

## USDA Cost-Share Programs

### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that addresses serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources. The program provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to farmers and ranchers through 1 to 10-year contracts. Implementing conservation practices such as grassed waterways, filter strips, and pesticide and nutrient management, achieve the most effective environmental benefits possible.

### Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

Through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provides emergency restoration for eligible projects that relieve imminent threat to life and property due to impairments of the watershed.

In fiscal year 2002, the Natural Resources Conservation Service addressed many of the critical areas throughout Oklahoma. Approximately \$3.8 million was spent to clean up ice storm debris from state bridges. Another \$4.8 million was spent repairing bridge abutments and for stream restoration due to flooding and high winds. In all, the property protected was valued at over \$800 million.

### Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) is a voluntary program that helps farmers, ranchers and Tribes keep their land in agriculture, and prevents conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. The program provides matching funds to state, Tribal, and local governments and non-governmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements.

### Surface and Groundwater Conservation

A special section of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program allows for additional funding for water conservation measures in the High Plains Aquifer region of Oklahoma. The purpose is specifically to promote ground and surface water conservation activities to improve irrigation systems, convert to the production of less water intensive agricultural commodities, or institute other measures that improve groundwater conservation.

Financial and technical assistance to a producer may be provided only to facilitate a conservation measure that results in a net savings in groundwater or surface water resources in the agricultural operation of the producer.

### Private Grazing Lands Technical Assistance

Grazing lands, which include rangeland, pastureland, grazed forest, and grazed cropland, are the backbone of Oklahoma's agricultural industry. The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides assistance to landowners to improve range and pasture conditions by managing for forage improvement, wildlife habitat, weed and brush control, erosion control, and revegetation.

Partnerships with landowners and other organizations help expand the management of grazing lands. The Grazing Land Conservation Initiative (GLCI) is a voluntary effort to enhance privately owned lands. The Oklahoma Grazing Lands Conservation Association was formed through GLCI, to focus on grazing land issues specific to Oklahoma.

### Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), is a voluntary program that helps landowners develop and enhance wildlife habitat on private lands. Both financial and technical assistance are available through WHIP. In fiscal year 2002, the Natural Resources Conservation Service assisted over 26 participants in the program and serviced over 580 applications for cost share through the program. WHIP participants value quality fish and wildlife habitat, and are especially supportive of native grassland and riparian area restoration. NRCS currently provides technical assistance to over 353 contract holders, covering 156,000 acres. Unfunded applicants at the end of 2002 totaled 563 for over \$4 million in cost-share assistance.

### Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

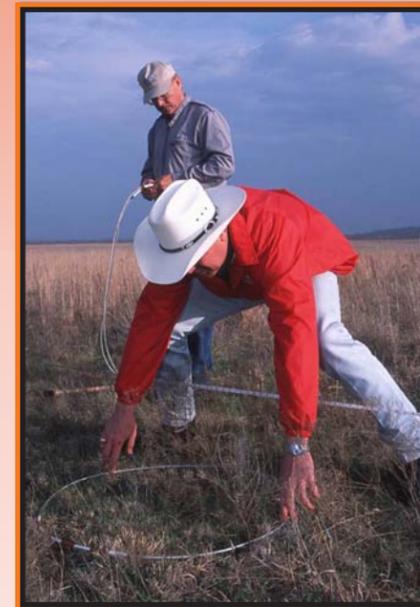
The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private and Tribal lands. The program provides financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. Options available under the program are permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreement. The program currently encompasses 34 Oklahoma counties, covering 43,959 acres, with a total of 146 contracts. The additional funding provided through the 2002 Farm Bill, created the opportunity for 6,139 acres of wetland restoration through 19 new agreements. At the end of 2002, 47 offers on over 6,700 acres remain unfunded.

# Oklahoma

## Natural Resources

### Conservation Partnership

# ACTIVITY REPORT



Provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

*NRCS Mission*



## OKLAHOMA PARTNERSHIP



Oklahoma  
Conservation  
Commission

 NRCS Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Oklahoma  
Association of  
Conservation Districts 



Oklahoma Association of Resource  
Conservation and Development

Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

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Dear Oklahomans:

Welcome to the Oklahoma Natural Resources Conservation Partnership 2002 Activity Report. This report highlights partnership efforts that continue to achieve tremendous results in the conservation of our natural resources in Oklahoma.

The mission of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is to provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. As you review this report, you will see the effect of our mission in action.

On May 13, 2002, President Bush signed the Farm Security and Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). The conservation provision of this Farm Bill marked the most significant amount of funds targeted to conservation in our nation's history. To deliver this Farm Bill, the Natural Resources Conservation Service will rely on partners from both the public and private sector. Partners such as the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC), the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD), the Oklahoma Association of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), The Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE), and the Oklahoma Grazing Lands Conservation Association. Partners also include Earth Team volunteers, community based organizations, professional societies and universities such as Oklahoma State University and Langston University.

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the 88 conservation districts are the heart of the conservation delivery system. They serve as the bridge between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and private landowners. The conservation districts and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission do more than link the Natural Resources Conservation Service with farmers, ranchers, and Tribes, they also support conservation with state funded programs.

Locally organized RC&D Councils continue to serve local communities with projects that provide practical solutions for community development and economic growth. The Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees and Earth Team Volunteers are critical partners that continue to provide assistance, and work a tremendous number of volunteer hours in the conservation effort.

We welcome our newest partner, the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, to the conservation partnership. The Council will provide a valuable communication network to accomplish the conservation work with the 39 federally recognized Tribes of Oklahoma.

I appreciate the employees of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and conservation districts, members of the conservation partnership, private landowners, and all who are committed to conservation activities that benefit Oklahoma. Many thanks to the partnership and all who contributed to the success of conservation in our great State.



M. Darrel Dominick  
State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service



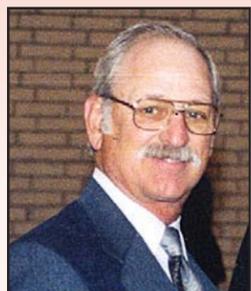
**M. Darrel Dominick, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service**



**Mike Thralls, Executive Director, Oklahoma Conservation Commission**



**Rick Jeans, President, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts**



**Garold DeWitt, President, Oklahoma Association of Resource Conservation and Development**

## Program Summary

### Oklahoma Conservation Cost Share Program

The Oklahoma Conservation Cost Share Program provides financial assistance, through cost share payments to landowners, to apply conservation practices to help improve water quality and control soil erosion in the state. The Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) administers the program at the state level and conservation districts administer the program locally. The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance and works closely with landowners to ensure that practices are carried out according to specifications.

The Oklahoma state legislature appropriated \$1.5 million in 2002, bringing the total funding for assistance to \$5.4 million since the program began in 1999.

### Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA)

Provides natural resource inventories and assessments, planning assistance, and technical assistance in applying conservation systems and practices to protect and enhance natural resources. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has the responsibility to provide conservation technical assistance to individuals, groups, communities, Tribes, state and local government and other federal agencies. A close partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, 88 local conservation districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts provides the vehicle for delivery of conservation technical assistance in the state.

### Small Watershed Program

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954, and Public Law 83-566 (Small Watershed Program) provides broad authority to USDA agencies and other federal and state agencies to cooperate in watershed planning, surveys, and investigations. The small watershed program helps communities and rural areas reduce flooding. In addition to flood control, the small lakes formed by the dams provide millions of dollars in benefits each year for recreation, municipal water supplies, irrigation, and wildlife habitat. Local watershed project sponsors, usually conservation districts, obtain land rights and easements to build and maintain the dams.

With many Oklahoma dam construction dates dating from the 1940s, several dams have exceeded their 50-year design life. A survey of rehabilitation needs of watershed dams in Oklahoma was conducted. The review indicated that 190 dams were in need of rehabilitation. Oklahoma was selected to establish a national pilot project on rehabilitation of aging flood control dams. The rehabilitation of the Sergeant Major Creek Watershed raised national attention to the fact that many flood control dams would soon reach the end of their 50-year designed life and many would require rehabilitation.

## Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program

Resource Conservation and Development programs help people in rural areas plan and carry out activities that increase conservation of natural resources, stimulate and support economic development, and enhance the environment and standard of living in local communities.

Local people make the choices for their community – whether they work on land conservation, water management, environmental enhancement, community development, or something unique to their particular area. In every case, local people are the decision-makers.

Oklahoma has 9 authorized RC&D areas, serving 75 of the 77 counties. The Natural Resources Conservation Service administers the program, providing a coordinator and administrative support to each of the areas.

### Soil Surveys in Oklahoma

Conservation of land and water resources is an important part of all landuse in Oklahoma. The maps and soil descriptions in soil surveys can help identify specific conservation problems in a given area and planning measures to reduce erosion, sedimentation, subsidence, slippage, wetness, water quality, and other hazards.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides soil data to landowners at no charge. Currently, Oklahoma is digitizing soil survey data, and hopes to have all 77 counties available in electronic format by 2007.

### Oklahoma State Technical Committee

The State Technical Committee provides recommendations for establishing criteria, priorities, and other state-level initiatives on EQIP and other USDA programs. The committee serves as an advisor to the Natural Resources Conservation Service state conservationist, in the implementation of conservation programs within Oklahoma. Currently, 90 representatives from state and federal agencies, organizations, agri-businesses, and Tribes serve on the Oklahoma USDA State Technical Committee. This committee reviews proposals from the local level and provides advice and recommendations to the state conservationist on conservation priorities and initiatives. They also make recommendations on statewide program assistance, eligible conservation practices, cost share and incentive payment limits, and on criteria to prioritize EQIP and other conservation program applications.

In 2002, the Oklahoma State Technical Committee reviewed conservation priorities established by local conservation districts in meeting the conservation needs at the local level. Sixty-three separate natural resource conservation issues were identified and prioritized by the 88 conservation districts serving all of Oklahoma. Through this process, resource treatment needs were identified on over 33 million acres at an estimated cost of over \$897 million.