

# Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

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**VISION:** Productive Lands - Healthy Environment -- **MISSION:** Helping People Help the Land

## NRCS partners with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission to restore WRP sites

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Recently the NRCS partnered with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) to assist in the restoration of Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) projects. The OCC's role in this process is to provide contract administration for acquiring legal boundary surveying and implementing construction projects. The NRCS still works with WRP project site landowners to design the wetland restoration engineering activities and to establish the planned vegetation on the project. However, this partnership allows NRCS to utilize the State's contracting process, which reduces NRCS administration activities. In 2012-2013, the OCC administered the construction contracts for four WRP sites; two in Tillman County and two in Cotton County. The OCC has also administered the completion of legal boundary surveys on 18 additional projects in 15 different counties.

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Newly constructed WRP project wetland unit in Cotton County

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## ENGINEERING REVIEW



What's in a Diploma?

**Meredith Shiflet, Agricultural Engineer**  
**Perry TSO office**

This past spring, I sat for the Fundamentals of Engineering Exam through the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying, the first of many steps towards becoming a licensed Professional Engineer (P.E.). This eight hour test of knowledge is composed of questions from nearly every science, technology, engineering and mathematics subject possible. Essentially, all of my college course work was fair game for examination. Despite an exam content outline, the sheer amount of material I was responsible for was daunting. Months of preparation and review culminated in the most mentally exhausting day I could imagine. I put my best effort on the line and waited for a letter in the mail with a simple answer: pass or fail. Finally I received the notification that I had indeed done enough to earn the passing grade and was on my way to becoming a professional engineer. Upon successful completion of the Fundamentals Exam, and filing the appropriate paperwork with the state licensing board, I was deemed an Engineering Intern. Yes, after completing multiple college internships and graduating with a bachelor's degree, I was granted the title of "Intern". I have learned throughout my first full year as an engineer with the NRCS, this title is remarkably fitting.

I may have been taught a great deal of information while in school, but that is nothing compared to the practical, on the job learning I will continue to do throughout my career. The real world engineering problems I am faced with require so much more than knowing what page to turn to in a book. Little did I know all those homework problems were really teaching me how to think and evaluate a situation. Learning to work with different people, different environments, and a variety of technical challenges all make my job interesting each and every day. After at least four years of practice and training while working under a licensed Professional Engineer, I will sit for yet another lengthy exam. Similar to a doctor in residency, I still have a great deal to learn and need time to hone my skills. I am fortunate to be surrounded by great teachers who strive to bring out the best in me and the work I do. This year has taught me that my degree and my Engineering Intern certificates are simply invitations: invitations to continue to learn and grow and earn the right to be a Professional Engineer.

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## ZONE 1 REVIEW

### HARPER COUNTY – Buffalo Field Service Center

The Buffalo Field Office along with the Harper County Conservation District and OSU Extension held its annual Harper County Conservation Breakfast on November the 12<sup>th</sup>. David McGough, DC gave an update on programs and services available, as well as an outlook for the next year. The Harper County Conservation District gave an update on services that are available, equipment that is available for rent and also an update on the State Cost Share program. Darrell McBee with OSU extension gave a presentation on nitrate toxicity in feed crops, since Harper County has had several cases of high nitrate feed this year. The Farm Service Agency gave a program update. This year's guest speaker was Dr. Jason Warren, soil specialist with Oklahoma State University from Stillwater. Dr. Warren gave a presentation on cover crops and the benefits they provide, as well as the economic feasibility of cover crops. We had a good turn out with 25 producers attending.

**Harper County Conservation  
Breakfast**



### TEXAS COUNTY – Guymon Field Service Center

The Guymon Field Office and Troy Collier, RSS, assisted Oklahoma Panhandle State University with the annual FFA Scholastics Contests held on November 12, 2013. NRCS staff assisted with scoring and setting up the land judging pits. High school students from the 5 state region participate in this annual event.



## ZONE 3 REVIEW

### CADDO COUNTY – Anadarko Field Service Center

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered with the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) to hold a “hands on” workshop that covered the eligibility and application process for USDA Farm Bill programs for Tribes, tribal members, women in agriculture and producers. The workshop was held on November 12<sup>th</sup> at the Caddo County OSU-Extension Ag Center, located at 1202 E Central Blvd, Anadarko, Oklahoma. The workshops were held at 2:30 and 6:00 pm. USDA agencies participating in the workshop included NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Rural Development (RD). The focus of the training was to review the FSA eligibility process and NRCS application forms and process for their Farm Bill programs. NRCS and FSA staff provided assistance in completing application and eligibility forms. RD provided training on their community and individual program opportunities. In addition, all USDA agencies provided program information to all workshop attendees. Facilitating the workshop was Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison with a welcome provided by David Hungerford, representing NRCS state leadership. NRCS staff that provided technical assistance during the workshop included: Brandy Pietz-Jones, Matt Irby, Danielle Whaley and Russ Igo. Representing FSA were Amanda Tye and Tom McCullough. Shelley Bookout represented RD.



**The workshop was attended by twenty (20) tribal members representing eleven (11) Oklahoma Tribes and seven (7) American Indian women in agriculture.**

### CLEVELAND COUNTY – Norman Field Service Center

The Cleveland County Cattlemen’s Annual Banquet was held November 7, 2013 at the Norman, Oklahoma City Fairgrounds. The Norman Field Office and the Cleveland County Conservation District set up a booth at the banquet & Kim Walker gave a presentation about Farm Bill Programs offered through NRCS in Cleveland County. Approximately 80 potential customers were in attendance.



## ZONE 4 REVIEW

### HASKELL COUNTY – Stigler Field Service Center

On the evening of November 14, 2013, the Stigler NRCS staff assisted the Haskell County Conservation District conduct their 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bankers Conservation Awards Program. There were 100 in attendance including Jamey Wood, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Zone 4. The event was held at the Kiamichi Technology Center in Stigler, Oklahoma. Conservation award plaques were presented to two conservation district cooperators for outstanding accomplishments in performing conservation activities. Awards were also presented to first place winners of Haskell County youth poster, speech and essay contests. Pictured are attendees during the awards presentations.

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32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bankers  
Conservation Awards  
Program

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### PITTSBURG COUNTY – McAlester Field Service Center

The Conservation District along with sponsorship money from banks in Pittsburg County sponsored the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Pittsburg County Bankers Conservation Awards Banquet on October 29, 2013. The Banquet was held at the Southeast Expo Center in McAlester where approximately 250 people were in attendance. The program featured three outstanding district cooperators who improved their land through conservation programs. Also the banquet spotlighted and gave awards to students who competed and won their respective divisions in the conservation districts annual speech, poster, essay, and land judging contests. Pictured below are Glenn and Jerry Davis (center) one of the outstanding district cooperators receiving their recognition from district board members Wayne Sexton (left) and Kenneth Battles (right). Board member Ben Murdaugh is at the podium.

