



Conservation Conversation

Legislators & NRCS Honor Commissioner Terry Wyatt

Senator Gilmer Capps and Representative Don Armes presented a Legislative Commendation to Area IV Conservation Commissioner Terry Wyatt at the Commission's regular monthly meeting June 7. John Glover, deputy state conservationist, presented Wyatt with a Certificate of Appreciation from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The event marks Wyatt's last meeting as a commissioner. Appointed to Conservation Commission May 20, 1999, she will have completed her five-year term on June 30.



Senator Gilmer Capps and Representative Don Armes presented a legislative Citation of Commendation to Commissioner Terry Wyatt. Above, from left, are Commissioners George Stunkard and Virginia Kidd, Sen. Capps, Commissioner Wyatt, Rep. Armes, Commissioner J.T. Winters and OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls.

Wyatt and her husband Fred



John Glover, NRCS deputy state conservationist, presented Wyatt with a Certificate of Appreciation.

own a farming and ranching operation near Hollister. A third-generation farmer, Wyatt has served on the board of directors of the Tillman County Conservation District since 1997. She is a member of Class Two of Conservation Leadership 2000. She has served on the state Consumer Credit Commission, Textbook Committee and the Ad Valorem Task Force. She serves on her area Vo-Tech's Farm Management Board, and as a director in the Sirloin Club she helps with the Oklahoma Junior Livestock Show and the National Land and Range Judging Contest. Wyatt is a member of the Hollister First Baptist Church, Oklahoma Cattlewomen's Association, Frederick Chamber of Commerce, Farmers Union and Farm Bureau, and a lifetime member of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts.

The text of the Citation of Commendation:

TERRY WYATT

Whereas, TERRY WYATT, a third-generation farmer and rancher in Hollister, Tillman County, Okla., is being honored for five years of service as Area IV Commissioner on the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. TERRY WYATT was appointed by Governor Frank Keating in 1999 and has also served for seven years on the Tillman County Conservation District Board of Directors; and,

Whereas, TERRY WYATT has championed important conservation issues for southwest Oklahoma and the state including the conservation cost-share program for producers, the upstream flood control program, and conservation education for Oklahoma's children; and

Whereas, TERRY WYATT has demonstrated a strong commitment to conservation through her lifetime membership in the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and as a graduate of the Conservation Leadership Program; and

Whereas, TERRY WYATT is a tireless advocate for agriculture and conservation issues, serving in numerous leadership positions at local, state and national levels; and

Whereas, TERRY WYATT is an outstanding example of the willingness of women and men to accept responsibility to work for the good of their state and nation improving our environment and protecting our precious natural resources; and,

Whereas, the entire Oklahoma State Legislature takes great pleasure in extending recognition and deep appreciation to this worthy individual,

Now therefore, pursuant to the motion of Senator Gilmer Capps and Representative Don Armes, the Legislature of the Great State of Oklahoma extends to TERRY WYATT

Sincere Congratulations and Directs that this Citation be Presented.

(Signed) Gilmer Capps, Assistant Majority Leader; Don Armes, State Representative;
Cal Hobson, President Pro Tempore; Larry Adair, Speaker of the House

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Meet New Faces at OCC

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.

*"The doors of wisdom
are never shut."*

Benjamin Franklin

Conservation Calendar

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



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



Oklahoma Association of RC&D Councils
Annual Summit
Aug. 1-3, Quartz Mountain Resort



Oklahoma Grazing Lands Association Conf.
"Grazing Lands Dollar\$ and Cent\$,"
Aug. 13 & 14, Oklahoma City
(Jack Eckroat, 405.742.1283)



The new **Sammy Soil** costume is available for check-out through Karla Beatty, 405/521-6788

In Our Thoughts

Keith Wilson, Dewey County CD director had bypass heart surgery May 24. He is recovering at home and doing well.

Janet Maloney, Caney Valley CD director, passed away Tuesday, May 18.

Mason Mungle, former OCC executive director, lost his mother Becky June 3.

OCC/AML staffer Dianne Ireton's mother is recovering from injuries sustained in a auto accident June 8.

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

Please include dates!!!!!!!

For Sale by Cimarron County CD:

1. 11' Mayrath auger with under carriage and 1" center shaft for flighting. \$370
2. 3/4 HP electric 110 volt motor that will fit the auger. \$120.

Both 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.

National Honor Awarded to Dan Butler

At the June meeting of the Conservation Commission, Dan Butler was acknowledged for a national honor he recently received. Butler is director of monitoring for the Conservation Commission's Water Quality division.

The National Water Quality Monitoring Council presented the Elizabeth Jester Fellows Award to Butler in recognition of his contributions to water quality monitoring. The NWQMC made the presentation at its 2004 National Monitoring Conference in Chattanooga, Tenn., May 17. The award is considered by water quality professionals to be the highest honor among the water quality monitoring community.

"Dan Butler has been a leader and pioneer in water quality monitoring for over 20 years," said Miles Tolbert, state Secretary of Environment. "His focused vision and perseverance are responsible for many of the biological and habitat assessment methods that are now the basis for biocriteria implementation in Oklahoma. Streams that Butler surveyed for early statewide Nonpoint Source Assessments remain the focus of many of the state's water quality programs almost two decades later. His recent efforts are leading Oklahoma towards a monitoring strategy with its first-ever probabilistic monitoring program," Tolbert said.

"In the late 1980s Oklahoma's ambient monitoring programs were discontinued due to lack of funding," said Mike Thralls, executive director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. "Dan's leadership helped overcome these problems by forging interagency approaches. The renewed recognition of the value of monitoring programs in Oklahoma led to an additional \$1.5 million of funding annually to state monitoring programs for assessment of beneficial use attainment," Thralls said.

Butler was cited for leadership in building a solid foundation for monitoring in Oklahoma. This includes a comprehensive set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for monitoring and an aggressive quality assurance (QA) program for field collections and bioassessments. He instituted an aggressive QA program for data entry and management in his monitoring programs. The SOPs form the backbone of the Conservation Commission's monitoring efforts and have been widely adopted with minimal modifications by other state agencies and tribes.

Butler was also cited as an exceptional teacher, training both professional and volunteer monitors in OCC's Blue Thumb Program and other educational programs directed towards teaching the public about water quality. Butler has provided interagency training for habitat assessment and fish identification. He is training tribal environmental staff in Oklahoma and has helped several tribes develop the framework of their environmental monitoring programs. He has also served as a science mentor for gifted high school students at the Oklahoma School for Science and Mathematics

"Dan is usually a first choice for any technical working group addressing water quality in Oklahoma," said Larry Edmison, director of the Conservation Commission's Water Quality division. "Dan's work in water quality monitoring has influenced environmental programs across Oklahoma," Edmison added.

Butler has participated in several national work groups dealing with lake and reservoir bioassessment, nutrient criteria guidance, and biocriteria development. He has also participated in the Oklahoma Water Monitoring Council's Quality Assurance and Monitoring Work Group.

The National Water Quality Monitoring Council established the Elizabeth Jester Fellows Award to recognize individuals for outstanding achievement, exemplary service, and distinguished leadership in the field of water quality monitoring. NWQMC established the award in memory of Elizabeth J. Fellows, who headed the Assessment and Watershed Protection Division in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water.



From left, OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls, Commissioners Terry Wyatt and Virginia Kidd, OCC Water Quality monitoring director Dan Butler, and Commissioner J.T. Winters. Butler received the EJF Award in Chattanooga, Tenn., May 17.

A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met June 7, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

District Director Resignations:

Charles Wyrick - Ottawa County
Carolyn Kelley - Pawnee County

District Director Appointments:

Adair County - Mildred Hamilton
Central North Canadian River - Joe Funck
Central North Canadian River - Frank Austin
Craig County - Dale Tullis
Dewey County - Jimmie Purvine
Garvin - Brent Mynhier
*Garvin - D. Frank Perry
Grady County - John Paxton
Grant County - Daniel Wilson
Kay County - Joe Caughlin
Lincoln County - Ola Bon Fouquet
Mayes County - Jerry Koelsch
Muskogee County - James Roy Johnson
Oklahoma County - Richard Godfrey Jr.
Okmulgee County - Tom Porter
*Pushmataha - Loyd Deaton
*Talihina - Herbert L. Moody

*New Director

Claims/Financial Statement

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement submitted by Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources director, who reported \$1,314,444.57 in claims April 20 - May 24.

Agreements

Commissioners approved 23 agreements, presented by Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director. (For details, contact Mark Harrison at the OCC office.)

Out-of-State Travel

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

1. EPA EMAP Wadeable Streams Assessment Training, May 31- June 4, Lawrence, Kan. (Wes Shockley, Brooks Trammel)

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

2. OSM, GeoExplorer 3 GPS & PC Office, June 8-10, Pittsburgh, Penn. (Shellie Willoughby)
3. NACD South Central Regional Meeting, July 14-16, Ft. Smith, Ark. (3 OCC staff).
4. CTC/Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources, 12th National NPS Monitoring Workshop, Sept. 26-30, Ocean City, Md. (Dan Butler, Shannon Phillips)
5. ASIWPCA Annual Meeting, Aug. 8-10, Chicago, Ill. (Mike Thralls, Larry Edmison, Dan Butler)

2004 Legislation

OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls gave an overview of legislation affecting OCC and districts from the recent session, listed below.

Appropriation Legislation —

- HB 2007 appropriates a base appropriation of \$6,363,318 (signed by Governor)
- SB 1019 appropriates an additional \$754,340 to the commission. Authorizes the transfer of \$500,000 from the REAP fund to the commission. Authorizes the transfer of \$50,000 previously appropriated to the cost share fund to the Conservation Commission Revolving Fund (405). Sets state and total limits for the agency. Authorizes agency FTE limits (subsequently

signed by Governor).

- SB 1031 directs the Water Resources Board to transfer up to \$500,000 from the REAP fund to OCC for watershed rehabilitation. These funds would come from funds collected above the \$5,076,485 appropriated from the REAP fund for FY2005. The bill also directs the Water Resources Board to transfer up to \$500,000 from the REAP fund to the commission for the priority watershed and/or locally led cost share programs if collections to the fund exceed \$1,400,000.00 above the \$5,076,435 appropriated from the REAP fund for FY2005 (subsequently signed by Governor).

Other legislation

- SB 1020 creates the Conservation Commission Revolving Fund (405) and the Tar Creek Reclamation Revolving Fund (subsequently signed by Governor).
- HB 1823 allows a conservation district to purchase service credit for a member of the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System employed by a conservation district prior to July 1, 1988 (subsequently vetoed by Governor).
- HB 2005 authorizes a pay increase for all state and conservation district employees as follows: Effective Jan. 1, 2005, an annualized increase equal to \$1,400.00 and effective July 1, 2005, an additional annualized increase equal to \$700.00 (signed by Governor)
- HB 2006 sets the annual salary of the executive director (subsequently signed by Governor).
- HB 2457 reorganizes the makeup of the state GIS Council and increases the number of members from 15 to 19. Establishes Office of Geographic Information in OCC and authorizes the position of State Geographic Information Coordinator (signed by Governor)

Commission Members Reports

The Commissioners commended OACD and OACDE for their communication activities during the legislative session. Commissioner J.T. Winters reported attending the new employee training. Commissioner Terry Wyatt stated she had enjoyed serving during her tenure on the Commission.

Staff Reports

Administration: Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, stated that the OCC and district budgets are very tight again and will depend on federal contracts to fill in gaps. He expressed gratitude to NRCS for the opportunity to provide assistance under several agreements including EWP and watershed rehabilitation. Thralls provided an overview of OCC's accomplishments during the year despite severe budget reductions. Commissioner Winters commended Thralls for his leadership, and Commissioner Stunkard stated that the talent of OCC staff is well known.

Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director, stated that he has spent considerable time conducting budget meetings with division directors and preparing next year's budget. He reported attending the State Technical Committee Meeting where the Conservation Security Program Guidelines were announced. He stated that staff had been working with NRCS, the National Watershed Coalition and Gov. Henry's office on a proclamation for the 50th anniversary of the Public Law 566 watershed program. He reported attending the final inspection of the Double Creek Site 1 Watershed Rehabilitation Project.

Financial Management and Human Resources: Steve Coffman, FM/HR director, reported attending division budget meetings and stated that payroll will be placed in the CORE state accounting system beginning Sept. 1.

Conservation Programs: Robert Toole, new CP director, thanked the Commissioners, Thralls and Pollard for selecting him as director of the CP division. He commended Tammy Sawatzky for her work during her tenure as acting CP director and commended all CP staff for their work during the interim. He reported that contract information for Sugar Creek and Calvary 6 sites had been provided to the Dept. of Central Services for contract bidding processes. He provide copies of a pamphlet on watershed research developed in cooperation with the Agricultural Research Service that will be provided to all districts.

Water Quality: Larry Edmison, WQ director, reported that staff is completing transfer of data to EPA's database. He stated that the Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission would meet to discuss monitoring scenic rivers.

Abandoned Mine Land: Mike Kastl, AML director, reported that a subsidence in Hartsorme over a mine abandoned in 1891 would expend a large amount of the program's funds for emergency projects.

Information Technology: Mike Sharp, IT director, reported giving numerous presentations about the McNeely Reclamation Project in the Tar Creek Superfund Area. He reported the Governor had signed HB 2457, expanding the responsibilities and membership of the state GIS Council. Sharp provided copies of the Citizens Pollution Complaint report, prepared by OCC for the Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

District Services: Lisa Knauf, DS director, reported 49 of 63 invited district employees attended the training for new district employees in May. She reported working with NRCS on the contributions agreement and will spend time helping at North Fork of Red River CD due to the retirement of two district employees.

Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Royce Casey, OACD president, reported that Joe Parker, Rogers County CD director, had been appointed to fill the vacant OACD Area III director post. He thanked OCC and NRCS for help with the National Land & Range Judging Contest and reported that 160 teams from 36 states had participated. OACD will host some activities for the NACD executive board when it meets in Oklahoma City beginning June 30.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

John Glover, NRCS deputy state conservationist, provided information on World Water Monitoring Day 2004. He presented a certificate of appreciation from NRCS to Commissioner Terry Wyatt.

USDA Farm Service Agency

Ginger Lyde, FSA Conservation Program assistant, reported FSA county offices were completing work on digital photography. She stated that funding for farm loan programs was pooled June 1 and will be available to producers. She reported on the new Source Water Protection Program being implemented.

Election of Officers for FY2005

Commissioners approved a motion for selection of officers for fiscal year 2005. Area I Commissioner J.T. Winters will serve as chair, Area II Commissioner Rick Jeans as vice chair, and Area III Commissioner George Stunkard as secretary.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held Tuesday, July 6, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Oklahoma Hosts Regional Nonpoint Source Conference

The Oklahoma Office of the Secretary of Environment hosted the Region 6 Nonpoint Source Watershed Conference June 7-10 at the Westin Hotel in Oklahoma City. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 6 consists of Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico and Texas.

The conference, entitled *It's Showtime!*, highlighted success stories in nonpoint source water quality management from the region and across the nation.

Sec. of Environment Miles Tolbert hosted the conference. Speakers from EPA's Region 6 office included Brad Lamb, Region 6 coordinator, and Miguel Flores, Water Quality Protection Division director. Conservation Commission Chair Virginia Kidd provided conference participants with a brief overview of the wide range of conservation efforts in Oklahoma. She recalled seeing eight to ten feet of water flooding the town of Wister in the years before upstream flood control structures were installed.

OCC staff participated in the conference steering committee and gave presentations. Sponsors included the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oklahoma Clean Lakes and Watersheds Association, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service, OGE Energy Corp. and McKinney & Stringer, P.C.



(From left) Conservation Commission Chair Virginia Kidd provided conference participants with a brief overview of the wide range of conservation efforts in Oklahoma. Sec. of Environment Miles Tolbert hosted the conference and welcomed Miguel Flores, director of Region 6 Water Quality Protection Division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Do You Know These OCC Staff?



From left, Robert Toole joined OCC as Conservation Programs Division director June 1. Lynn Weldon became benefits coordinator May 12.

Water Quality specialists working out of the WQ annex in the Ag Building, Jerry Carr joined OCC in May, and Azure Wells, in September 2003.

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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

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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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