



# Conservation Conversation

## First Place Results Noted, Contest Winners Honored

### 2004 Land Judging

Oklahoma City — Over 150 teams of teenage FFA and 4-H members competed in the 53rd annual National Land and Range Judging Contest, held May 4-6, according to contest cochairman Royce Casey, of Kiowa, Okla. Casey is president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, the contest's principal sponsor. "We had teams from over 36 states competing this year," Casey said.

Casey notes the idea of a land judging contest was invented by three Oklahoma conservationists in 1942. They decided which soil qualities could be judged and developed score cards to test skills. The idea caught on and Oklahoma City has been hosting the national contest since 1952.

The 4-H and FFA participating teams qualified for the national event by placing among the top five teams at contests held in their home states. Casey said the teams match skills in judging the adaptability of land for various purposes including farming, range management, and homesite construction. An adult category is provided to allow coaches, team alternates and others interested in soil to compete.

"The contestants take turns examining the soil in pits and trenches dug especially for the contest," Casey said. He noted that the skills the teens test at the contest involve principles that can be valuable in career fields like environmental and agricultural management, natural resource conservation, home building and construction.

The actual contest site remains a secret until contest day, so no one has an unfair advantage. Contestants and coaches gather on contest morning to find out the official contest location. They then travel to the site, with a police escort, in a caravan of over 100 cars spanning several miles. This year's Land and Range Judging Contest was held May 6 at the USDA Agricultural Research Service Experiment Station at Fort Reno, near El Reno, Okla.

The event ended Thursday night with an awards banquet in the Great Hall of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum when the day's freshly-tabulated results were announced. National championship trophies were awarded to team and individual winners in each category



Fort Reno hosted the 2004 Land & Range Judging Contest.



Land Judging, continued on page 2

(From left) Fredia Rice, past president of OACDE, helps Royce Casey, OACD president, present awards to an FFA team at the Land & Range Judging Contest Banquet. Les Tilley, Career and Technical Education (far right), announced the winners during the ceremony at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

## In This Issue

2004 National Land & Range Judging Contest  
First Place Results  
Volunteer Honored

Tulsa County CD Photos from Soil Painting and Butterfly Garden Workshops

### 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 farming puts first things first by attending to the needs of the soil — by seeing to it that the starting-off place, the base, is put into health and kept that way. Any other approach, no matter what it may be, always has and always must lead eventually to agricultural disaster."*

Hugh Hammond Bennett

# Conservation Calendar

Orientation for New District Employees  
May 25-26, Oklahoma City

Legislature adjourns sine die  
May 28

Memorial Day, State Holiday  
May 31

All Oklahoma Chapter Soil & Water  
Conservation Society Annual Meeting  
June 16-18, Stillwater

NACD Executive Board Meeting  
June 28 - July 1, Oklahoma City

NACD South Central Region Meeting  
July 14-16, Fort Smith, Ark.

## District Dateline .....

**Texas County CD/NRCS** sponsored an Ag Career Day on May 19th for grades 9-12. The district will sponsor a Texas County student to attend the Black Mesa Ecological Camp. The district also donated funds to assist with the camp's funding and to the National Land Judging Contest. **Texas County CD** will assist Guyton Junior High with Science Camp and the school will assist the district with Blue Thumb .....

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

## For Sale by Cimarron County CD:

1. 11' Mayrath auger with under carriage and 1" center shaft for flighting. \$370
2. 20' Mayrath auger with under carriage and 1" center shaft for flighting. \$500
3. 3/4 HP electric 110 volt motor that will fit either auger. \$120.00.

All are in excellent, nearly new shape. Used only in the 1988-89 CRP grass seed sales when the district was cleaning seed, but no longer needed. Jim Belford, 580-544-3048.

## In Our Thoughts

Hessel Purdy, Kay County CD info/educ. specialist, lost his sister May 9.

John Inselman, Noble County CD director, lost his wife May 7.

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

## Land Judging, continued from page 1

of competition including land judging, range judging, and homesite evaluation. Each category included FFA, 4-H and adult divisions.

OACD President Royce Casey presented the Land Judging and Homesite Evaluation awards. Dr. Merwyn M. Kothman, national president of the Society for Range Management joined Casey for presentation of the Range Judging awards.

In Land Judging, FFA competition, the Madison Central, Richmond, Ky., chapter won in the team category and the first place individual winner was Keenan Wiley from Richmond, Ky. In the 4-H competition the Barbour County, Philippi, W.V., chapter, was the winning team, and Bridgett Piotter from Denver, Ind., was the individual winner. The adult category winner was Bruce Hunnicutt.

In the Range Judging Contest, the Gans, Okla., chapter won the FFA team competition, and Cameron Kirkland from Cleburne, Texas, took the first place individual FFA award. The Kendall County, Texas, chapter, won the 4-H team category, and Grant Giles from Boerne, Texas, placed first in the individual category. Terry Baize from Hamilton, Texas, won in the adult category.

In Homesite Evaluation, the Columbia City, Ind., chapter won the FFA team competition, and Gia Drew from Columbia City, Ind., took the first place individual FFA award. The Barbour County, W.V., chapter won the 4-H team category, and Lyndsa Reckner from Palmetto, Fl., placed first in the individual category. Glen Jones from Denver, Ind., won the adult competition.

Each year, an individual is selected as official Contest Honoree in recognition of outstanding support or contribution to the event. This year Raymond Cockrum received the 2004 National Land and Range Judging Contest Honoree Award. Cockrum has worked behind the scenes at the contest for many years, helping to tabulate the scores on contest day before the results are rushed to the Land and Range Judging Contest awards banquet. Cockrum served on the state advisory staff

of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education as central district supervisor and as state FFA Alumni Advisor until he retired in 1996.

Casey credits the OACD Auxiliary, conservation district employees association and Oklahoma conservation districts for helping make the contest a success.

"I would like to thank all the conservation districts, businesses and associations who sponsored this educational contest," Casey said. "It takes a tremendous amount of time, effort and money to put on an annual event like this."

"A special thanks goes to the USDA Agricultural Research Service Experiment Station at Fort Reno for hosting the contest site." Casey said, "Thanks also to the Noble Foundation for sponsoring the printed program and the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum for hosting the awards banquet."

Casey said the Auxiliary of the National Association of Conservation Districts sponsored the Social Hour and Dance this year, hosted by the OACD Auxiliary. Members of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Employees assisted with the very vital contest tabulating, which takes place in the few hours between the end of the contest and the beginning of the awards banquet.

In addition to the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, contest cosponsors include the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Oklahoma Farmers Union and Oklahoma Farm Bureau. Other sponsors include the OACD Auxiliary, Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees, Noble Foundation, Frontiers of Science Foundation, NACD Presidents Association, Chisholm Trail Farm Credit, Biltmore Hotel Oklahoma, Sirloin Club of Oklahoma, numerous Oklahoma conservation districts and other businesses and organizations.

## A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

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

### District Director Resignations:

James Cochran - Cherokee County  
Dave Dawley - Lincoln County

### District Director Appointments:

Blaine County - Clay Loosen  
\*Cherokee County - Billy D. Dudley  
\*Coal County - Larry Cometti  
Cotton County - Jack Hudman  
Delaware County - Marshall Houck  
Haskell County - Bill Wilson  
\*Lincoln County - Dan Sebert  
Osage County - Charley Chambers  
Pontotoc County - C.T. Holland  
Pushmataha - Frank Rosenthal  
Valliant - James L. Hicks

\*New Director

### Claims/Financial Statement

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement submitted by Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources director, who reported \$1,335,514.80 in claims March 24 - April 19.

### Agreements

Commissioners approved 34 agreements, presented by Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director. (For more information, contact Mark Harrison at the OCC office.)

### Education Grant

Commissioners approved an "Education in Oklahoma Grant," presented by Karla Beatty, OCC education coordinator, to allow the correlation of conservation education curriculum in Oklahoma to state education standards.

### Out-of-State Travel

Commissioners ratified the following requests for out-of-state travel previously approved by OCC chair Virginia Kidd due to time constraints.

1. OSM instructor training course, April 18-23, 2004, Leesburg, VA. (Shellie Willoughby)
2. Wetlands Working Group Meeting, April 27-29, 2004, Chicago, IL. (Dan Butler, Chris Dubois)

Commissioners approved the following out-of-state travel requests.

3. EPA Quad State Poultry Dialogue & Waste to Energy Meeting, May 5-6, 2004, Fayetteville, AR. (Larry Edmison)
4. USEPA/ASIWPCA Watershed Working Lands Summit, June 21-24, St. Louis, MO. (Larry Edmison, Dan Butler)
5. 2004 National Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Forum, June 22-24, 2004, Hershey, PA. (Shannon Phillips)
6. Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators Annual Meeting, August 8-10, 2004, Chicago, IL. (Larry Edmison, Dan Butler)

### EPA Region 6 Nonpoint Source Watershed Conference

Commissioners approved a motion for three members to attend EPA Region 6 Nonpoint Source Watershed Conference in Oklahoma City, June 7-10.

### Best Management Practice: Metal Creek Jacks

Commissioners approved a request presented by Monty Ramming, Fort Cobb Creek Project coordinator, to add metal creek jacks as a best management practice for shoreline protection and channel stabilization for the Cobb Creek/Fort Cobb Reservoir Project. The jacks will slow the speed of the creek to allow sand and sediment to be deposited around the jacks.

### EQIP Average Cost List

Larry Edmison, Water Quality director, stated that staff will request the Commission to update the price of cost-share practices for use in the Cost-Share Program and Priority Watershed Program when NRCS updates the EQIP average cost list, usually in November of each year.

### Commission Members Reports

Commissioner J.T. Winters invited all members to attend the first Commodity Conference, hosted by the Oklahoma Farm Bureau. Commissioners Winters, Kidd, Terry Wyatt and Rick Jeans reported the Governor's Conference on Agriculture and Economic Growth was very good. Commissioner Winters also stated Ralph Chain, an Area I producer, was inducted into the Agriculture Hall of Fame. Commissioner Jeans spent time at the Capitol on OCC's budget.

### Staff Reports

**Administration:** Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, reported on OCC's FY05 budget request, stating a bill passed placing the same funding as FY04 in OCC's FY05 budget with additional funding for pay increases for state and district employees. Employees will begin to receive an additional \$1,400 annually on Jan. 1, 2005, and an additional \$700 annually on July 1, 2005. A bill was written in committee but has not been considered that provides for additional program funding. He provided a handout outlining OCC's priority in restoring essential base funding. Thralls stated that OCC may receive \$500,000 from the REAP fund, which funds the cost-share program and the priority watershed program. Each program would receive \$250,000. Should the REAP fund yield additional funds during the year, OCC may receive more funding for watershed rehabilitation. Thralls provided a second handout summarizing OCC's budget from FY2002 through FY2004. A meeting was held with the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate to discuss previous budget cuts, the critical need to restore those funds, and the need for additional program funding. Staff was informed that there is between \$16 and \$20 million of state funds that has not been appropriated. If this money is not used for tax cuts it may become available to agencies. Thralls stated that an announcement on the Conservation Programs Division director position should be made within the next seven to ten days and thanked Commissioner Winters for serving on the interview committee.

Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director, stated that he has spent considerable time working on OCC's budget. He is also working with OCC and NRCS staff to renew the NRCS Contributions Agreement that helps support conservation districts. Pollard stated that Mark Harrison, information officer, provided a display during the Governor's Agriculture Conference and has worked closely with OACD on the National Land and Range Judging Contest activities. Pollard stated that OCC's web page is being updated, and commended Dianne Ireton for her efforts with the project.

**Financial Management and Human Resources:** Steve Coffman, FM/HR director, and his staff spent considerable time working on budget issues. The CORE system allows agencies to begin preparation of the FY2005 budget modules and accounts. He introduced Lynn Weldon as the new Human Resources specialist.

**Conservation Programs:** Tammy Sawatzky, CP acting director, reported that the Double Creek Site 1 Rehabilitation Project should be completed in four weeks. Double Creek Site 5 will be advertised later this month. Sawatzky met with the Washita County CD and local church camp officials to discuss relocation of camp structures for

rehabilitation of Calvary Creek Site 6. Staff provided Cost-Share Program training for new employees in the North Fork of Red River CD and assisted districts with the development of Emergency Action Plans for high hazard watershed structures.

**Water Quality:** Larry Edmison, WQ director, reported on a wetlands meeting in Chicago. EPA is proposing to change its wetlands funding approach by shifting funds to support programs. Staff attended a meeting with Arkansas and Oklahoma officials to discuss monitoring strategies for scenic rivers on the state line. Edmison will be meeting with Latimer County, Cherokee County and LeFlore County CDs to discuss completion of the Illinois River and Wister priority watershed projects.

**Abandoned Mine Land:** Mike Kastl, AML director, reported that the FY2002 grant is almost completed. A clean streams project may be removed from the grant to allow the completion. The bid opening for the West Chelsea project in Rogers County is scheduled for May 13. Six sites under the Emergency Watershed Protection Program have been completed and OCC received \$141,000 for administration.

**Information Technology:** Mike Sharp, IT director, attended the Interstate Technical Group on Abandoned Underground Mines in Tucson, Ariz., and received information that will be helpful with the Tar Creek project. Staff met with Kansas AML staff to discuss the possibility of a joint project concerning an underground lead and zinc mine on a segment of Stateline Road south of Baxter Springs, Kan. Sharp and staff negotiated an engineering contract with C.H. Guernsey for design of the Enochs Tar Creek AML project on the north side of Commerce. Sharp reported that language for the Geographic Information Systems Council bill went to Rep. Clay Pope in draft form.

**District Services:** Lisa Knauf, DS director, reported that she reviewed 64 Long Range Plans. Fourteen plans were returned for revisions and 19 extensions were granted. There will be an orientation session for employees with four years of service or less on May 25-26 in Oklahoma City.

### Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Don Bartolina, OACD executive director, stated that budget information was sent to all conservation districts. The National Land and Range Judging Contest begins May 4. The OACD executive board will meet May 5. The NACD executive board will hold a meeting in Oklahoma June 28-July 1 and has requested a field tour.

### USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Darrel Dominick, NRCS state conservationist, stated that holding an NRCS all employees meeting was good for morale. He reported that the Conservation Innovation Grants rule was released along with the announcement of \$15 million available for proposals. Four targeted concerns for EQIP application pools are AFO/CAFO, Irrigation Water Conservation, Manure Transfer, and Animal Waste Lagoon Closures. The State Technical Committee will meet May 20 to review the Grassland Reserve Program interim rule and recommendations. Dominick expressed pleasure in signing an agreement with OCC regarding Tar Creek.

### USDA Farm Service Agency

Rod Wanger, Conservation Program chief, reported the acreage reports for crops in northwest Oklahoma will end May 16. The state office has sent a questionnaire to soybean producers regarding a referendum checkoff.

### Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held June 7 in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

# Tulsa County CD: Soil Painting and Butterfly Gardens

Tulsa County Conservation District sent some photos taken during two recent events held the same week. On Thursday, May 6, the district hosted a workshop on "painting with soils." The properties that make soils different — mineral content, permeability, pH, etc. — also give them different pigments. The district employed a crafts workshop to raise participants' awareness of soil qualities.

On Saturday, May 8, the district sponsored a butterfly gardening workshop hosted by the Sanders Nursery in Coweta. (Yes, that's George Stunkard, Wagoner County CD director and Area III Commissioner, cleaning off one of the tables — he is the manager of the nursery. In another picture, that is Cheryl Cheadle's mother, Mary Packham, working with Cheryl on a garden planter.)



## 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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Mike Thralls, Executive Director  
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director

### COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Area I J.T. Winters Jr. Mooreland  
Area II Rick Jeans Tonkawa  
Area III George Stunkard Coweta  
Area IV Terry Wyatt Hollister  
Area V Virginia Kidd Poteau

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