program agenda. Pollard acknowledged Susan Krug, assistant Attorney General, for assisting districts with Open Meeting Act issues.

Oklahoma Association Of Conservation Districts

Don Bartolina, OACD executive director, presented a flyer for the election of Bill Wilson as first vice president of the National Association of Conservation Districts and a copy of an invitation to the OACD State Meeting banquet that was mailed to all legislators and special guests. Rick Jeans, OACD president, sent a letter to all conservation district employees and directors, and NRCS employees, regarding attendance at OACD activities. Bartolina expressed his appreciation to OCC staff for their assistance with the state meeting. The OACD executive board will meet at the conclusion of the meeting on Feb. 25. OACD will host the NACD South Central meeting in Oklahoma City, July 13-16.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Darrel Dominick, NRCS state conservationist, provided a press release on the President's proposed record-level \$3 billion for conservation programs, a summary of proposed rules for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and a summary of proposed conservation program funding. The NRCS state office continues to receive inquiries from constituents regarding local office closures; however, criteria for closures has not been received. If and when it does happen, Dominick expects swift action. The State Technical Committee will meet this month to discuss EQIP. Dominick will discuss civil rights issues in Oklahoma during the week. Dominick stated that competitive outsourcing of positions is being discussed. He stated that quality assurance review of Zone 1 has been completed and he appreciated the participation of district directors.

USDA Farm Service Agency Report

Ginger Lyde, FSA Conservation Programs specialist, stated that Rod Wanger, FSA Conservation Programs chief, was receiving Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) training for the next sign-up period, as yet unscheduled. She provided a press release on the hard white wheat incentive program. FSA, like NRCS, has no budget and is operating under a continuing resolution.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on March 3, 2003, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

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for Area V, and as OACD area director then vice president while on the Atoka County CD board.

State Representative Randall Erwin received the OACD President's Award for his active support of conservation districts and rural Oklahoma. During the past four years as the chairman of the House subcommittee on appropriations for natural resource agencies, he was instrumental in establishing the Rural Economic Action Program for Oklahoma that has benefitted both the state's conservation cost-share and watershed rehabilitation programs. This year he has introduced legislation to assist conservation district employees with their retirement benefits.

In Environmental Information Awards, cosponsored by OACD and the Oklahoma Press Association, the award for Best Conservation-Related Feature Story went to Shaun Schafer of the Tulsa World for his story, "Hard Work Keeps Old Dams in Place to Control Flooding." The

feature was entered for consideration by being submitted in a scrapbook of news clippings the Caney Valley CD. The Herald Democrat, Beaver, Okla., received recognition for Outstanding Advertising Series Promoting Conservation.

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

The Kay County CD received the Synergy/NACD District of the Year Award for educational activities.

Iris Inler, programs coordinator for the Cimarron County CD, received the Adeline Laird Award. The award is presented to recognize district secretaries or programs coordinators who typify the hard work and caring attitude of Adeline Laird, finance officer at the Oklahoma Conservation Commission from October 1974 until her death in 1984.

Carolyn Tucker, district

secretary for the North Caddo CD, received the Outstanding Conservation District Employee Award from the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees.

John Glover, deputy state conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, presented NRCS Earth Team awards for volunteer service. Volunteer of the Year awards were presented to Robert Strom of the Great Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D), and Pauline Fahle, High Plains RC&D. The Work Group of the Year award went to Todd Forwoodson of the Wilburton Natural Resource Class, and the Most Volunteers Recruited award went to the Tulsa Field NRCS field office.

Mike Thralls presented certificates acknowledging 100 percent attendance of conservation district board of directors to Harper County and Kay County CDs.

WORKSHOPS & TRUNKS

Project WET Workshops
 Karla Beatty
 (405) 521-2384

Project Learning Tree Workshops or Trunks
 Christina Stallings
 (405) 521-3864

Project WLD Workshops or Trunks
 Lisa Anderson
 (405) 521-6704

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