

Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

March 2011



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Oklahoma Hosts Tri-State Forestry Conference

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The Tri-State Forestry on the Grow Conference held March 9-12, 2011, in Idabel, Okla., hosted more than 220 participants from Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas and throughout the southern pine region. Both private landowners and professional foresters took part in the four-day event, gaining valuable knowledge and insight in today's forestry issues and concerns. The educational conference was a project of the Ouachita Mountains Resource Conservation and Development Council from McAlester, Oklahoma.

The conference was one of the most in-depth forestry conferences of the year. Forestry presentations and networking opportunities had a direct benefit to private landowners and professionals with timberland holding in the tri-state region. "We tried to offer subject matter that could have a direct effect on the timber grower's and manager's bottom-line "said Frank Acker, president Ouachita RC&D Council.



Celebrity kick-off speaker Mr. Bobby Goodson, Discovery Channel's "Swamp Logger," started the conference. Goodson, a third generation logger, encouraged the forestry and logging industry to be proud of hard and important work that they were doing. He also communicated the importance of his families' logging heritage to the work he does with his company, Goodson's All Terrain Logging. Other conference topics included today's housing and forestry outlook, recreational leasing, biomass opportunities, prescribed burning and trespass law issues. Courses offered to professional foresters attending the conference included advanced GIS, GPS tools and techniques, advance genetics, professional forestry ethics and more.

Also new this year was a free Master Logger/Pro-Logger course held in advance of the conference. More than 55 loggers attended the course to obtain their required certification. Mill and field tours were offered to conference attendees. Tours visited both the International Paper Company Mill in Valliant, Okla., and the Huber Engineered Woods Mill in Broken Bow,

Okla. Field tours of successful silviculture practice and the forestry research station were also well attended.

Scott Pace Ouachita Mountains RC&D Coordinator said, "I can't help but applaud the efforts of the planning committee members who have been working so tirelessly for the past 15 months planning this event. All the credit goes to their efforts and enthusiasm."

Forestry Conference — ... continued.



Conference kick-off speaker, Bobby Goodson, from the Discovery Channel's "Swamp Logger" signs autographs at the Oklahoma Forestry Association booth at the conference.



Ouachita Mountains RC&D President, Frank Acker welcomed the crowd of more than 220 attendees and served as Master of Ceremonies for the three-state timber conference.

Outreach Efforts — submitted by Jasper Parker



Attendees received valuable information regarding 2008 Farm Bill Programs, other conservation programs and community based opportunities at Pawnee Nation Tribal Reserve, in Pawnee, Okla., March 10, 2011.

Tribal Outreach

The Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered to sponsor a conservation information meeting to discuss funding opportunities for local tribes, tribal landowners and farmers and ranchers. The meeting was held Thursday, March 10, 2011, at the Pawnee Nation Roam Chief Community Center, on the Pawnee Nation reserve, in Pawnee, Okla. The meeting was facilitated by OTCAC Board Member Darrel Dominick, District Conservationist Carol Crouch, Pawnee Nation Executive Director Dawna Hare and Executive Assistant Vi Will. The meeting was well attended and lunch was provided by the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma.

Resource Conservationist Matt Ward presented information about the 2008 Farm Bill Programs, including the new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Max Schone presented the FSA programs and farm loan programs. Darrel Dominick presented the Oklahoma Conservation Commission projects going on in north-central Oklahoma. Resource

Conservation & Development Coordinator Greg Kindell presented community based projects and opportunities for local and tribal governments. Dr. Carol Crouch presented an overview of opportunities for tribes to partner on community projects with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. David Moore, American Indian coordinator for Rural Development, provided an overview of technical assistance and program opportunities for tribes and tribal and local landowners. Waylon Marler, United States Geological Survey, presented the mission, objectives, projects and available technical assistance the organization has to offer. Steve Clark, resource specialist, presented best management practices to address invasive eastern redcedars. Handout materials were available for all attendees.

Engineering Events — *submitted by Chris Stoner*

Turkey Creek Site 8 Completed

Turkey Creek Site 8 in Alfalfa County received a final inspection on March 10, 2011. This site is the second new dam constructed in the state through funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Completion of this dam marks the third of ten planned structures in the 244,006 acre Turkey Creek Watershed encompassing parts of four counties in rural north central Oklahoma. The site was completed ahead of schedule.



Watershed Rehabilitation Active in Oklahoma

Current watershed rehabilitation projects in FY2011 for Oklahoma include active construction on two sites – Cobb Creek Site 1 (Washita County) and Turkey Creek Site 9 (Custer County); pending construction contracts on 3 sites – Upper Clear Boggy 36 (Pontotoc County), Sallisaw 26 (Adair County), and Caney Coon 2M (Coal County); and design and planning activities on 15 others sites around the state. In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided funds for the rehabilitation of seven sites – two of which are nearing completion (Sallisaw 18M in Adair County and Sugar Creek L43 in Caddo County) with the remaining five (Upper Clear Boggy Sites 33, 34, and 35 in Pontotoc County, Cottonwood 15 in Kingfisher County, and Sugar Creek L-44 in Caddo County) pending construction contracts. This is a level of construction not seen in Oklahoma in the last 20 years.

Zone 1 Review — *submitted by Lanny Miller*

Watonga Field Service Center

Lesley Carson began her duties as the new Rangeland Management Specialist at the Watonga Field Service Center February 28, 2011. She came to NRCS from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. She has a degree in plant and soil sciences from OSU and currently serves on the board of directors for the Society for Range Management.



The Blaine County Conservation District proudly announces that Marci Howerton, 8th grade student from Canton Schools won the OACD state poster contest as well as the 7th - 9th grade division NACD poster contest.



Zone 1 Review — ... continued.

Kingfisher Field Service Center

Kingfisher field service center employees Brandon Burns, district conservationist, and Joshua Ketch, rangeland management specialist, participated in a career day at Dover High School. NRCS set up a booth and told students about careers with NRCS. In all, around 00 7-12 grade students participated in the career day.



Boise City Field Service Center

Extension Educator Nick Risley, Area Research Extension Specialist Rich Kochenower and Dr. Brian Arnall discussed soil fertility and the use of nutrient enriched strips at a meeting held March 24, 2011, by partners Cimarron Co. Conservation District, NRCS and OSU Extension. Dr. Arnall encouraged producers to begin by simply putting in one strip for field observation. He and Kochenower then explained the use of a hand held sensor to determine nitrogen needs. Program information was also presented to producers by NRCS and Cimarron County Conservation District.

Guthrie Field Service Center

March 7, 2011, the Logan County Conservation District, OSU Extension Office and the NRCS put on a nitrogen-rich strip field day. This workshop provided an opportunity for producers to see nitrogen-rich strips first hand and watch the GreenSeeker Hand-Held Sensor being used. Roger Gribble, area agronomist for OSU Extension presented part of the program and was followed by Rodney Jones, area farm management specialist for OSU Extension, who gave a presentation about grain market outlooks.



Oklahoma City Field Service Center

Chairman of the Oklahoma County Conservation District Richard Parker presented Dr. Stephen Cagle the Outstanding District Cooperator award for the many years that Dr. Cagle worked with the district and NRCS to install conservation practices on his farms. The presentation was held during the district's regularly scheduled board meeting on March 2, 2011.

Zone 1 Review — . . . *continued.*

March 3, 2011, approximately 350 students from Star Spencer High School participated in Ag Career information programs presented by NRCS, FSA, RISK Management and Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. The NRCS set up a booth and presented information about working for the NRCS. Oklahoma County Technician Robert Dukes was assisted by Black Emphasis Program Manager Cleon Bradford, district conservationist. The students were separated into groups and moved from station to station to learn what could be in their career futures with the various agencies.



Zone 2 Review — *submitted by Andy Tucker.*

Stillwell Field Service Center

The Earth Team Volunteer Office of the Year was awarded to the Stillwell Field Service Center. Receiving the award are (l) Soil Conservation Technician Robert Bagby and (r) District Conservationist Andrew Inman. The Stillwell Field Service Center had the most volunteer hours. Acting Assistant State Conservationist Andy Tucker presented the award on behalf of NRCS.



Okmulgee Field Service Center

About 480 9-12th grade students from Henryetta and the surrounding area attended the March 10, 2011, career day. Soil Conservationist Rishell Bowler discussed NRCS career opportunities with Henryetta students.



Zone 2 Review — ... continued.



Vinita Field Service Center

The Craig County locally-led outreach meeting addressed priority resource concerns including soil erosion on cropland and grazing land, brush control including cedar removal and pest management involving musk thistle and sericea lespedeza.

Zone 4 Review — submitted by Jamey Wood.



Idabel Field Service Center

The Idabel Field Service Center has been busy servicing WRP, EQIP, CSP and WHIP applications and practices, as well as operations and management activities on WRP easements including prescribed burning, dike repair and fencing contracts to control trespass cattle.

In addition to program activities, the annual McCurtain County Land Judging Contest was held recently with plans in the works for the McCurtain County Forestry Judging Contest.



The Little River Conservation District was honored during the Conservation Day celebration at the Oklahoma State Capitol as the Conservation District of the Year for outstanding conservation activities and accomplishments.

Zone 4 Review — . . . continued.

Ardmore Field Service Center

The Ardmore Field Service Center completed an emergency watershed protection project cleaning up 2009 tornado damage in Carter County. The results of the project are demonstrated by these before and after photos.



McAlester Field Service Center

Tim Jones, district conservationist, and Teresa Wright, soil conservationist technician, from the McAlester NRCS office, hosted eight Eastern Oklahoma State College agricultural students with a Natural Resource Field Day March 10, 2011, at the Leslie Smith farm in Pittsburg County. The students were shown the day-to-day operations of NRCS and how the service helps landowners treat natural resource concerns. Other agencies providing educational opportunities for the group were the Forestry Division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry and the OSU Cooperative Extension Service.



District Conservationist Tim Jones (left) and SCT Teresa Wright (right) with the eight EOSC agriculture students. Students were shown how the NRCS helps landowners treat natural resource concerns.

RC&D Activities — *submitted by Scott Pace.*

Cherokee Hills RC&D

Cherokee Hills RC&D Council had one member attend the Southwest States RC&D Association meeting in Dodge City, Kans. The primary issue was the current budget process and how it will affect the RC&D Councils.

The council provided loan information to an individual interested in starting a small home based business.

The council had some leads from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission regarding possible funding sources to complete the Poultry Waste Processing Project.

The council participated in the NRCS national civil rights review. The reviewers had some excellent recommendations that can be implemented into the Cherokee Hills RC&D operation.

High Plains RC&D

High Plains RC&D received a grant for \$35,000 for waterfowl habitat improvements in Dewey, Ellis, and Roger Mills counties, and a \$25,000 capacity building grant to assist in the formation of a statewide burn association that would become a conduit through which liability insurance can be made available to producers conducting prescribed burns on their lands.

Fun Country RC&D

Fun Country RC&D participated in the Leadership Arts Oklahoma class session in Ardmore, OK. Angela Williams, RC&D coordinator, joined a panel discussion on how the arts relate to economic development. Her presentation included a diversity of examples from the ten counties in the Fun Country Council. Ada and Ardmore have the strongest partnerships in the area. The organizations are actively involved with the city and local governments to help identify economic impacts of some of their arts events and activities. Both communities also have a strong public art program they feel enhances the community pride as well as quality of life. Other panelists included Mita Bates, Ardmore Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Authority, Aubrey Harris, Two Frogs Restaurant and Concert Promoter and Leila Lenore, Executive Director of the Goddard Art Center. Area artists Traci Martin and Susan Yeager, from Studio107, have been major catalysts in revitalizing an area downtown and they were also panelists for the event. Approximately 30 participants came from across Oklahoma in various art and non-art related disciplines.



The Atoka Main Street planned a community event April 1, 2011. The event showcased some Made In Oklahoma products. The event presented local wineries, local cheese and local candies. The group later decided to present non-alcoholic juices so the council connected them with Redlands Juice Company, Pure Prairie Creamery and Wagon Creek Creamery. The vendors held a tasting and sales tent for their products and 150 people attended the Main Street event. Atoka Main Street Executive Director Carol Ervin accepted a position with the McAlester Main Street and left Atoka mid-March. The council will miss this great advocate of Fun Country RC&D.

RC&D Activities — . . . *continued.*



Fun Country RC&D assisted an area bank looking to provide Made in Oklahoma products to bank customers replacing the traditional hard candy servings. They prefer products that are local or regionally significant. The council continues to work with MIO, Oklahoma Agritourism and the State Bank to identify possible sources for these products.

Fun Country RC&D provided information and a grant search to a small rural city that was looking for financial assistance through grants for the police/fire/ambulance departments. They will use the funds to buy new computers or small equipment needs. Their jaws-of-life rescue equipment is more than 35 years old and they are looking to replace it.

The Ardmore Beautification Council is reviving efforts in the historic canal/drainage way through eastside and downtown Ardmore. The council is interested in finding financial resources to assist in clearing trees and debris for the development of walking, biking and nature park activities.



Fun Country RC&D Council recently participated in the Southwest States RC&D Regional Conference in Dodge City, Kans. Both the chair and vice-chair were able to attend. Plans were in place to participate in the breakout sessions and tours but recent congressional concerns made it even more critical for them to have the opportunity to meet face to face with national, regional and other state association leadership to discuss matters at hand.



Members tried to attend different breakout sessions to gain as much information as possible. Session categories included: natural resources and forestry, non-profit management and capacity building, business and community development and sustainable energy development. Twenty-two presenters highlighted projects and programs in these four focus areas during concurrent sessions.

In addition to state, regional and national speakers, keynote speakers included Judge Tom Webb and Alison Felix, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. Andrew Gordon, National Association of RC&D Councils in Washington, D.C., spoke to the group about the RC&D program funding.

Attendees were provided the opportunity to tour several local points of interest including visits to the City of Greensburg, Forget-Me-Not Dairy Farm, Ingalls Feedyard, Beavers' Game Bird Farm, Spearville Wind Farm and Ford County Windbreak Renovation project.

RC&D Activities — . . . *continued.*

The council held a quarterly business meeting at the Santa Fe Depot in Ardmore, Okla. Much of the discussion included strategies for the federal budget concerns. The council approved a resolution supporting the RC&D program. This resolution will be circulated by council members for their contacts to sign in support. They identified March 30, 2011, for all hard copies to be returned to the Fun Country office. Other topics of discussion included opportunities to partner with other councils to share resources, administrative support and maintain operations and communications. Another major decision was to return the grant monies from OSU/Risk Management for the planned Women in Ag & Small Business conferences. The concern was with the potential timelines of the project and worst case scenario program support. The council chair and vice-chair shared information they gained at the SW states meeting. Murray County agreed to host the next quarterly meeting.



Great Plains RC&D

The Great Plains RC&D Council recently funded the purchase of additional milling equipment for the Stone Stack Flour Mill to increase milling capacity and to grind other grains into flour to be used in mixes and blends. This will provide additional jobs and economic benefits. Market based incentives are used to promote sustainable agriculture and best management practices with conservation cropping systems.

Great Plains RC&D is also providing funding to assist with the start-up expenses for "The Place on Main" to provide community development in the form of recreation facilities, cultural, social and educational opportunities for an underserved community. Expenditures are assisting with the remodeling and updating a historic building in Custer City to provide a safe, secure, and accessible meeting facility.



RC&D Activities — . . . continued.



Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) was recognized as the outstanding supporting organization by the Great Plains RC&D council. SWOSU was recognized for providing resources that improve the quality of life in southwestern Oklahoma. SWOSU has a partnership in a student intern program, hosts the Center for Economic and Business Development, Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance, and Small Business Development Center. SWOSU President Randy Beutler received the award from Alfred Miller, Great Plains RC&D chairman. Also on hand for the presentation were (from left) Dr. Marvin Hankins, director of the SWOSU Center for Economic and Business Development and Larry Wright, RC&D coordinator.

Tallgrass RC&D



Tallgrass RC&D Council submitted four grant proposals for funding during the month of March. The first project is "The Welcome Table Kitchen Project" which will provide for 45 raised bed gardens on city block of the unincorporated community of Turley, Okla. The council is seeking a \$25,000 grant to complete the \$61,000 project.

The second project is the Claremore Farmers Market project which will provide for a permanent covered farmer's market which will be located on city property next to the expo center. The council is seeking a \$25,000 grant to complete the \$67,775.00 project.

The third project is the completion of the renovation of the Constantine Arts Center in Pawhuska, this project will provide a completely new sound system and renovation and replacement of windows and the carpet in the theater. The council is seeking a \$25,000 grant that will complete the \$39,500 project.

The fourth project is the Pawhuska hospital lab project which is for the purchase of a coagulation analyzer, which is used to measure the ability of the blood to clot by performing variety of tests. The machine is extremely important in a community that is 28% Native American, a population with a 17% incidence of diabetes. The council is seeking a grant for \$23,500 which will complete the \$79,616 lab project.

Wheatland RC&D



Several council members attended the Southwest States RC&D Regional Conference in Dodge City, Kans. Honors were awarded to area representatives for outstanding efforts that advance communities. Cindy Bobbit was submitted for the Council Person of the Year award for her considerable involvement in the community working on projects that not only benefited her county, but all the other counties and seven tribes in the council's region. Bobbit delivers trees for beautification and windbreak projects, distributes printers to Title I Schools, Indian Tribes, rural fire departments, workforce offices and other nonprofit agencies and works with government agencies to secure funding for infrastructure development in the region. She attended a training that helped her better understand basic civil engineering and other technical aspects of road construction and maintenance useful in developing infrastructure in her community and worked with local business and community leaders to establish a county wide Economic

Development Plan for Grant County. Cindy was instrumental in identifying funding sources and technical assistance resources in these coalition meetings.

RC&D Activities — ... continued.



Canadian County Commissioner Phil Carson receives awards on behalf of the Wheatland RC&D Council for Oklahoma Council of the Year, 2010, SW States Council of the Year, 2010, at the Southwest States RC&D Councils Regional Conference and the NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Office of the Year, 2010, at the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts meeting.

Wheatland RC&D was honored for state and regional council of the year awards for working with all locally led meetings and groups in the community to develop, model and renew the RC&D area plan. The Council has the knowledge and coordination required to constantly plan, evaluate results and understand problems and opportunities. Wheatland initiated an Economic Development Coalition comprised of multiple partners engaged in projects and the resulting brainstorming produces a cost/benefit ratio of 1/20. For every dollar received, there has been a return of twenty dollars.

The council helped coordinate Women in Agriculture and Small Business Seminars. Members viewed materials and recruited numerous partners to serve 650 attendees in four workshops covering the 10 counties in Wheatland's district.

Involved in partnerships and affiliated organizations, council members are active in researching and seeking all available financial resources, public and private. Funding from state and federal agencies and various private and public foundations has enabled Wheatland to accomplish projects that allowed twelve rural schools to replace outdated unsafe playground equipment with new handicap accessible playground equipment, one school to hold state and regional track meets with a state of the art track, residents of five towns to walk safely on new walking trails and the council is using grants to assist rural towns with sewer lagoon repairs. The businesses involved in the council's revolving loan fund have created or retained more than twenty quality jobs for the region.

The council also credits volunteers as one of the most important resources. Wheatland has a large number of Earth Team Volunteers who donate over 15,000 hours each year. These volunteers coordinate, plan and implement activities with regional agencies and related groups having similar resource groups of which they are members. They utilize their community resources in analyzing community needs, then develop plans to meet these needs and coordinate the resources required to accomplish these goals. And that has earned them the NRCS recognition as the Earth Team Volunteer Office of the Year.

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