



Conservation Conversation

Information for and about Oklahoma's Conservation Districts

Volume 49 No. 8, August 2004

“Solutions at Work,” Fort Cobb Project Tour

U.S. Congressman Frank Lucas was the keynote speaker at a luncheon capping “Solutions at Work,” a July 30 tour of the Fort Cobb Reservoir Watershed Water Quality Implementation Project. Congressman Lucas discussed his efforts to maintain conservation funding levels as agreed to in the 2002 Farm Bill and not spent on other programs.

OCC Water Quality division employees Monty Ramming and Ed Crall led the tour for a bus full of nearly 60 people. Ramming is the Fort Cobb Project coordinator and Crall is education coordinator for the project.

The purpose of the Fort Cobb Reservoir Watershed Water Quality Implementation Project is to demonstrate the benefits of nonpoint source pollution controls on the water resources of the Cobb Creek/Fort Cobb Reservoir Watershed. The objectives are to promote protection and reestablishment of buffer zones and riparian areas and to demonstrate practices necessary to achieve sediment, nutrient and pesticide control to protect the watershed and reservoir and improve water quality.

The tour focused on water quality and erosion control practices being implemented in demonstration projects in the Cobb Creek watershed. The heavily agricultural area contains an abundance of highly erodible “sugar” sand. Though productive, the soil is especially vulnerable to water erosion. The tour included looks at “creek jacks” (so named because of their resemblance to “jacks” used in a children’s game) on Sugar Creek, a riparian restoration area on Lake Creek and a roadside stabilization project.

West Caddo, North Caddo, Deer Creek, and Mountain View Conservation Districts cosponsored the tour, with help from local businesses.



The tour group examined a roadside stabilization demonstration project that help keep soil from washing into an adjacent creek.



The properly functioning “jacks” on Sugar Creek have become almost invisible as vegetation has overgrown the sediment that the jacks caused to slow and settle in place.

USDA Offers Conservation Partnership Initiative Grants

(WASHINGTON) Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced in July that up to \$1 million is available in fiscal year 2004 Conservation Partnership Initiative (CPI) grants for state and local governments, tribes and nongovernmental organizations that have a history of working with agricultural producers.

CPI is a voluntary program that fosters conservation partnerships and funds projects that focus technical and financial resources on conservation priorities in watersheds of special significance and other geographic areas of environmental sensitivity.

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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.

*“What would be the feeling of
this nation should a foreign
nation suddenly enter the
United States and destroy
90,000 acres of land, as
erosion has been allowed to do
in a single county?”*

Hugh Hammond Bennett
from *Soil Erosion A National Menace*, by
H.H. Bennett and W.R. Chapline, USDA
Circular No. 33, Washington, D.C., 1928.

Conservation Calendar

Ouachita Mountains RC&D, "Women in Agriculture & Small Business"
Sept. 16, Forest Heritage Center, Beavers Bend State Park, Broken Bow



Oklahoma Association of RC&D Councils
Board Meeting
Oct. 12, Cordell



Oklahoma Water Resources Board
25th Annual Governor's Water Conference
Oct. 19-20, Oklahoma City



Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture,
"Digging Deeper,"
Nov. 6, Oklahoma City



2004 OACD Area Meetings

Area 1 Enid, Nov. 3, Garfield Co. CD
Area 2 (loc. to be det.) Nov. 4, Kay Co. CD
Area 3 Wagoner, Nov. 17, Wagoner Co. CD
Area 4 Weatherford, Nov. 9, Deer Creek CD
Area 5 McAlester, Nov. 18, Pittsburg Co. CD

District Dateline

Scotty Herriman, Nowata County CD director and OACD vice president, was named Outstanding RC&D Council Member at the Oklahoma Association of RC&D Councils Annual Summit, Aug. 1-3 at the Quartz Mountain Resort
Jesse Snyder, Shawnee CD director, was profiled in the Kerr Center's "Field Notes" for his successful grant project to produce organic sweet corn using parasitic wasps to control ear worms

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

Lyle Shingleton, OCC/AML vegetation inspector, was placed in the intensive care unit at St. Francis hospital in Tulsa in early August.

LeFlore County CD secretary Lisa Grey's father is undergoing treatment for a serious illness.

Hollis Adams, Pawnee County CD director from 1982 to 2001, passed away July 16.

Congratulations

NRCS District Conservationist Kirk Schreiner and wife Carisa have a new baby boy, Jake Nicholas Schreiner, born July 17.

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

Please include dates!!!!!!!

Thank you

I want to thank everyone for the prayers, thoughts and cards after Mother passed away. Our family was blessed from Mother's love and guidance during her time with us. Our extended family of conservation friends help us all get through hard times. Thank you for all your kindness.

Mason and Renee Mungle and family.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish & Wildlife

Private landowners, not-for-profit organizations, tribes, schools, local governments, and businesses are all eligible applicants for funding for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program restoration projects. The program focuses on projects in watersheds where conservation efforts will provide benefits for federal trust species including migratory birds, certain types of fish, and species listed federally as threatened or endangered.

Approximately \$32 million is available across the country for project funding. Financial assistance is provided through cooperative agreements. The Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program has no formal written application. To begin the application process, contact your state coordinators. Log on to <http://partners.fws.gov/HowToPartner/altcont.html> to find your coordinator. There is no specific deadline for the program. Read more at <http://partners.fws.gov/pdfs/grantsgovpartners.pdf>

Districts Support Playa Lakes Festival in Goodwell

Thirty-seven students who will enter grades 4-7 in August came from the towns of Boise City, Texhoma, Stratford, Griggs, Sunray, Guymon, Straight, and Goodwell to attend the Playa Lakes Festival held during July in Goodwell at the Oklahoma Panhandle Research & Extension Center and Oklahoma Panhandle State University. According to festival director Darryl Birkenfeld, on the first day the students knew very little about playa lakes, wastewater reuse, the Beaver River, or the Ogallala Aquifer. By the fourth day the same students knew more about the local water cycle than most adults, Birkenfeld said.

"These kids and their adult sponsors received a crash course on water issues with some of the region's best teachers," he said. Each day they gained a better understanding of surface water hydrology, how Ogallala groundwater is being steadily depleted and what they can do to preserve water and promote a healthy water cycle.

The Playa Lakes Festival was organized by Ogallala Commons, an education resource network active in eight states of the Ogallala Aquifer region. Sponsors included the Texas County and Cimarron County Conservation Districts, Oklahoma Farmers Union, High Plains RC&D, Oklahoma Panhandle State University, the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library at Texas Tech, and the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District.

CPI Grants, continued from page 1

Applicants must submit proposals to the appropriate NRCS state office for project planning funds. Applicants may request between \$100,000 and \$200,000 in CPI funding for the planning phase and must provide a one-to-one match of non-NRCS funding. Up to 100 percent of the match may come from in-kind contributions. Applications must address at least one of the four CPI conservation priorities for 2004 — terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat improvement, coastal resources conservation, livestock nutrient management and minor/specialty crop pest management. In addition, CPI projects must be consistent with the following four CPI objectives. Projects must encourage:

- * Producers to cooperate in the installation and maintenance of conservation practices that affect multiple agricultural operations.
- * Producers to share information and technical and financial resources;
- * Cumulative conservation benefits in geographic areas.
- * Development and demonstration of innovative conservation methods.

NRCS has published a Request for Proposals (RFP) on the agency's website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cpi> and on the Federal eGrants website at <http://www.grants.gov>. Funds will be awarded through a nationwide competition.

Selected applicants will have up to 18 months to develop the partnership, generate producer interest and participation, and prepare a final project plan. Following completion and approval of the final project plan, phase two begins — project implementation. Applicants are expected to secure project implementation funds from a wide range of potential partners including local, state and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

A Summary of the Monthly Meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met Aug. 2, 2004, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

District Director Resignations:

Jay Hague - Alfalfa County
Larry Farris - Okfuskee County
Everette Balkman - Pittsburg County
John Allen Williams - Talihina

District Director Appointments:

Alfalfa County - Charles O'Neil
Latimer County - Derooy Forwoodson
*Major County - Byron Neal Hobson
*Pittsburg County - Ben Murdaugh
Woodward County - Mead Ferguson

*New Director

Claims/Financial Statement

Commissioners approved the claims and financial statement submitted by Jana Chicoine, FM/HR administrative officer, who reported \$1,123,684.46 in claims June 23 - July 20.

Agreements

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

- Kiamichi Conservation District, for watershed construction and related expenses;
- City of Commerce to serve as contractor for the Enochs Tar Creek AML Project.

Commissioners approved the following agreements:

- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, for National Wetlands Inventory map digitization.
- Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, Amendment 3, to extend the time and number of samples from a monitoring well.

Out-of-State Travel

Commissioners approved the following out-of-state travel request, presented by OCC Executive Director Mike Thralls:

NASCA Annual Meeting, Sept. 13-14, Grand Rapids, Mich. (Thralls)

FY2005-2009 Long Range Plans

Commissioners approved long range plans for 18 conservation districts, presented by Lisa Knauf, District Services director.

Conservation Cost-Share Program Year 7

Commissioners approved an amendment to Conservation Cost-Share Program Year 7 Guidelines on recommendation from Robert Toole, Conservation Programs director. The amendment extends the program year allocation deadline to Dec. 31 and adds \$225,000 of FY 2005 funds to the program.

Oklahoma Conservation Commission Members

Commissioners Virginia Kidd, Rick Jeans and George Stunkard reported on attending the National Association of Conservation Districts South Central meeting in Little Rock, Ark. Commissioner Jeans reported that at the meeting new NACD chief executive officer Krysta Harden outlined the new direction for NACD. Commissioner Stunkard enjoyed the tour of the watershed site and the outdoor classroom. Commissioner Dan Lowrance attended a National Watershed Coalition meeting in Washington, D.C., and had the opportunity to meet with Harden, NRCS Chief Bruce Knight, and Dr. Matt Gray, USDA undersecretary for Natural Resources. Commissioners Lowrance and Winters reported attending the Fort Cobb Reservoir Watershed Water Qual-

ity Implementation Project tour the previous week and commended staff on both the project and the tour.

Staff Reports

Administration: Mike Thralls, OCC executive director, reported attending the Fort Cobb Priority Watershed tour and commended the water quality staff. He stated that all five West Caddo CD directors attended, as well as directors from Deer Creek and North Caddo CD. Gary King, of the West Caddo board, presented a discussion at a riparian buffer zone previously damaged by oil and gas exploration. Thralls attended the NACD South Central meeting and agreed that Krysta Harden gave a good presentation. Harden attended the NACD executive board meeting held in Oklahoma in July and sent pictures from the reception at the Bricktown Ballpark. Thralls will attend the Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators meeting in Chicago, Ill., later in the week. Thralls reported that Brad Carson, candidate for the U.S. Senate, has established an advisory group and OACD President Royce Casey serves on this group.

Ben Pollard, OCC assistant director, stated that Aug. 4 marks the 50th anniversary of the watershed program and that Governor Brad Henry had issued a proclamation for the anniversary. OCC has received instructions for preparing next year's budget request, due to the Office of State Finance Oct. 1. The request will be brought before the Commission at the October meeting. Pollard requested that if members have particular issues they would like discussed at their respective OACD Area Meetings to advise the staff.

Financial Management and Human Resources: Jana Chicoine, FM/HR administrative officer, reported staff has been transferring information to begin the new fiscal year. They are preparing to convert the payroll system to the new CORE system on Sept. 1.

Conservation Programs: Robert Toole, CP director, reported Cost-Share Program activities, stating that 203 claims were processed for reimbursement with an economic impact of over \$800,000 to local areas. Staff assisted 38 districts with this program. Karla Beatty, OCC education specialist, prepared two education workshops — one for Project WET and the second for a four-state workshop for Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas. In the watershed program, 24 claims were processed with an economic impact of over \$40,000. For the year, the program allocated \$77,000 to conservation districts with an economic impact of more than \$500,000. Four watershed rehabilitation claims were processed for an economic impact of \$240,000. The pre-bid site showing for Double Creek was held with a subsequent bid opening. The project was awarded for a bid of \$541,145. Toole reported on meeting with the Seminole County Conservation District board to discuss a pilot project to assist watershed operation and maintenance. Toole stated that staff provided technical assistance to 41 districts for operation and maintenance.

Water Quality: Larry Edmison, WQ director, reported that Kendra Eddlemon resigned as environmental programs coordinator to take a teaching position. Edmison reported that the Beaty Creek project closed out the previous week followed by the kickoff of the Spavinaw Priority Watershed Project. Staff signed up 19 applications during the kickoff and predicts that all of monies will be obligated in 30 days. The Illinois River Priority Watershed Project will close on Sept. 30 and all monies for that project will be allocated. He reported that all water quality data is now on the STORET system as required by the Environmental Protection Agency. He commended OCC Water Quality staff

and Department of Environmental Quality staff on the project. Edmison stated that the U.S. House of Representatives' markup of the 319 program reduces it by \$3.25 million instead of the \$29 million as proposed by the administration.

Abandoned Mine Land: Mike Kastl, AML director, reported that two AML sites are under construction. Kastl reported on the Spears house subsidence in Pittsburg County stating that a second house is in jeopardy. Staff is working with the Office of Surface Mining office in Alton, Ill., to use pressurized grout to assist with the house settling. Kastl reported that rumors from the OSM solicitor's office is that Congress will not extend fee collections for the AML program. Members directed Kastl to prepare a letter for the Commission, encouraging the fee collections to continue. Kastl reported on the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, stating that work is complete in Noble and Garfield Counties. The first EWP contracts in Kingfisher and Kay Counties will begin soon.

Information Technology: Shellie Willoughby, GIS specialist, stated that work has been ongoing with the Enochs Project in Tar Creek. The division has been working on restoring email accounts to staff and conservation districts since the failure of the email server in May. IT staff coordinated training for Water Quality staff and conservation district employees on the use of GIS. The Moore-Norman Technology Center provided the training.

District Services: Lisa Knauf, DS director, reported on providing training in districts where resignations and retirements have occurred. Knauf attended board meetings at North Fork of the Red River, Caney Valley, Payne County and Seminole County Conservation Districts. A memo was sent to all conservation districts outlining the new Contributions Agreement between OCC and NRCS. Knauf attended an Open Records/Open Meeting seminar. She is also working on developing job descriptions and standards of performance in Hughes, Tulsa and Okfuskee County Conservation Districts.

Oklahoma Association Of Conservation Districts

Royce Casey, OACD president, stated that the executive board will meet on Aug. 6 and will begin preparations for the area and state meetings. Krysta Harden, NACD CEO, is scheduled to speak at the state meeting. He stated that OACD will be taking a new direction in the near future.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Kevin Norton, NRCS assistant state conservationist/Programs, reported the Conservation Security Program sign-up closed on July 30. Field offices and conservation district personnel are assisting landowners with eligibility, categories and tier placement. Norton stated that Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding to Oklahoma has increased substantially this year. The state received additional funding of \$843,800. With this addition, the total Oklahoma has received exceeds \$20 million. The State Technical Committee will meet Aug. 12 to discuss Farm Bill Conservation Programs. Norton reported that Mark Mosely, state range conservationist, resigned to take a Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative coordinator position in San Antonio, Tex., and that Ed Kephart has resigned to take a position with General Service Administration in Denver, Colo.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be Tuesday, Sept. 7, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City.

Mine Shaft Opens and Closes in McAlester Over Fourth of July Weekend

During the Fourth of July holiday weekend OCC's Abandoned Mine Land Program addressed an emergency in McAlester. A hole that suddenly opened up on the grounds of the Big V Feeds store and close to a railroad track, was the main shaft of Osage Mine No. 5, according to Henry Roye, AML emergency coordinator.

The hole had been sinking periodically for years, but to a lesser degree. A feed store employee said that over the last 30 years the area would sink from two to 10 inches and he would refill it with dirt and rock using a bucket loader. The ground sank again on July 1 and the employee proceeded to fill it but sensed something unusual and drove the bucket loader off the sink area. As he watched, the earth fell away opening a hole large enough to swallow a car — 16 feet wide, 18 feet long and 160 feet deep!

The AML emergency program allows an expedited bid process for contractors so that public safety can be restored quickly. Roye said the rock quarry remained open extra hours to allow the contractor to finish the closure. Despite a holiday weekend, the project was completed and public safety restored within 48 hours of Roye's first arrival at the site.



Employees of Big V Feeds look into a hole where one of the them had operated a bucket loader moments before its collapse. (Photo by Henry Roye/OCC)

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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