



Conservation Conversation

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

Volume 49 No. 2, February 2004

The 2004 OACD Annual State Meeting

Conservation Districts - Lighting the Way

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) held its 66th Annual State Meeting at the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City Feb. 22-24. The meeting, *Conservation Districts — Lighting the Way*, featured district directors and district and NRCS employees presiding during the sessions. The meeting was cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

Mark Musser of Governor Brad Henry's office extended a welcome from Gov. Henry during the opening session. Musser expressed Gov. Henry's appreciation for the work that conservation districts accomplish and stated that the Governor had demonstrated his support by increasing the appropriation for watershed rehabilitation from \$500,000 last year to \$1.5 million for the coming year - an increase of one million dollars. The state funding match will bring federal dollars into the state to rehabilitate part of an aging infrastructure of small watershed flood control dams.

John Hassell, executive director of the Conservation Technology Information Center, gave a presentation called "Where Has All the Passion Gone," recalling the fervor of earlier conservationists when more people were more closely tied to the land for their food and income.

Clem McSpadden, of McSpadden and Associates, discussed strategies useful in communicating with legislators. OACD has retained the firm to assist with legislative communication.

OACD Conservation Hall of Fame

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 conservation district directors and friends of conservation are inducted in recognition of a positive influence on Oklahoma's conservation programs.

Sandra Drummond of Hominy, Okla., was inducted into the Conservation District Director Hall of Fame. Drummond has served on the board of directors of the Osage County Conservation District since 1990. She was the first woman to serve as a Commissioner on the governing board of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. First appointed by Gov. David Walters in 1993, then reappointed by Gov. Frank Keating in 1998, she completed two five-year terms. She served on the Grazing Lands and Public Resources Committee for the National Association of Conservation Districts and helped organize the first-ever National Conference on Grazing Lands. She helped found the Oklahoma Grazing Lands Coalition and served as its charter chair from 1997 to 2000.

State Representative Elmer Maddux, was named to the Conservation Hall of Fame as a Conservation Friend. Rep. Maddux served for 22 years on the board of directors of the Woodward County Conservation District before his election to the state House of Representatives in 1988. He was acknowledged for championing conservation causes and the role that conservation districts



Lt. Governor Mary Fallin (center) was the guest speaker at the Monday luncheon. Commissioner Terry Wyatt (left) and OACD President Royce Casey present Lt. Gov. Fallin with a copy of "Out of the Dust — The History of Conservation in Oklahoma in the 20th Century."

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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.



Conservation Calendar

Southwestern States RC&D Conference
March 21-24, Westin Hotel, Oklahoma City

Agriculture Day at the Capitol
March 25, Oklahoma City

Oklahoma Farm Show
March 25-27, State Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City

Governor's Conference on
Agriculture & Economic Development
April 13-14, Oklahoma City

"Forestry on the Grow" 9th Annual Forest
Utilization Conference & Equipment Exposition
April 27-29, Wagoner OK

National Land & Range Judging Contest
May 4-6, Oklahoma City

Wanted — Gopher Bait!

The military activities in Iraq appear to have created a shortage of gopher bait. Several districts are looking for a source for the bait to help service needs of their customers. Any district or individual who has a supply and is willing to share, or knows of a source, please contact Mark Harrison at the OCC office.

In Our Thoughts

Carolyn Kelley, Pawnee County CD director, has been diagnosed with a serious illness. Cards or letters may be sent to the district office, 500 Harrison St., Room 100, Pawnee, OK 74058-2568.

Clint Wyatt, age 23, former North Caddo CD district manager, was killed in a car accident Feb. 1.

Congratulations

Kay Caswell is retiring after 24 years of service to Harmon County CD on Feb. 26. She wants the commission and all of her Conservation friends to stay in contact with her at her new address- Ben and Kay Caswell, 4323 Crescent Drive, Granbury, TX 76049, (817) 326-6390.

Congratulations

Miller's *Gas and Grub* of Thomas was recognized as "Business of the Year" by the Thomas Chamber of Commerce. Bertha Miller, a Deer Creek CD board member, and her late husband Amos opened *Gas and Grub* in 1985. Bertha and four of her children also operate a 150-head dairy and a farming/ranching operation that includes 1,300 acres of wheat. She has served as a Deer Creek CD director since 1999 when she was appointed to fill the unexpired term of her husband Amos who tragically died in a farm accident.

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

OACD State Meeting, continued from page 1

play in protecting Oklahoma's natural resources. As a farmer and rancher, Maddux has provided an experienced voice for agriculture and conservation during his tenure in the legislature.

Larry Adair, Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, received the OACD President's Award for his support of funding for the state's Conservation Cost-Share Program and the rehabilitation of small watershed upstream flood control dams that are reaching the end of their designed life. Rep. Adair was also acknowledged for his support of water quality improvement projects in the Illinois River watershed.

OACD Conservation Awards

For the first time the association announced the OACD Conservation Awards winners during the legislation banquet. An audio/visual presentation was shown, describing the outstanding activities that earned the winners awards in each of three categories. Harold Wooderson of Wooderson Farms was named Outstanding Cooperator. He was nominated by Kay County CD. Carol Gaunt, a director on Deer Creek CD, was named Outstanding Director. Nowata County CD was named Outstanding District. The awards will be presented in a ceremony in the Governor's Blue Room during Conservation Day at the Capitol on March 10.

Information Awards

Mark Thomas, executive vice president of the Oklahoma Press Association (OPA), presented the Environmental Information Awards, cosponsored by OACD and OPA. The award for Best Conservation-Related Feature Story went to Charles I. Burch of the Newkirk Herald Journal for his story, "Taming the Wild Duck," published in the newspaper's Farmer-Rancher supplement on Aug. 21, 2003. The feature was entered for consideration in the contest by being included in a scrapbook of news clippings submitted by the Kay County Conservation District. The Herald Democrat, Beaver, Okla., received recognition for Outstanding Advertising Series Promoting Conservation.

Haskell County, LeFlore County, Latimer County and Kay County Conservation Districts received awards for compiling outstanding news clipping scrapbooks featuring local conservation activities.

Conservation Education Awards

Pamela Bonwell was named Elementary Teacher of the Year in the Conservation Education Award program sponsored by Syngenta Ag Products and the National Association of Conservation Districts. Bonwell she teaches the third grade at Remington Elementary School in Tulsa. The Rogers County Conservation District was honored with the Synergy/NACD District of the Year Award for educational activities.

Employee Recognition

Alisa Marshall, secretary for the Comanche County Conservation District, received the Adeline Laird Award. The award was established in memory of Adeline Laird, finance officer at the Oklahoma Conservation Commission from October 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.

Paula Templeton, programs coordinator for the Wagoner County Conservation District, received the Outstanding Conservation District Employee Award from the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees.

Earth Team Awards, Partnership Awards

Kirk Schreiner and Becka Redding of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service presented NRCS Earth Team awards for volunteer service. Earth Team Volunteer Awards were presented to Jerry Sanders, Lyle Shingleton, Oklahoma Bluebird Society, Sayre NRCS Field Office, Crosstimbers Resource Conservation and Development Council, Wilburton NRCS Field Office, Tulsa NRCS Field Office, and Great Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council. Les Connor, NRCS assistant state conservationist, presented NRCS Partnership Awards to Gary Taylor, Sequoyah County Conservation District; Hessel Purdy, Kay County Conservation District; Tricia Soderstrom, Lincoln County Conservation District, and Edie Brown, Washita County Conservation District.

A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Feb. 9, 2004, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

District Director Resignations:

Bill Jordan - Garvin
Donald Barrett - Little River
John Wyatt - North Caddo

District Director Appointments:

Arbuckle - Creede Speake Jr.
*Bryan - Don Morris
Cleveland County - Sid Calvert
Custer County - Jack Carpenter
East Canadian County - Pamela K. Mach
Garfield County - Joe Peeper
Greer County - John Birdwell
*Little River - Dennis Ward
*North Caddo - Douglas Kent Eichelberger
Rogers County - George Fraley
Shawnee - Mike Rooker

*New Director

Claims/Financial Statement

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement as submitted by Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources director, who reported a total of \$1,094,626.17 paid in claims.

Stillwater Creek Watershed Implementation Project

Larry Edmison, Water Quality Program director, introduced Joe Creech, Stillwater Creek Project coordinator, and Bob Priess, Payne County CD director. Priess told the Commissioners that the Payne County CD board was excited about beginning work in the Stillwater Creek watershed. Commissioners approved practices and cost-share rates for the FY 2001 319(h) Task No. 01-003, Stillwater Creek Watershed Implementation Project as presented by Creech.

Agreements

Commissioners ratified the following agreements, previously approved by Commission Chair Virginia Kidd due to time constraints and presented by OCC Assistant Director Ben Pollard:

a. Grant County CD, Amendment 1 to add project inspection to conservation district duties for cooperation with the Emergency Watershed Protection Program debris removal from the 2002 ice storm.

b. Eagle Environmental Consulting Inc., to provide wetland and waterway delineation and survey services on the Club Lake West 191 AML Project site.

Commissioners approved the following agreements:

c. Noble County CD, Amendment 1 to add project inspection to conservation district duties for cooperation with the Emergency Watershed Protection Program debris removal from the 2002 ice storm.

d. Garfield County CD, Amendment 1 to add project inspection to conservation district duties for cooperation with the Emergency Watershed Protection Program debris removal from the 2002 ice storm.

e. Washita County CD, for cooperation with the Emergency Watershed Protection Program debris removal from the 2002 ice storm.

f. Oklahoma Water Resources Board, to utilize Oklahoma Water Watch volunteers to collect chlorophyll-A samples in addition to routine parameters, to assist in determining impacts from eutrophication in Eucha Lake.

2004 Abandoned Mine Land Program Grant

Commissioners ratified the 2004 Simplified AML Program Grant, previously approved by Commissioner Kidd due to time constraints. Mike Kastl, AML Program director,

stated the grant is for \$1.5 million to provide funding for equipment and design and reclamation of mine sites.

Out-Of-State Travel

Commissioners ratified the following out-of-state travel requests for staff, previously approved by Commissioner Kidd and presented by OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls.

1. Office of Surface Mining CAD Team Meeting, Jan. 26-29, Alton, Ill.

2. Office of Surface Mining Ground Penetrating Radar and Technology Transfer Team Meeting in Rollo, Mo., Feb. 9-10, and Alton, Ill., Feb. 11-12.

3. Missouri Projects WET/WILD/PLT Four-State Advanced Facilitator Workshop, Feb. 10-12, Kansas City, Mo. Commissioners also approved the following travel requests submitted by Thralls:

4. National Association of AML Programs Winter Business Meeting, March 7-10, Annapolis, Md.

5. National Association of Conservation Districts' Spring Legislative Conference, March 14-17, Washington, D.C., for two commissioners and two staff members.

6. EPA Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program Symposium 2004, May 3-7, Newport, R.I.

7. American Water Resources Association Riparian Ecosystems and Buffers Conference, June 28-30, Olympic Valley, Calif.

Allocations to Conservation Districts

Mike Thralls stated that the OCC budget committee, consisting of Commissioners George Stunkard and Rick Jeans, OCC staff Thralls, Pollard, and Coffman, OACD President Royce Casey, and OACDE President Carolyn Tucker, recommended an additional allocation of \$1,000 to each district. The source of funding is the contributions agreements between OCC and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Districts must have a signed agreement on file and current reporting to be eligible for the allocation. The committee also recommended an additional allocation of \$812.50 to Tillman County CD. The committee also recommended that \$5,000 be restored to Rogers County CD's allocation to support the operation of the conservation education reserve. Sen. Stratton Taylor had added funds to OCC's base budget for that purpose.

Commissioners Reports

Commissioner Jeans reported that he, Commissioner Kidd and OACD President Royce Casey attended the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting as well as some directors from Dewey County, Greer County, and Cotton County CDs. Billy Wilson, Haskell County CD, was unanimously voted as president-elect, and Krysta Harden has been hired as the new CEO. The 2005 meeting will be held in Atlanta, Ga.

Staff Reports

Administration: OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls reported that the Governor's Conference on Agriculture is scheduled for April 13-14 in Oklahoma City. He reported on the Governor's FY2005 budget stating that it recommends an additional \$1.5 million for watershed rehabilitation, \$500,000 for the Conservation Cost-Share Program and \$420,000 for priority watersheds. Staff met with Mary Jane Calvey, Department of Environmental Quality, regarding Tar Creek. Thralls reported on a bill sponsored by Rep. Clay Pope regarding the Geographic Information Systems Council. He reported that staff is working to bring conservation districts under the state risk management system and that will require a statutory change. OCC Assistant Director Ben Pollard, reported that OCC will have a booth at the Oklahoma Farm Show.

Financial Management and Human Resources:

Steve Coffman, FM/HR director, reported that the Human Resources position is currently advertised with a closing date of Feb. 27. Coffman acknowledged Sec. of Agriculture Terry Peach for his support in gaining assistance for CORE problems and questions. Coffman underscored the importance of risk management for districts being transferred to the state's risk management program.

Conservation Programs: Tammy Sawatzky, CS acting director, reported continued work with Caney Valley CD, Department of Central Services and the Westchester Fire Insurance Bonding Company to get a new contractor to complete the watershed rehabilitation project on Double Creek Site 1. Rehabilitation of Sandstone Creek Site 12 in the Upper Washita Conservation District started Jan. 12. Districts were provided with a Cost-Share Program Handbook on computer disk. The Oklahoma Environmental Education Coordinating Committee was named Outstanding Organization at the recent OKAEE meeting. Sawatzky recognized Karla Beatty, OCC education coordinator, for her contribution to the success of the committee.

Water Quality: Larry Edmison, WQ director, provided an update on Water Quality Standards development in Oklahoma, explaining that the Quapaw Tribe is proposing a set of standards to apply to their waters. Other tribes are also considering such action, which may become confusing in Oklahoma where Indian lands are not found in contiguous reservations as in other states. He also mentioned the upcoming Unified Watershed Assessment meeting to develop improved ways to rank watershed problems.

Abandoned Mine Land: Mike Kastl, AML director, summarized ongoing AML Program activity. There are two AML sites currently being reclaimed in Rogers and LeFlore Counties. OCC is beginning to process claims under the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP).

Information Technology: Mike Sharp, IT director, reported being involved with several Tar Creek planning activities. Working with the Department of Environmental Quality, a 380-acre site on the west side of Commerce was identified as the next Tar Creek reclamation project. Sharp reported that Rep. Pope's bill, HB2457, dealing with strengthening the GIS Council was introduced into the House. OCC serves as the chair of the Council.

District Services: Lisa Knauf, DS director, attended board meetings in Blaine County, Shawnee, Custer County and Oklahoma County CDs. She provided training to secretaries in Blaine County and Custer County CDs. Knauf stated she has responded to questions on the NRCS agreement.

Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Don Bartolina, OACD executive director, reported that McSpadden and Associates has been retained to assist OACD with legislative issues. Conservation Day at the Capitol is March 10 with an awards presentation in the Blue Room.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Darrel Dominick, NRCS state conservationist, reported that NRCS had received a portion of its budget. An allocation of \$2.2 million has been earmarked for Tar Creek. The State Technical Committee will meet Feb. 10 to discuss this year's issues. Following the meeting, there will be a national listening session to discuss proposed rules for the Conservation Security Program. Dominick congratulated the Payne County CD on work on the Stillwater Creek project.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held March 1, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

For Children and Grandchildren of Directors and Employees

OACD Auxiliary Offers Scholarship

The Auxiliary of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts is sponsoring a scholarship for children and grandchildren of directors and employees of Oklahoma's conservation districts. The scholarship is limited to seniors who will graduate in the spring of 2004 and attend college as a full-time freshman in the fall of 2004.

To participate, eligible students will submit an essay of 500 words or less, based on the previous year's Soil and Water Stewardship theme from the National Association of Conservation Districts. For the 2004 essay contest the theme is *Food for the Future*.

The winner for Oklahoma will receive \$100. The winning essay will then be entered in the scholarship competition sponsored by NACD South Central Region Auxiliary. The winner of the regional scholarship will receive \$250. The deadline for the Oklahoma scholarship is July 5.

For further information and full entry details, contact OACD Auxiliary President Pat Sharp, 3400 Barberry Court, Edmond, Okla., 73103, or email psharp@mail.icnet.net.

Black Mesa Ecological Academy Planned in Kenton

The Oklahoma Section of the Society for Range Management is seeking high school students to participate in the Black Mesa Ecological Academy. The academy will be held June 20 - 25 at Kenton, Okla. The academy will be a cooperative effort among Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Students will explore the rangelands of the five-state area. The five-day academy provides an opportunity to learn more about range and wildlife management, conservation planning, plant identification, conflict resolution and leadership development. All these subjects are integrated using new technology such as global positioning systems and geographic information systems.

The course will be taught by members of the Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas sections of the Society for Range Management, along with personnel from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, and conservation districts. Additional staff selected from the five states will include animal scientists, historical re-enactors, tourism specialists, and others with expertise in rangeland related issues.

Applications are due June 1 along with a \$200 tuition payment. For additional information contact Chris Moseley at (405) 744-9515, Mark Moseley (405) 742-1235, your local conservation district, NRCS or Extension offices. Applications can also be obtained at <http://www.agr.okstate.edu/OKSRM/range.htm>

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**WORKSHOPS
& TRUNKS**

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