



Conservation Conversation

New Area IV Commissioner Dan Lowrance

Dan Lowrance, a lifelong resident of Stephens County, was selected by Gov. Brad Henry to represent southwest Oklahoma on the five-member Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Gov. Henry appointed Lowrance on April 19 for a five-year term effective July 1, 2004. Lowrance attended his first meeting in his new official capacity at the Conservation Commission's regular monthly meeting on July 6.

Lowrance received Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University in 1973 and 1975. He returned home to Alma, Oklahoma, to become partner and manager of W.L. Lowrance & Son Ranch, where he and his parents raised registered Limousin cattle. He served on the board of directors of the Oklahoma Limousin Breeders Association, and also as the secretary/treasurer, vice-president and president.

In 1990 Lowrance was appointed as a director of the Stephens County Conservation District. He was a member of Class One of Conservation Leadership 2000 and has served as Area IV director and vice-president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. He currently serves on the National Association of Conservation Districts Water Resources Committee, and as chairman of the National Watershed Coalition. Lowrance now resides in Duncan, Oklahoma, and is general manager of the Stephens County Fair & Exposition Center.



Dan Lowrance

NACD Executive Committee Meets in Oklahoma

The executive committee of the National Association of Conservation Districts met in Oklahoma City June 28 through July 1. With Oklahoma being the national leader in the number of small watershed flood control dams, the Lincoln County Conservation District and the National Watershed Coalition provided the group with a tour in nearby Lincoln County. The group visited Kickapoo Nations Watershed Dam No. 1-M. The dam was built in 1990, creating Bellcow



The NACD executive committee and members of Oklahoma's conservation partnership at Bellcow Lake.

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Proclamation Highlights Program Anniversary

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Day

Gov. Brad Henry has proclaimed Aug. 4, 2004, as Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Day in the state of Oklahoma. The date marks the anniversary of President Dwight D. Eisenhower signing into law the federal Watershed Protection and Flood Control Program, Public Law 83-566, that made 982 flood control dams and other floodwater retaining structures possible in Oklahoma. These dams were built through the partnership of local conservation districts, watershed conservancy districts, county commissioners, municipalities, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and private landowners with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Dams built under PL-83-566, plus those built under other federal programs, give Oklahoma an infrastructure of almost 2,100 small watershed upstream flood control dams.

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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.

"Almost invariably, conservation farming — which is, after all, common sense farming with scientific methods — begins to show results the very first years it is applied."

Hugh Hammond Bennett

Conservation Calendar

Oklahoma Association of RC&D Councils
Annual Summit

Aug. 1-3, Quartz Mountain Resort



Oklahoma Conservation Commission
Meeting, Aug. 2, Oklahoma City



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



On Sunday, April 25, the **Conservation Partnership Running Team** (from left), Ben Pollard, Conservation Commission assistant director and Duane Crider, NRCS district conservationist, El Reno Field Office, participated in the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon. Pollard and Crider competed in the two man relay, each running 13.1 miles of the 26.2 mile course through Oklahoma City. This was the fourth year of the marathon, held to remember and honor those who died in the Murrah Building bombing, including USDA and State of Oklahoma employees.

District Dateline

Cimarron County CD provided trees for Arbor Day and Earth Day plantings at the Cimarron Co. Nursing Home Gazebo Garden. **Cimarron County CD** assisted the Okla. Wildlife and Prairie Heritage Assoc. with two informational and organizational meetings of ranchers to address salt cedar management **Cimarron County CD** and USDA agencies sponsored a Career Fair for 155 students May 19 **East Canadian County CD** cosponsored a free landfill promotion in July ...

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

Bill Sharp, Oklahoma County CD director, was hospitalized in June. He has returned home and is doing well.

Ross Reed, Coal County CD director from 1971 to 2001, passed away July 6 at age 89.

Congratulations

Todd Goodall, Upper Washita CD employee, and his wife have a new baby, Peyton Scott Goodall, born June 17.

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

Please include dates!!!!!!!

Watershed Day, continued from page 1

The small watershed upstream flood control infrastructure is especially important to the state considering the unseasonably high amount of rainfall recently. For the 30-day period of June 7 through July 6, all but a few areas of Oklahoma received above average rainfall, with many areas recording 160 to 180 percent of average rainfall, according to information from the Oklahoma Climatological Survey.

Data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service shows that these dams and associated conservation practices provide \$87.5 million in average annual flood and erosion control benefits providing protection for lives and property, thousands of acres of land and hundreds of bridges and roads and other structures. A number of these dams also provide wildlife habitat, recreation areas, municipal and rural water supplies, and irrigation water. In addition to protection of lives and property through flood control, Gov. Henry's proclamation states that "...these watershed dams improve the quality of life for Oklahoma citizens ..."

Oklahoma's Congressman Frank Lucas felt strongly enough about the importance of these dams to sponsor legislation to rehabilitate the older dams now reaching the end of their designed life, in order to extend the benefits received into the future. The Small Watershed Amendments Act of 2000 was signed into law in November 2000. The federal Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (commonly referred to as the "Farm Bill") in 2002 amended the Small Watershed Amendments Act of 2000 to authorize \$600 million for rehabilitation for fiscal years 2003-2007 — \$275 million mandatory funds and \$325 million in Commodity Credit Corporation funds.

Although Congressman Lucas considers the national program a success, he recently expressed concern about cuts to the program. For fiscal year 2005 the Farm Bill authorized \$55 million in mandatory funds and \$65 million in CCC funds, but so far no CCC funds have been used for rehabilitation. In June a U.S. House subcommittee pared the \$55 million down to \$30 million nationwide. At that time, Bruce Knight, national chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service said that the 18 dams on which rehabilitation work has been completed since the program began had reduced risks to 1,530 people.

NACD, continued from page 1

Lake, by the Natural Resources Conservation Service under the PL 83-566 with sponsorship of the Lincoln County Conservation District and the city of Chandler. The lake supplies water for 7,000 people and over 60,000 people use the recreational areas each year. The drainage area of the watershed encompasses 20,860 acres. Total water storage of the lake is 25,000 acre-feet including 9,387 acre-feet of floodwater storage.

Watershed operation and maintenance technicians Dennis Boney, George Moore, and Johnny Pelley of OCC's Conservation Programs division, and underwater specialist Gene Peters demonstrated innovative techniques and specialized tools they use on the 2,100 small watershed flood control dams in the state. Lincoln County Conservation District hosted the tour, demonstrations and a barbecue dinner.

The group also visited the headquarters of the National Watershed Coalition in downtown Chandler, hosted by NWC Chairman Dan Lowrance and NWC Executive Director Dan Sebert.



Watershed technicians (from left in foreground) George Moore, Dennis Boney and Johnnie Pelley explain replacement parts they have developed for repair of small watershed upstream flood control dams.

A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met July 6, 2004, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Oath of Office

Jana Chicoine, administrative officer, administered the oath of office to Area IV Commissioner Dan Lowrance.

District Director Resignations:

Matt Gard - Major County
Leo Goeringer - Washita County

District Director Appointments:

Comanche County - Erma June Hewes
East Woods County - Edward Short
Johnston County - L. Dean Ross
Nowata County - Robin D. Landrum
Stephens County - Dan Lowrance

Claims/Financial Statement

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement submitted by Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources director, who reported \$1,704,990.07 in claims May 25 - June 22.

Agreements

Commissioners ratified the following agreements previously approved by OCC chair J.T. Winters due to time constraints, presented by Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director.

1. Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Amendment 1, laboratory analysis for water samples for FY2004.
2. Department of Environmental Quality, Amendment 2, Tar Creek Land Remediation.

Commissioners approved the following agreements presented by Pollard:

3. Natural Resources Conservation Service No. 67-7335-0-61, Amendment 4, for training and continuing education of district directors, district and NRCS employees.
4. Attorney General, legal services for FY2005.
5. NRCS No. 68-7335-3-93, contribution agreement, for service to conservation customers.
6. Pontotoc County CD, Wetlands Learning Center.
7. Oklahoma Water Resources Board, funding for implementation of the Project WET program in Oklahoma.

Out-of-State Travel

Commissioners approved the following out-of-state travel request:

Office of Surface Mining, TIPS Steering Committee, July 26-29, Estes Park, Co. (Mike Sharp)

FY2005-2009 Long Range Plans

Commissioners approved 29 district long range plans.

Risk Management

Commissioners approved a motion designating Ben Pollard, assistant director, and Steve Coffman, comptroller, respectively, as the primary and secondary representatives to oversee the OCC's Risk Management Policy, administered by the Department of Central Services.

Stillwater Creek Watershed Implementation Project

Commissioners approved a recommendation submitted by Joe Creech, OCC/WQ Stillwater Creek Project coordinator, to set the average cost of the aerobic septic systems for the Stillwater Creek Watershed Implementation Project at \$3,825 for the system, \$3825 for installation, for a total of \$5850.

Executive Director's Salary

Pollard stated that in past years the Legislature set the salary of the executive director in the appropriations bill; however, this year, the bill states that the Commission shall set the salary. Commissioners approved a motion to set the executive director's salary to remain as it is currently until Jan. 1, 2005, when it will be increased to include the \$1,400

pay raise given to all state and district employees.

Study of OCC And District Employee Salaries

Commissioners approved a motion to reauthorize the district allocation advisory committee to further study future allocations to district operating funds and a recommendation by OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls to include the study of OCC and district employee salaries in comparison with other state employee salaries for recommendations to be included in the FY2006 budget request.

FY2005 Budget Work Program

Commissioners approved the FY2005 Budget Work Program, presented by Steve Coffman. He stated it was developed following meetings with division directors.

FY2005 Districts Allocations For Personnel And Operating Expenses

Mike Thralls stated that the district allocations advisory committee recommended \$3,000 in operating expenses to each district including a \$5,000 increase to Rogers County CD for the education reserve, and funds for one full-time employee at Pushmataha CD and one halftime employee at Deer Creek CD. Commissioner Rick Jeans reported that the committee does not feel the Commission can reinstate district director meeting reimbursement at this time, but will revisit the issue in November or December. Commissioners approved the FY 2005 allocations to districts for personnel and operating expenses as presented.

FY2005 Locally-Led Cost-Share Program

Ben Pollard stated that OCC only received \$250,000 for the Conservation Cost-Share Program and staff has been examining options for allocating those funds to conservation districts. Rather than begin a new program year requiring public meetings and an application and selection process, Robert Toole, Conservation Programs director, recommended making an additional allocation to each district within the current Program Year 7. The funds would be immediately available to districts using priorities identified in public meetings and allow districts to fund approved alternate applicants for Program Year 7. The Commissioners approved the recommendation as presented.

Commission Members Reports

Commissioner Virginia Kidd reported attending the National Association of Conservation Districts executive board meeting reception. Commissioners Kidd and J.T. Winters reported attending the EPA Region 6 Nonpoint Source conference. Commissioners George Stunkard and Dan Lowrance commended Robert Toole, watershed technicians George Moore, Dennis Boney, and Johnny Pelley, and Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition executive director, for putting together a great program for the NACD board. Commissioner Rick Jeans reported Kay County CD will hold groundbreaking for a new office building in July.

Staff Reports

Administration: Mike Thralls, executive director, commended Water Quality program director Larry Edmison and staff for their part in hosting the EPA Region 6 Nonpoint Source conference. He commended Conservation Programs staff and NRCS employee Larry Caldwell for a great job with the NACD board meeting. Thralls stated that with approval of the agreement with the Attorney General, OCC will be working with Assistant Attorney General Joann Stevenson on legal issues. He introduced Stevenson, who was present, to the Commissioners.

Ben Pollard, assistant director, reported attending the Oklahoma Grazing Lands Association meeting and that OGLA will host a range conference on Aug. 13-14. Pollard has been assisting with OCC's budget work program.

Financial Management and Human Resources:

Steve Coffman, FM/HR director, has been working on OCC's budget work program and district allocations.

Conservation Programs: Robert Toole, CP director, reported that the pre-bid site showing for Double Creek 5 is July 19. Toole attributed the success of the NACD executive board meeting to outstanding team efforts by OACD, NRCS, the National Watershed Coalition and OCC staff. Toole stated that NACD President-elect Bill Wilson was extremely impressed with the program and tour. Toole commended the watershed technicians on their work.

Water Quality: Larry Edmison, WQ director, stated that OG&E hosted EPA Region 6 Nonpoint Source Conference participants at the Bricktown Ballpark and the McKinney-Stringer law firm hosted a reception. Edmison reported staff attendance at the Working Lands Summit meeting in St. Louis, Mo., an effort to encourage discussion among state and local environmental and farm agencies. He stated that the 319 program is facing severe budget cuts.

Abandoned Mine Land: Mike Kastl, AML director, reported on two active AML projects and an emergency in McAlester where a hole opened up 160 feet deep, 16 feet long and 18 feet wide. Despite a holiday weekend, the project was completed and public safety restored within 48 hours of AML inspector Henry Roye first arriving at the site. Kastl reported a pre-bid meeting July 20 for Emergency Watershed Program work in Washita County watersheds and bid opening on July 29.

Information Technology: Mike Sharp, IT director, reported that OCC's email system went down and staff worked to restore service and develop an upgrade of the system. Sharp reported working with an engineering firm on the final design of the Enochs Tar Creek AML reclamation project. An agreement is being prepared for Commission approval for assistance from the city of Commerce.

District Services: Lisa Knauf, DS director, reported on attending board meetings at North Fork of Red River and Tulsa County CDs and highlighted a written report.

Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

Don Bartolina, OACD executive director, thanked staff for participation in the NACD executive board meeting. He stated the NACD South Central Regional Meeting would be held the following week in Fort Smith, Ark., and the OACD executive board will meet in Oklahoma City Aug. 6.

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Darrel Dominick, NRCS state conservationist, reported the signup period for the Conservation Security Program is July 6-30. The Lower Salt Fork of the Arkansas River was selected as one of the nation's 18 priority watersheds. He provided copies of a CSP Self Assessment Workbook and CD-ROM. Activities are being planned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Public Law 83-566, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, on Aug. 4. NRCS has begun a pilot evaluation of marketability of eastern red cedar in Payne and Dewey counties.

USDA-Farm Service Agency

Rod Wanger, Conservation Program chief, reported that the Emergency Conservation Program was approved for Creek County due to tornado damage. He reported attending a meeting, *Planting for the Future*, regarding the Conservation Reserve Program.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held Aug. 2, 2004, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Zone 2 Employees Efforts Net Secretary's Honor Award

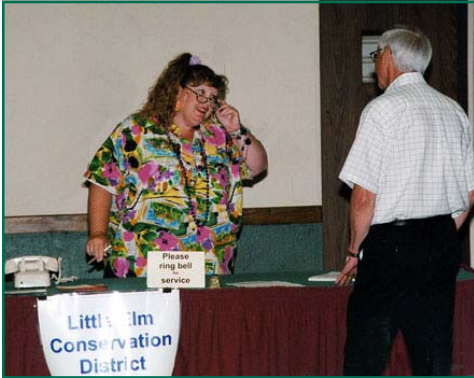
NRCS State Conservationist Darrel Dominick announced Oklahoma NRCS employees serving Zone 2 in northeast Oklahoma received the Secretary's Honor Award for supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights. "This is a very prestigious honor and Oklahoma NRCS is very proud of these employees" Dominick said.

Mark Habiger, assistant state conservationist for Field Operations, accepted the award on behalf of the NRCS employees at the NRCS and USDA 2004 Honor Awards Ceremonies June 25, in Washington, D.C. The award is one of the most prestigious honors bestowed by the Secretary of Agriculture.

"This group went above and beyond all expectations in supporting the United States Department of Agriculture civil rights policies and tremendous outreach efforts. These efforts resulted in increased assistance to the 17 Tribal Nations and underserved communities in northeast Oklahoma" Dominick remarked.

Employees from the following communities received the recognition: Pawnee, Pawhuska, Dewey, Nowata, Vinita, Miami, Jay, Stillwater, Wagoner, Chandler, Okemah, Claremore, Tulsa, Okmulgee, Stilwell, Sallisaw, Tahlequah, and Okmulgee.

Sec. of Agriculture Ann Veneman and NRCS Chief Bruce Knight presented the awards. "The Honor Awards are a tribute to our employees for their commitment to doing the best job possible and serving local communities" Knight said, "The NRCS work force is dedicated to conservation and excellence in public service."



Orientation for New Employees

At the Orientation for New Employees workshop, Lisa Knauf, OCC District Services director (left), and Dwain Phillips, OCC public affairs consultant, performed a role-playing skit to illustrate points about professional service in conservation district offices. The workshop was held May 25-26 in Oklahoma City for about 50 participants with four years or less of district employment.

Workshop topics included ethics, professionalism, sexual harassment, financial management, technical guides and soil surveys. Presenters included district and NRCS field office employees, and NRCS and OCC state office staff.

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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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