

# Oklahoma Conservation Planning Pilot Sign-up – Final Report

## Description of Pilot Area

The planning pilot was conducting in twelve counties throughout the state. A decision was made that all Zones of the state would have counties participating in the sign-up. This would provide a good feel for the interest of participating in the sign-up for all areas of the state. The counties were selected based on potential CSP watershed that has been identified for 2007/2008. It was also determined that an entire county would be included in the sign-up even if a portion was outside of the watershed area. It was felt that including the entire county would reduce the confusion of producers and make the pilot easier to implement. See the project area map included as Appendix 3.

The pilot area included twelve counties that cover more than 9.4 million acres of land. The following tables show general information about the counties included in the sign-up:

	Number of Farms	Land in Farms (acres)	Average Size of Farm (acres)	Median Size of Farm (acres)	Market Value of Agric. Products Sold (average \$ per farm)	Net Cash Farm Income of Operations (average \$ per farm)	Government Payments (average \$ per farm)
State Total	83,300	33,661,826	404	160	53,498	8,220	6,166
Beaver	960	1,018,626	1,061	500	124,835	17,004	8,800
Caddo	1,504	710,833	473	293	59,106	10,590	7,322
Choctaw	1,095	337,443	308	180	26,501	4,801	3,446
Custer	802	544,615	679	400	55,432	7,714	9,059
Grady	1,804	601,607	333	185	53,011	12,058	5,300
Kiowa	662	580,490	877	520	75,496	24,063	11,422
McCurtain	1,855	357,991	193	106	80,410	16,604	5,848
Osage	1,420	1,186,354	835	186	44,049	2,261	4,811
Pushmataha	780	309,855	397	166	12,225	-222	1,831
Tulsa	1,146	151,070	132	47	20,447	1,783	1,765
Washington	847	222,882	263	90	23,289	1,987	2,736
Washita	1,006	568,343	565	328	68,997	13,941	9,546

source: 2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE - COUNTY DATA

Land use Acres in County	Cropland	Irrigated Cropland	Farmstead (> 5 acres)	Forestland	Pastureland	Rangeland	Wetland	Urban/Built-Up Land	Water (lakes/ponds)
Beaver	426,731	36,029	879		2,461	678,789		3,024	30
%	36.63	3.09	0.08		0.21	58.28		0.26	
Caddo	310,095	69,015	3,241	62,157	191,689	168,732	20	6,502	7,184
%	37.56	8.36	0.39	7.53	23.22	20.45		0.79	0.87
Choctaw	55,319		89	146,194	190,533	51,900	2,283	4,121	14,220
%	10.78		0.02	28.50	37.14	10.11	0.44	0.80	2.77
Custer	301,280	2,125	3,686		8,953	271,892		6,888	8,271
%	46.98	0.33	0.57		1.39	42.40		1.07	1.29
Grady	194,743	4,605	4,407	24,478	181,086	276,575	119	14,625	1,986
%	27.53	0.65	0.62	3.46	25.60	39.09	0.02	2.07	0.28
Kiowa	377,756	1,779	395	49	10,940	229,597	346	4,822	10,672
%	57.21	0.27	0.06	0.01	1.65	34.78	0.05	0.73	1.62
McCurtain	57,206	79	188	854,877	216,434	11,483	1,849	9,813	20,673
%	4.71	0.01	0.02	70.33	17.80	0.95	0.16	0.81	1.70
Osage	70,438	534	741	338,505	100,874	894,897		18,262	29,982
%	4.78	0.04	0.05	22.96	6.84	60.70		1.24	2.03
Pushmataha	2,036		20	719,848	98,908	1,818	10	2,411	13,074
%	0.22			79.15	10.88	0.20		0.27	1.44
Tulsa	50,714		306	46,820	65,754	65,507	128	101,023	2,194
%	13.47		0.08	12.43	17.46	17.39	0.03	26.82	0.58
Washington	30,970	494	2,006	24,921	48,886	122,615	514	10,920	4,684
%	11.28	0.18	0.73	9.09	17.81	44.67	0.20	3.98	1.71
Washita	399,457	3,301	1,858	30	24,201	172,855		5,771	4,328
%	61.93	0.51	0.29		3.75	26.81		0.89	0.67

Demographic Data for the counties is included as Appendix 1

By including watersheds (groups of counties) in all Zones of the state, tremendous diversity of agriculture production and producers was included in the sign-up. A short description of the general agriculture production and producers within each area is shown below:

***Upper Washita (Grady, Caddo, Custer, Washita, Kiowa)*** – Area is predominately small grains (Wheat) and Cattle. There are several acres of alfalfa produced mainly on the creek bottoms; the hay is primarily produced to sell and not fed to local cattle. Hay for local cattle is mainly produced from hay grazer and wheat hay. Other crops grown are cotton, oats, milo, limited acres of corn (mainly for silage), some vegetable crops such as watermelons and cantaloupe. Most of the producers in the counties farm between 500 to 2000 acres. About 10% of the producers will farm/ranch 2000 to 5000 acres with approximately 10% of the producers operating less than 500 acres. Nearly all the producers in the counties will have crops produced and also cattle. Grass planting and an

increased interest in conservation tillage is interesting producers due partly because of the high cost of fuel and fertilizer with cropping equipment/repairs being a significant expense as well.

***Middle Beaver (Beaver)*** – The majority of agricultural production in the Beaver County area consists of a combination of types of production. Most producers deal in some rangeland, pastureland, and some cropland. The rangeland is primarily short grass pasture with some tall grasses in less utilized areas. Pastureland is primarily dry land which mostly consists of some type of Old World Bluestem. The most abundant crop grown on dry land and irrigated ground is wheat. The majority of the ag producers are growing continuous wheat and graze cattle on the wheat during at least a portion of the growing season. There are some producers who conduct crop rotations consisting of wheat, milo, and a fallow year. Irrigated cropland on the east side of the county could also be planted to corn or sunflowers. Residue Management is quickly becoming an accepted practice among producers with large acreages of cropland. Most producers are white males over the age of 50. The majority of producers have some type of conservation plan on file.

***Caney and Bird (Osage, Tulsa, Washington)*** – The counties involved for NE Oklahoma CTA Pilot programs were Osage, Washington and Tulsa Counties. These counties represented a very diverse cross section of this part of the state with a mixture of large native grass ranches, bottomland farming operations and small hobby farms. Very few acres in these counties are devoted to crop production, the majority of the land uses being native and introduced forage pasture and Hay land for cattle.

In Tulsa County an estimated 71% of the land area consists of urban lands and small suburban acreages (1-20acres). Only a small part of this county is devoted to agriculture production of any sort, mostly pecan production. The remainder of non urban land around Tulsa being used for wildlife and recreation. Osage County is primarily devoted to native grass range for cow/calf and stocker constituting approximately 61% of the 1.5 million acres. Producers on rangeland typically manage medium to large ranches (640ac-5000ac) with some ranches greater than 15,000 ac. Cropland is confined primarily along the Arkansas River to the south representing 11% of the county total. Washington County also contains many medium and large cattle ranches (640-2500ac) with some reaching 7,000 acres in size. Production on cropland acres consists of 160acre farms growing soybeans and wheat. Pastureland is predominant in the southern portion of the county with many 20 to 40 acre pastures mixing with the heavily urbanized southern portion of the county neighboring the Tulsa county line.

***Upper Little (Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha)*** – The agriculture production acres within the conservation planning pilot program consisted of 94% pastureland, 4% forage and hay production, and 2% cropland production.

Actual sign-up and plans written for the conservation planning program consisted of new, inexperienced, landowners wanting our professional technological experience and knowledge to aid them in the development of an economic and helpful conservation plan

for the improvement of the land and for their objective. With the increased interest in hobby farming, we are seeing a drastic change in the amount of ranching/farming experience people once had.

### **Conservation Planning Self-Assessment**

The idea for the Assessment Tool was to give NRCS conservation planners the ability to better service requests for conservation plans in their counties. The tool also gives a landowner/operator the opportunity to develop a comprehensive inventory of their agricultural operation, often giving them a better understanding of their own operation in the process. A common problem among Field staff is that when landowners/producers come in seeking assistance they often don't know what their resource concerns are. By using this tool landowners can identify their resources before scheduling field visits with NRCS staff that allows field staff to better service those landowners with Conservation Plans.

The format used to develop the tool was a result of the different Oklahoma watersheds getting together and sharing their thoughts on what questions should be included in the assessment. The objective was to develop a tool that was simple and streamlined, so it would be easy for producers to use but yet provide NRCS staff with enough information that it could potentially save time during the planning process. We also looked to others states such as Kansas and Missouri who have used similar Assessment tools in the assistance of their customers with conservation plans for formatting guidance. Many Field Offices have come to rely on the Assessment Tool for everyday planning long after the CTA Planning Pilot sign-up ended. Each county developed their own cover for the assessment; however the assessment itself was the same and was required to be used for all Field Offices that participated in the sign-up.

A copy of the Self-Assessment tool that was utilized during this pilot is attached as Appendix 4 of this report.

### **Marketing Activities**

A major component of this pilot included a marketing or outreach strategy. Several communication tools were developed and provided to each participating Field Office prior to the sign-up. Each office was encouraged to utilize these tools to ensure that a consistent message was communicated throughout the state. In addition there was outreach efforts completed at a state level that was aimed at spreading the word of the sign-up to as many people as possible.

A Conservation Brochure was developed that was used to help communicate the benefits of having a conservation plan and what information is included in a plan. This tool helped provide information to landowners who potentially would desire or need a conservation plan. The brochure is included as Appendix 6.

A sign-up news release was also developed that was used by local offices to provide to media sources for marketing purposes. The news release is included as Appendix 2. A

radio spot was also developed. The following table is a summary of the outreach efforts completed by each county included in the pilot.

**Conservation Planning Sign-up Pilot Counties  
Activity Summary**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>OUTREACH ACTIVITIES</b>
<b>Beaver</b>	<b>5 NWSP, 1 RD, FLY</b>
<b>Caddo</b>	<b>2 NWSP</b>
<b>Choctaw</b>	<b>2 NWSP, 1 RD, CALL</b>
<b>Custer</b>	<b>6 NWSP</b>
<b>Grady</b>	<b>7 NWSP, 1 RD</b>
<b>Kiowa</b>	<b>NWSP, RD, NWSL</b>
<b>McCurtain</b>	<b>11 NWSP</b>
<b>Osage</b>	<b>3 NWSP</b>
<b>Osage Tribal</b>	<b>2 NWSP</b>
<b>Pushmataha</b>	<b>1 NWSP, 1 MTG</b>
<b>Tulsa</b>	<b>4 NWSP, 2 MTG, 20 FLY,</b>
<b>Washington</b>	<b>3 NWSP, 2 MTG, 40 FLY</b>
<b>Washita</b>	<b>5 NWSP, 1 RD</b>

NWSP – Newspaper Articles  
RD – Radio Spot  
FLY – Flyers

CALL – Calling potential customers  
NWSL - Newsletters  
MTG – Outreach meetings

Based on the applications that were received during the sign-up, more than one-third of the self assessments that were given out were to landowners that had never received NRCS assistance in the past. The marketing/outreach efforts that were completed, reached a large number of landowners that had never received assistance before. This is possibly due to the fact that conservation planning assistance had never been offered through a sign-up period, without a specific program being marketed as well.

**Description of Sign-up**

The conservation planning pilot sign-up was held from October 17, 2005 to November 18, 2005. It was determined that the pilot would utilize a specific time frame to hold the sign-up. It was also determined that a 30-day sign-up would be a good length to gauge the interest from landowners in requesting conservation plans. The outreach efforts started prior to the actual sign-up dates, however there were outreach activities completed during the sign-up period as well. Information about the sign-up dates was also included in all marketing material to ensure that there was no confusion regarding the time frame of the pilot.

Another important decision regarding the pilot was how the effort would link or relate to on-going financial assistance programs. A decision was made by the Oklahoma State Leadership Team and the participating District Conservationist that it would be best to set up the pilot sign-up without any connection or discussion of financial assistance. This pilot was to determine the level of interest of landowners who wanted assistance from

NRCS to complete a conservation plan. There were no bonuses or advantages that were going to be given to landowners that requested conservation planning assistance through this sign-up that might apply for financial assistance through another program. The sign-up was set up to promote conservation stewardship and determine the level of interest in landowners desiring conservation planning assistance. This decision was made because there are significant backlogs of landowners request financial assistance in programs such as EQIP and WHIP, however we really do not have a good feel for the extent of landowners who just need technical assistance in doing conservation planning. For the purpose of the pilot, it was determined that a time-specific sign-up would work better than a continuous sign-up. It was also agreed to that the landowners would be assisted as they signed up unless an office had a large number of applications. If this occurred a prioritization would have to be developed based on the local resource priorities that have been established locally. This was never an issue, because no office ever received more applications than they could systematically address.

### **Conservation Planning Application Process**

Early in the planning phase of the sign-up the watershed team leaders decided to use the individual county Conservation District Cooperator agreements as the applications for the sign-up period. The reason being that this form was already in use for each of the counties in the selected watersheds to document CTA conservation planning. It was felt that by introducing a new form, one that was to be used only for the sign-up would be confusing to the field offices, and create unneeded additional paperwork.

Each county District Cooperator Agreement sheet accounts for information needed by Field Office staff in order to inventory the landowner/operators property and get in contact with the landowner. Regardless of county each Agreement sheet requested the following information: name, address, phone, legal description, acres and provisions for allowing NRCS and district staff to conduct conservation planning on the property to be planned. The length of each agreement sheet is one page making them easy to use and efficient for gathering and finding information on the landowner. See Osage County Conservation District Cooperators Agreement sheet included as Appendix 5.

### **Planning Phase**

A decision was made that Oklahoma conservation planning policy would be followed for this pilot effort. This policy states that all plans would have an RMS alternative that would be presented to the landowner. It also states that the conservation plan be developed for an entire operating unit as defined in the NPPH. If an entire operating unit plan is not possible, the minimum will be for a Conservation Management Unit (CMU). With this policy in place all plans that were developed for the pilot included an RMS alternative as the recommended alternative and was planned for the entire operating unit or to a CMU area at a minimum.

The typical size varied from county to county. However, most of the applications came from smaller operators and most generally were landowners who NRCS had not worked with in the past. The typical units were most generally smaller than the average size for the county, and smaller than those typical NRCS clients.

All plans have been developed that were requested through an application taken during the sign-up. There were 38 plans developed as a result of the 30 day sign-up.

### **Evaluation Phase**

***The number of Conservation Planning Sign-up applications received*** - varied not so much from watershed to watershed, but more by county to county. The range of applications taken for the CTA sign-up ranged from zero to eight in the four Oklahoma watersheds during the thirty day evaluation period, with a total of 34 applications being taken across the state. Applications were taken during county/watershed outreach activities and at the individual Field Office locations as landowner/operators came in seeking conservation assistance.

***Conservation planning self assessments received*** - back from landowners by participating Field Offices closely mirrored the amount of applications taken during the sign-up period. Field offices reported 37 assessments received back out of the 34 applications taken, although a total of 91 assessments were handed out by the field offices during the sign-up period.

***Client Feedback*** - was mixed across the state, new or small acreage landowners who were not currently participating with the USDA had good feedback. These individuals, which made up approximately 42 percent of the applications taken, cited the outreach efforts as very informative, as most were not aware of the services that the NRCS offers for conservation planning. Landowners who were familiar with the NRCS and the services we offer were not particularly interested due to their current participation in conservation with the District or NRCS.

***Field Office feedback*** - was also mixed, depending on the demographics of each county. Counties in the NE, NW and SW part of the state had low turnout and interest in the Pilot. The SE part of the state had the highest amount of interest and participation. The general consensus for this being that most of the landowners were already aware of the NRCS and the services offered in the watersheds outside of the SE part of the state. In counties with large numbers of new or small acreages landowners the opinion of the Pilot was good, whereas the counties with larger more established landowners thought it was almost a waste of time since the majority of their clients already had conservation plans on file.

### **Other Evaluations**

***Self-assessment benefit*** – The general feedback from the 12 offices that used the self assessment is that it does not save any staff time. However, there are some apparent benefits to the self assessment that makes it a potential useful tool. These include

- Does not increase staff time required for developing conservation plan
- It gets the landowner thinking about conservation needs and what issues they have that needs to be addressed
- A good form to capture the landowners thoughts, concerns, desires, and objectives as it relates to conservation – Baseline inventory documentation

- A good tool that can be provided to landowners who are considering requesting technical assistance from NRCS.
- Can be given out at outreach activities to give landowners an idea of what is included in the conservation planning process.
- Serve as documentation for the establishment of the benchmark condition.

***Impact on other programs and cost of planning*** – This pilot will have a positive impact on program participation because several of the applicants have now signed up for EQIP. Because their plan has been developed prior to an EQIP application, there will be very little staff time required to develop the EQIP contract. Because the sign-up was held in October and November it did not have a significant impact on other program workload. In addition the application numbers were not significant in any county, so the additional workload created from the sign-up did not impact any other program. This could have been an issue if a county would have had a large number of applications. The cost or staff time required to complete the assistance requested during this pilot was no different than planning assistance provided outside of this pilot effort. There was a significant amount of staff time used in completing outreach/marketing efforts for the sign-up.

***Types of customers*** - One significant finding from this pilot was that a significant amount of the landowners requesting assistance were first-time contacts for NRCS. The pilot generated interest to landowners that had not received assistance from NRCS in the past. Very few landowners who had worked with NRCS previously requested assistance.

### **Summary of Sign-up Activity**

County	Assessments Handed Out	Assessments Received Back	Applications Taken During Sign-up	Plans Developed
Beaver	8	1	1	1
Caddo	1	1	1	1
Choctaw	19	8	8	8
Custer	0	0	0	0
Grady	7	7	7	7
Kiowa	4	0	0	0
McCurtain	7	2	2	5
Osage	31	8	4	8
Pushmataha	9	8	8	7
Tulsa	1	1	1	1
Washington	4	1	1	0
Washita	0	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>38 1/</b>

1/ There were four plans that were developed for landowners who applied after the sign-up period was over.

## **Conclusions/Findings**

- Landowners who have worked with NRCS in the past showed very little interest in this pilot effort.
- A specific sign-up that promotes conservation planning on the basis of stewardship does not generate the interest that financial assistance programs do.
- More than 40 % of applications were from first-time contacts
- 34 applications were taken, from 12 counties, during the 30 day sign-up pilot; or an average of about 3 applications per county
- The type of outreach/marketing that was completed had no real bearing on the level of applicants that a county had.
- About one-third of the landowners who received self assessments actually returned them at least partially completed
- Self assessment did not save staff time, however it does seem to have several benefits
- Feedback from participating staff indicates that a time-specific sign-up is not an effective way of promoting conservation planning.
- Feedback from many landowners that made an inquirer from the outreach material, first asked if financial assistance was available from this pilot.
- Of the 38 plans developed, 24 producers selected the RMS alternative that was developed.

## **Recommendations**

### *Recommendation #1*

Based on the information gathered by the District Conservationists in each of the CTA Pilot watersheds it is recommended that the use of the Planning Assessment Tool be expanded into the Environmental Quality Incentives ranking criteria. We suggest making the completion of the assessment tool by the landowner prior to acceptance into the EQIP program an incentive, but not mandatory. An incentive by awarding points towards their application in the Statewide Ranking tool to be used for next years rankings in the Protracts system. By linking this to the statewide ranking tool it would be a quick yes or no question resulting in a potential increase in points. Not only would this be beneficial to the landowner, but it would assist the Field Office staff with the baseline inventory on the client's agricultural operation.

Another benefit to this system would be the potential reduction in workload on field staff. A common complaint among high workload offices is that they spend a large amount of time ranking applications for landowners that sign-up just because they heard that there were funds available. These individuals usually are not interested in obtaining or following a conservations plan, only on acquiring funds to complete small projects not part of a larger more comprehensive conservation system. By making the assessment tool a quantity of points the field staff could more quickly move through the backlog of applications and focus more on writing RMS plans for large and small acreage landowner/operators.

### *Recommendation #2*

Another recommendation is to complete an outreach effort promoting conservation planning prior to Conservation Security program (CSP) being available in a watershed. CSP requires landowner/operators to provide management records on their agricultural operation for previous year's activities in order to be eligible for the program. A farming operation for example is expected to present tillage records outlining types and timing of tillage implements used, fertilization and herbicide records showing how much, why and timing of when they applied based on OSU soil tests or weed identifications. Ranching operations are expected to show cattle rotations, how many head and type of cattle were maintained, on which traps they were kept and for how long. If they had applied fertilizer or herbicide they too are expected to show soil tests and documentation of how much and when they applied like farming operations. These are but few examples of the records that landowners are expected to present for the CSP program that can easily be captured in a conservation plan.

This burden of documentation has been the biggest hurdle in processing applications for landowner/operators applying for CSP. Most landowners do have records of some sort, but often times they are disorganized, missing or simply committed to memory. By promoting conservation planning and the benefits from it in watershed counties prior to their enrollment in CSP the agency can alleviate a large portion of the workload on the field staff and landowners. It is our opinion that if a CTA conservation planning effort is presented to counties in soon to be selected CSP watersheds we could streamline the entire process of obtaining and organizing landowner management records for the landowner and the field staff by already having an updated conservation plan on file.

### *Recommendation #3*

To further promote the benefits of conservation planning, it is recommended that a national effort (through guidance or policy) be established to ensure all program applications have a developed conservation plan prior to the application being processed. After the plan is developed conservation programs such as EQIP, WHIP, WRP, etc will be used to implement systems. Without a signed conservation plan a producer will not be able to apply for financial assistance. A major marketing/outreach effort will be conducted to promote conservation planning as the vehicle that will be used to implement financial assistance programs. This type of policy would identify the conservation planning process as the focal point of utilizing financial assistance. The policy or guidance would need to consider the potential of complaints by landowners and be developed in a way that it would be fair and equitable to all producers.

This needs to be a national direction to ensure that this up-front conservation planning is completed by all states so that the CTA program can be fully accounted for. A planning period or time frame would be established to complete the planning requests associated with current financial assistance. Bottom-line, a comprehensive conservation plan is needed up front to help determine the issues and needs to see if a financial assistance program might be available to help offset the cost of the needed improvements.

### Appendix 1 - County Demographic Data

	Beaver	Caddo	Choctaw	Custer	Grady	Kiowa	McCurtain	Osage	Push- mataha	Tulsa	Washington	Washita	State Total
<b>White</b>													
Farms - #	954	1,456	982	796	1,750	653	1,703	1,254	723	1,079	770	997	78,451
- %	99.38	96.81	89.68	99.25	97.01	98.64	91.81	88.31	92.69	94.15	90.91	99.11	94.18
Operators	1,267	1,975	1,355	1,061	2,449	899	2,412	1,746	962	1,508	1,083	1,296	108,877
Acres	1,013,919	693,361	298,885	543,617	590,641	575,740	329,854	1,062,365	276,488	143,330	207,309	564,259	32,453,807
<b>Black or African American</b>													
Farms - #		3	33			4	39	14	3	24			889
- %		0.20	3.01			0.60	2.10	0.99	0.38	2.09			1.07
Operators		4	39			4	46	18	3	37			1,096
Acres		730	7571			(D)	6,488	3,831	140	1,189			149,825
<b>American Indian</b>													
Farms - #	6	57	152	8	94	11	160	206	95	87	87	16	6,392
- %	0.63	3.79	13.88	1.00	5.21	1.66	8.63	14.51	12.18	7.59	10.27	1.59	7.67
Operators	6	67	172	10	108	11	181	253	111	96	102	16	7,470
Acres	1,568	17,748	50,843	2,576	22,918	3,087	28,673	106,267	43,477	16,578	19,099	7,594	1,563,122
<b>Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islanders</b>													
Farms - #					2		2			2			26
- %					0.11		0.11			0.17			0.03
Operators					2		2			2			26
Acres					(D)		(D)			(D)			2,393
<b>Asian</b>													
Farms - #		3			1			4		5	2		106
- %		0.20			0.06			0.28		0.44	0.24		0.13
Operators		3			1			4		5	2		116
Acres		206			(D)			155		124	(D)		14,105
<b>Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino Origin</b>													
Farms - #	10	49	50	11	36	25	38	13	17	26	13	20	1,870
- %	1.04	3.26	4.57	1.37	2.00	3.78	2.05	0.92	2.18	2.27	1.53	1.99	2.24
Operators	17	57	54	11	41	25	38	13	17	28	13	24	2,069
Acres	4335	13228	16472	5299	9528	15350	8175	4111	3986	1516	1365	4895	495,932
<b>Reporting More Than One Race</b>													
Farms - #	2	18	9		31	7	46	28	19	31	25	7	1,646
- %	0.21	1.20	0.82		1.72	1.06	2.48	1.97	2.44	2.71	2.95	0.70	1.98
Operators	3	21	10		33	7	50	34	23	34	30	8	1,924
Acres	(D)	6,799	4,464		3,988	2,944	5,754	8,584	6,564	2,058	11,158	2,675	531,031

## Appendix 1 - County Demographic Data

	Beaver	Caddo	Choctaw	Custer	Grady	Kiowa	McCurtain	Osage	Push- mataha	Tulsa	Washington	Washita	State Total
<b>Women Principal Operators</b>													
Farms - #	189	122	105	45	145	52	234	134	102	166	86	87	8,720
- %	19.69	8.11	9.59	5.61	8.04	7.85	12.61	9.44	13.08	14.49	10.15	8.65	10.47
Acres	89,282	48,757	26,841	21,679	28,615	15,497	25,247	79,049	27,452	12,816	20,458	20,792	2,250,065
<b>Women Operators</b>													
Farms - #	375	481	445	192	719	198	848	601	320	536	340	285	33,613
- %	39.06	31.98	40.64	23.94	39.86	29.91	45.71	42.32	41.03	46.77	40.14	28.33	40.35
Operators	387	506	470	201	745	206	873	628	338	563	359	290	34,884
Acres	355,209	179,454	132,657	121,398	199,216	123,896	129,575	282,400	102,565	52,963	64,076	125,278	10,452,423

source: 2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE - COUNTY DATA

(D) - Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms

## **Conservation Planning for the Future**

William Jennings Bryant in 1896 stated “Burn down your cities! - And-Leave our Farms! – And- Your Cities will spring up Again as if by Magic.... But – Destroy our Farms! – And – Grass will Grow in the Streets of Every City in the Country”!

On April 14, 1935, the day started as a bright, brisk spring day. It would become to be known as “Black Sunday.” That afternoon a huge, black cloud swept across western Oklahoma blocking out the sun and reducing visibility to a few feet.

The 1930’s sparked the Conservation movement of establishing conservation practices on the land to control both erosion due to wind and water.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service as it is known today exist solely for the purpose of assisting landowner/landusers in the planning of conservation measures to maintain the earths natural resources and its productivity.

On October 17, 2005, the Natural Resources Conservation Service announces a sign-up period which will extend to November 17, 2005 for persons interested in a conservation plan or conservation planning for their farm or ranch.

The conservation plan will consider Soil, Water, Animals, Plants and Air as it relates to the farm or ranch. Alternatives will be given on solutions to existing problems or on new practices to establish.

If you are interested in a Conservation Plan for your farm or ranch contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service Office on or after October 17, 2005 but prior to November 17, 2005, for assistance.

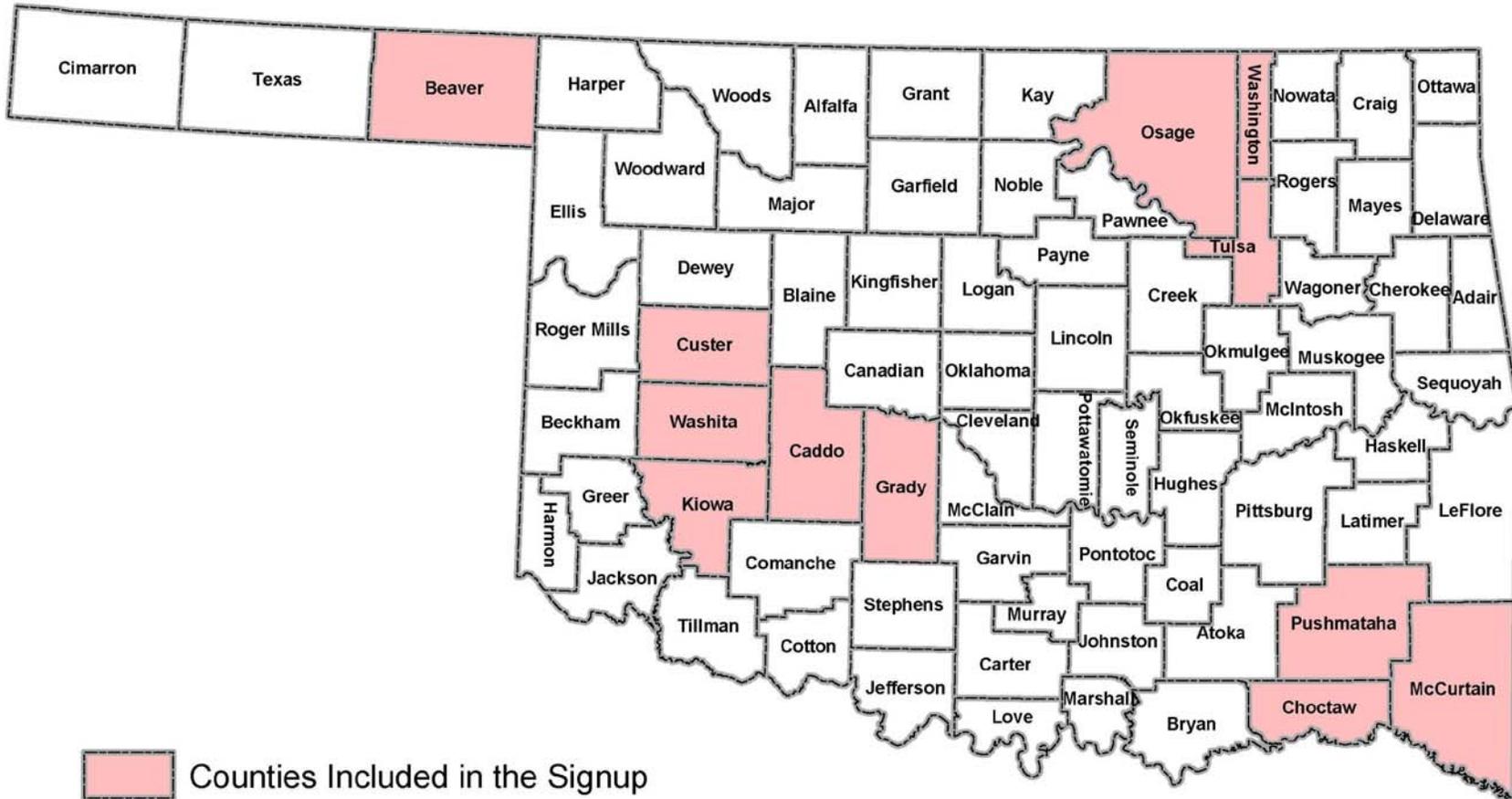
EEO Statement.

### Appendix 3 - Map of Pilot Counties

Oklahoma NRCS  
GIS Section

March 2006

## Oklahoma's Conservation Planning Pilot Signup



Appendix 4 - Pawhuska Field Office Assessment Form  
Conservation Planning Pilot Self-Assessment

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# Conservation on Your Land

## Osage County Planning Assessment Workbook



**Osage County NRCS Office**  
**1000 W. Main STE. 102**  
**Rt. 1 Box 650**  
**Pawhuska, OK. 74056**  
**918-287-3570**

## Conservation Planning Pilot Self-Assessment

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**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### What is a Conservation Plan?

A Conservation Plan is a tool that helps manage your lands profitably while protecting your natural resources. Soil erosion, water quality, waste management and grassland productivity are just a few of the resource concerns that could be addressed with a plan. The completed conservation plan will describe each of the conservation practices you select to manage your natural resources. The choice to develop or not develop a conservation plan is yours - it is a voluntary process. You make the decisions. You implement the plan.

Conservation planners provide the technical assistance needed to develop and implement your plan. Their help is free. Creating a plan does not provide public access to your property. You control all rights of entry and use. All of the information developed for you belongs to you.

Developing a Conservation Plan consists of nine steps and is relatively complex. This workbook does not result in a complete plan; however it assists us with the preliminary self-assessment and fact gathering needed for a plan. You need to commit to the process in order for it to work.

After completing this preliminary self-assessment, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office to be put in contact with a conservation planner.

### What are the Benefits of a Conservation Plan?

- Saves money as your land becomes more productive.
- Ensures better natural resource quality for you, your animals and your neighbors.
  - Increases your property value.
  - Enhances open space and wildlife habitat.
    - Improves animal health.
    - Prevents off-farm impacts.
  - Contributes to plant health and vigor.
- Makes your land more attractive and promotes good neighbor relations.
  - Promotes health and safety for your family.

**Appendix 4 - Pawhuska Field Office Assessment Form**  
**Conservation Planning Pilot Self-Assessment**

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**Approximate Total Acres** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives:** *(check all that apply)*

1. What is your reason for wanting NRCS assistance?
  - a. Protect resource(s) for future generations
  - b. Qualify for cost share programs
  - c. Improve wildlife habitat
  - d. Improve farming operations efficiency/production
  - e. Improve grazing land
  - f. Animal waste utilization
  - g. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Practices you may be interested in applying?
  - a. Fencing
  - b. Grass planting
  - c. Grazing management
  - d. Gully control
  - e. Pond
  - f. Wildlife habitat
  - g. Brush/pest control
  - h. Terraces or waterway
  - i. Livestock Watering Facility
  - j. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

**Type of Assistance Needed:**

1. Do you see your primary assistance being:
  - a. Planning
  - b. Design
  - c. Application
  - d. Check-out

2. Do you desire financial assistance in practice application?

Yes  No

## Conservation Planning Pilot Self-Assessment

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**Benchmark Inventories:**

- a. What are your current land uses and approximate acres?
- b. Rangeland \_\_\_\_\_ ac.
- c. Cropland \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Irrigated cropland \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Pastureland \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Orchard \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Vineyard \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Forested land \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Wildlife habitat \_\_\_\_\_
- j. Recreation \_\_\_\_\_
- k. Confined Livestock feeding operation \_\_\_\_\_
- k. Other, \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**Range and Pasture Land**

1. If you have livestock, approximately how many head of each do you maintain?
  - a. Dry cows \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Lactating cows \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Bulls \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Yearlings \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Ewes \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Rams \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Horses \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Goats \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. Other \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you rotate pastures?      Yes       No
3. If so, how many pastures are in your rotation? \_\_\_\_\_ Avg. Acres \_\_\_\_\_
4. What condition do you feel your range/pasture/other land is in?
 

	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
a. Rangeland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Pastureland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you apply fertilizers to your fields?      Yes       No
6. Do you have a current soil test? <3yr      Yes       No
7. Do you apply pesticides to your fields?      Yes       No

## Conservation Planning Pilot Self-Assessment

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### Describe Your Potential Solutions for Grassland:

### Crop and Hay Land

1. What crops do you produce and what is the estimated yield?

- a. Wheat \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Corn \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Peanuts \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Sorghum \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Cotton \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Soybeans \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Alfalfa \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Other, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. For the crops grown, what are your usual tillage operations?

- a. Moldboard plow
- b. Disk
- c. Chisel
- d. Sweeps
- e. Blade plow
- f. Bedder
- g. Subsoiler
- h. Land plane
- i. Strip-tiller
- j. One-way
- k. Rodweeder
- l. Cultivator
- m. Air-seeder
- n. Harrow
- o. Cultipacker (roller)
- p. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

## Conservation Planning Pilot Self-Assessment

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3. Do you apply fertilizers to your fields? Yes  No
4. If yes, are they based on soil testing? Yes  No
5. Do you apply manure to your fields? Yes  No
6. If yes, do you do an analysis of the manure? Yes  No
7. Do you apply pesticides to your fields? Yes  No
8. If yes, what determines when and if you apply?
- a. Presence of pest Yes  No
  - b. Level of infestation Yes  No
  - c. Availability of equipment Yes  No
  - d. Recommendation by consultant Yes  No
9. Are any of your fields irrigated? Yes  No
10. If yes, what determines your irrigation schedule?
- a. Crop use Yes  No
  - b. Soil moisture by feel Yes  No
  - c. Checkbook method Yes  No
  - d. Visual crop stress Yes  No
  - e. Measured soil moisture (*gypsum blocks, etc.*) Yes  No

### Describe Your Potential Solutions For Cropped Land:

### Wildlife Land

1. Is wildlife management your primary or secondary objective?  
Primary  Secondary  None
2. What wildlife species are you interested in managing?
- a. Quail
  - b. Deer
  - c. Turkey
  - d. Waterfowl
  - e. Songbirds
  - f. Prairie Chicken
  - g. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 4 - Pawhuska Field Office Assessment Form**  
**Conservation Planning Pilot Self-Assessment**

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**Describe Your Potential Solutions For Wildlife:**

**Screening Tools:**

1. Do you have control of the land to make management decisions?  
Yes  No
2. Is management of the land decided by a federal or state agency?  
Yes  No
3. Is this plan being dictated by other federal, state, or local regulations?  
Yes  No
4. Are you looking at protecting all resources on your farming operation?  
Yes  No
5. Are you aware of any species of state concern or are Threatened & Endangered?  
Yes  No
6. Is your operation located in groundwater protection area?  
Yes  No
7. Are you aware of any archaeological, historical or cultural features present on your farm?  
Yes  No

**Appendix 5 - Osage County Conservation Cooperator Agreement**

**OSAGE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
COOPERATOR AGREEMENT**

This agreement between the Osage County Conservation District, hereinafter referred to as district and:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_, hereinafter referred to as Cooperator(s).

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Section \_\_\_\_\_, Township \_\_\_\_\_, Range \_\_\_\_\_

Total Acres: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Cooperator(s) agrees to:**

1. Cooperate with the representative of the district to develop as rapidly as feasible a conservation plan for his/her/their land.
2. Start applying one or more conservation practices as provided in the conservation plan and which meets the technical standards of the District.
3. Maintain all structures established in an effective condition and continue the use of all other conservation measures put into effect.

**The District agrees to:**

1. Furnish the Cooperator(s) with technical assistance as needed in developing a sound conservation plan based on a soil and plant inventory of the land.
2. Furnish the cooperator(s) a conservation soils map, guide, and job sheets for needed conservation practices.
3. Furnish the cooperator(s) with information, guidance, and needed technical assistance as available for proper maintenance of established conservation measures.

**It is mutually agreed that:**

1. Provisions of this agreement are understood by the Cooperator(s) and the District and that neither shall be liable for damage to the other's property resulting from carrying out this agreement unless such damage is caused by negligence or misconduct.
2. This agreement supersedes any previous Conservation Agreement between the Cooperator(s) and the District.
3. This agreement will become effective on the date of the last signature and may be terminated by either party upon written notice.

Signature of Cooperator(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5 - Osage County Conservation Cooperator Agreement

### Conservation Planning

Conservation planning is the most fundamental and important starting point for maintaining your farm or ranch's natural resources. Every farm or ranch has its own unique resource problems or concerns.

Examples of activities causing resource problems or concerns to the land's natural resources include:

- **SOIL** being washed into streams
- **WATER** quantity problems due to over pumping ground water systems, water quality problems due to polluted streams
- **AIR** transporting livestock odors or soil particles
- **PLANTS** being overgrazed, encroaching invasive plant species, or declining wildlife habitats
- **ANIMAL** waste being produced in high volumes

A conservation plan combines your farming or ranching skills with the science-based knowledge of the Conservation Planner. By working together, you can produce a conservation plan that meets your farming or ranching goals in a resource-sustaining manner.

### Benefits of a Conservation Plan

- Identifies problems or potential problems overlooked on a day-to-day basis
- Protects soil along with the farm's productivity
- Helps comply with environmental regulations
- Adaptable to your changing farm or ranch operational goals
- Sets up a reasonable schedule for applying needed conservation practices that fits your timetable



Your Land...Your Investment...Your Plan



*Conserving Your  
Land's Natural  
Resources*

*Through A  
Conservation Plan*

## Appendix 5 - Osage County Conservation Cooperator Agreement

### The First Step

Contact your nearest USDA Service Center, and make an appointment to meet with the NRCS Conservation Planner.

USDA Service Centers are listed in the phone book under U.S. Government, or you can visit their website at [www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov).

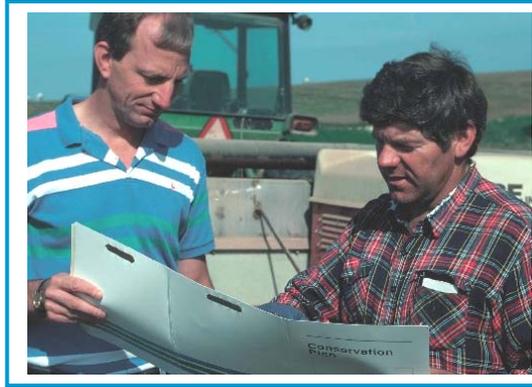
OK-CP-09-2005

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### What is a Conservation Plan?

A Conservation Plan is a written record of your management decisions and the conservation practices and systems you plan to use and maintain on your farm.



Carrying out your plan will achieve the goals of protecting the environment on and off your farm. After soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources on your property are inventoried and evaluated, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Certified Conservation Planner will review several alternatives for you to consider. The alternatives you select are recorded in the conservation plan, which becomes your roadmap for better management of your natural resources.

### A Conservation Plan Includes

- An aerial photo or diagram of your fields
- A soil map and soil descriptions
- Resource inventory data which can include forage or crop production potential, or potential livestock carrying capacity
- A list of your treatment decisions
- The location and schedule for applying conservation practices
- A plan of operation and maintenance of conservation systems or practices

