

# Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

August 2011



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

## Inside This Issue

- 1 Drought
- 2 Water Resources Report
- 4 Outreach Report
- 4 Earth Team Volunteer
- 5 Zone 1 Review
- 6 Zone 2 Review
- 7 Zone 3 Review
- 8 Zone 4 Review
- 9 Okla. Assn of RC&D

## Dealing with Drought

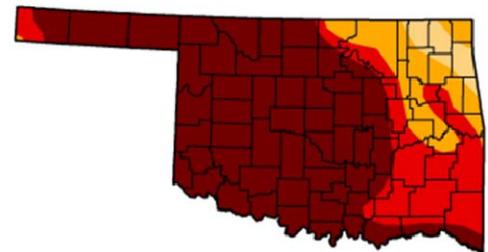
Dealing with the forces of Mother Nature is a constant that farmers and ranchers must deal with every day. **Drought, heat extremes and wildfires are currently challenging the state** but until someone figures out how to make it rain, the next best solution is to properly manage forage. A recent report noted that over 66 percent of Oklahoma’s drought conditions checked in at exceptional, over 85 percent at extreme and over 96 percent at severe drought conditions. Right or wrong, drought is a normal part of agriculture. In drought, the negative effects of poor management are intensified and the positive effects of good management are increased. A drought management plan that considers the land, livestock, money and people, will provide a better position to recover when the rains finally do come.

### U.S. Drought Monitor Oklahoma

August 23, 2011  
Valid 7 a.m. EST

*Drought Conditions (Percent Area)*

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	100.00	96.63	85.37	66.87
Last Week (08/16/2011 map)	0.00	100.00	100.00	96.35	85.39	66.84
3 Months Ago (05/24/2011 map)	32.30	67.70	55.37	41.31	29.09	10.26
Start of Calendar Year (12/28/2010 map)	13.82	86.18	47.90	1.50	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/28/2010 map)	66.28	33.72	4.21	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago (08/17/2010 map)	49.57	50.43	4.06	0.00	0.00	0.00



Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

Land management is best addressed through three areas consisting of vegetation management, cross-fencing and water development. Plant management is the cornerstone of an effective drought management plan. Developing and maintaining desirable forages will provide the plant community to recover when it does rain again. Cross-fencing is another tool to manage the pressure grazing places on a plant during drought. Plants grow slower when it’s dry and need more rest for re-growth. When grazing livestock are concentrated in smaller fields, through cross-fencing, they tend to graze more uniformly. That eliminates spot grazing of the most desirable plants. Water supplies must be developed for long term usage. However, forage production and cross fencing are of no value if there is no water available. Think of it as drought insurance.

Livestock management through a planned grazing system balances the needs of the plant community, the needs of the livestock, and the desires of the manager. During drought, decisions have to be made with consideration of reducing livestock numbers as forage production decreases. Locking into maintaining herd size is inviting disaster. Overstocking during drought can lead to undesirable forages,

*continued...*

## Dealing with Drought — ... continued

decreased livestock performance and ultimately 'red ink'. Supplemental feeding during drought is expensive and leads to overstocking, deteriorated pastures and accelerated economic losses.

**Financial** income is likely to increase when you ultimately destock. Take control of managing capital. The farther a drought continues without addressing the problem, the more drastic income will plunge.

**People** should keep a positive outlook about drought since it's inevitable in agriculture operations. Take control by making critical decisions in selling livestock and managing the land so it doesn't deteriorate.

When Mother Nature is in control, we tend to travel through an illogical cycle of thinking with awareness, concern, panic and apathy.

Agricultural producers should remember that it's not the drought that determines profit or loss, but how drought is managed and the decisions that are made.



*Sun-parched sediment is all that's left by drought in this lake.*

**On July 20, 2011, Gov. Mary Fallin amended a state of emergency to include all 77 Oklahoma counties because of ongoing drought conditions that are expected to worsen...**

## Water Resources Report — Submitted by Bill Porter

### Status of Oklahoma Watershed Rehabilitation Projects as of 8-17-11

Watershed	Dam No.	County	Conservation District	Status
<b>In Planning</b>				
Cobb Creek	3	Washita	Deer Creek CD	Estimated completion 9.1.11
Upper Black Bear	62	Noble	Noble County CD	Estimated completion 11.1.11
<b>Planning Completed - Awaiting Design</b>				
Sallisaw Creek	32	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights
Sallisaw Creek	29	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending

*continued...*

## Water Resources Report — ... continued

Watershed	Dam No.	County	District	Status
<b>In Design</b>				
Quapaw Creek	15M	Lincoln	Lincoln County CD	Pending
Barntiz Creek	1	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 10.1.11
Barntiz Creek	11	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 8.1.12
Barnitz Creek	5	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 3.1.13
Sallisaw Creek	28	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Estimated completion 4.15.12
Sallisaw Creek	30	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Estimated completion 6.15.12
Fourche Maline	7M	Latimer	Latimer County CD	Estimated completion 5.1.13
Cottonwood Creek	16	Canadian	East Canadian CD	Estimated completion 6.1.13
<b>Planning &amp; Design Completed - Awaiting Construction</b>				
Cottonwood Creek	54	Logan	Logan County CD	Pending Landrights
Sallisaw Creek	34	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights
Sallisaw Creek	26	Adair	Adair County CD	Estimated start 12.1.11
Upper Clear Boggy *	33	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	Estimated start 11.15.11
Upper Clear Boggy *	34	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	Estimated start 12.1.11
Sallisaw Creek	33	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending
Caney-Coon Creek	2M	Coal	Coal County CD	Estimated start 10.1.11
Ft Cobb Laterals	10	Caddo	South Caddo County CD	Estimated start 10.1.11
<b>Under Construction</b>				
Cobb Creek	1	Washita	Deer Creek CD	Estimated completion 2.15.12
Turkey Creek	9	Washita	Washita County CD	Estimated completion 1.1.12
Upper Clear Boggy *	35	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	Estimated completion 12.15.11
Sugar Creek *	L-44	Caddo	South Caddo County CD	Estimated completion 9.1.12
Cottonwood Creek *	15	Kingfisher	Kingfisher County CD	Estimated completion 2.1.12
Upper Clear Boggy	36	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	Estimated completion 2.15.12

*continued...*

## Water Resources Report — ... continued.

Watershed	Dam No.	County	Conservation District
<b>Rehabilitation Completed</b>			
Sandstone Creek	16A	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD
Barnitz Creek	14	Dewey	Dewey County CD
Mill Creek	18	Johnston	Johnston County CD
Double Creek	1,2,3,4,5,6	Washington	Caney Valley CD
Cavalry Creek	6	Washita	Washita County CD
Sandstone Creek	12,17A	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD
Sergeant Major Creek	1,2	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD
Cobb Creek	2	Washita	Deer Creek CD
Sallisaw Creek	15,16,20	Adair	Adair County CD
Big Wewoka Creek	29	Seminole	Seminole County CD
Cottonwood Creek	17	Canadian	East Canadian CD
Sallisaw Creek	18M	Adair	Adair County CD West Caddo County CD
Sugar Creek	L-43	Caddo	CD

\*American Recovery Reinvestment Act

## Outreach Efforts — submitted by Gilbert Guerrero (Acting)

### OTCAC Reaches Out in McClain County

The McClain County Conservation District, the NRCS and the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) held a **conservation informational meeting** to discuss funding opportunities for local farmers, ranchers, tribes and tribal landowners. Attendees received information on the new Conservation Stewardship Program, USDA Farm Bill Programs and program opportunities from other federal and state agencies. More than 75 people attended the meeting that was held April 7, 2011, at the Mid-American Technology Center located in Wayne, Okla.

## Earth Team Volunteer Efforts —

### NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Accomplishes More Than Donating Time

**Mark Ward is an NRCS Earth Team volunteer** in the Norman Field Service Center. Ward is also a cancer survivor. For the last year, Ward has been battling four cancerous brain tumors. He has undergone intensive chemotherapy and radiation treatments to combat his brain tumors. After aggressive cancer treatment, Ward found himself with the challenge of working daily on repetitious activities designed to assist him in improving his motor skills and short-term memory. Ward decided that he wanted to do something that would not only sharpen his motor skills and improve his memory, but would also be a greater benefit to others. For the last month, Ward has been coming to the office twice a week to assemble NRCS program information packets used in outreach events and meetings.



Although Ward's disabilities are short-term, his therapeutic approach to donating his time to his community has been therapeutic for the NRCS and Cleveland County Conservation District staff. **Mark deserves a round of applause** as service center staff are humbled and inspired by his commitment and contribution as an Earth Team volunteer.

## Zone 1 Review — *submitted by Lanny Miller*

### Oklahoma City Field Service Center

Taylor Nero, from Mustang, Okla., spent one of the hottest summers on record as an **NRCS intern through REYAP** (Retired Educators for Youth Agricultural Programs) at the Oklahoma City Field Service Center. Taylor assisted Robert Dukes, soil conservation technician, with various engineering aspects of practice implementation. Nero also went to the field with District Conservationist Rod Shaw, where she visited with organic farmers and learned about installing high tunnel greenhouses. Nero also learned about farm programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Programs, and how various programs and technical assistance helps farmers and ranchers protect, conserve and improve their private lands. Nero also learned about the National Resource Inventory grazing land surveys and was quite impressed with the benefits of the watershed program and structures in Oklahoma County.

The partners in the REYAP (Retired Educators for Youth Agricultural Programs) met at the Oklahoma City NRCS office on August 5, 2011. Taylor held the attention of everyone in the conference room as she provided a PowerPoint presentation to highlight her experiences and her understanding of careers in NRCS and other agriculture occupations.

Taylor will be attending the University of Oklahoma the fall semester of 2011. However, her experience with NRCS this summer may still have an influence in her college degree and career decisions that lie ahead of this very talented young lady.

### What is REYAP?

Retired Educators for Youth Agricultural Program (REYAP) provides African American high school students and other culturally diverse youth with opportunities in the field of agriculture. The program, which aims to address the goals of increased leadership, scholarship, citizenship and economic development, is held on the Oklahoma State University campus in Stillwater each summer.

Participants gain an appreciation for agricultural sciences and technology, while also increasing their understanding of the diversity of agriculture; they leave the program with an awareness that agriculture encompasses more than the task of farming.

Students participate in hands-on, interactive scientific experiences in the food and nutritional sciences; entomology; bio-systems and agricultural engineering; and plant pathology career fields. Participants also participate in oral and poster presentations to gain public speaking experience, while highlighting the research they learned about in the program.

Contact Rita Combs, REYAP executive director, at 918.619.3111 for more information or go to [www.okepescor.org/education/k-12-students/reyp](http://www.okepescor.org/education/k-12-students/reyp)



*NRCS Intern Taylor Nero at Bear Fall Coon Creek Watershed site 32.*



*REYAP meeting attendees (l) to (r): Christine Williams, youth coordinator, Rita Combs, exec dir, Rod Shaw, district conservationist, Taylor Nero, intern, Ron Hilliard, state conservationist, Becky Inmon, OCCD secretary, Don Bartolina, OCCD manager, Robert Dukes, soil conservation technician, and Sam Combs.*



## Zone 2 Review — Submitted by Jasper Parker (Acting)



*NRCS State Conservationist Ron Hilliard, RD Director Ryan McMullen, and Bob Miller with the Muscogee Creek Nation, welcome attendees, as NRCS employees Carol Crouch and Matt Ward look on.*

### Okmulgee Field Service Center

The Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council and the Natural Resource Conservation Service partnered to sponsor a **conservation informational meeting** to discuss funding opportunities through the Farm Bill programs and livestock health for local Tribes, tribal landowners, and farmers and ranchers in northeast Oklahoma.

The meeting was held Thursday evening, August 18, 2011, in Okmulgee, Okla. The Muscogee Creek Nation hosted the meeting at their Human Development Center with a traditional meal being served by Sharon Harris, Creek Nation tribal member. There was a very good turnout for the meeting .



*Matt Ward, NRCS program liaison, talks about Farm Bill Programs and assistance available from NRCS.*



*District Conservationist Andy Inman provides Farm Bill program information to attendees.*

### Stilwell Field Service Center

On August 12, 2011, the **Adair County Cattleman's Association meeting** was held in Stilwell with approximately 81 people in attendance. The Stilwell Field Service Center provided assistance to the local County Cattlemen's Association for educational information relating to current agricultural programs and current conservation issues and concerns. Andy Inman, district conservationist, provided a presentation to the group about conservation topics including NRCS programs, operations, and services available.

The Oklahoma Firewise program helps to educate homeowners in Wildland Urban Interface areas about proactive steps they can take to protect their homes. Oklahoma Forestry Services encourages communities to participate in the Oklahoma Firewise program by offering grants and free community assistance.

## Zone 3 Review — Submitted by Richard Kacir

### Cheyenne Field Service Center

The OSU Extension Service, Roger Mills County Farm Service Agency, and the NRCS Cheyenne FSC hosted a **local meeting on Drought Management**. The meeting was held on Monday, July 25, 2011, at the OSU Ag Pavilion. Speakers included Greg Allen, district conservationist, Robert Payne, FSA executive director, Bob LeValley, area extension livestock specialist, J.C. Hobbs, extension specialist tax ed. & farm management, and Dr. Gene Parker, animal quality & health specialist.

### Chickasha Field Service Center

The USDA-NRCS Chickasha FSC recently **participated in the statewide Feds, Farmers, and Friends Feed Families food drive**. Donations were shared with the Women's Service & Family Resource Center, located near the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma campus. Established in 1981, the Women's Service & Family Resource Center provides assistance and crisis intervention of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. The Chickasha FSC accepted donations from employees as well as members of the local community. Chickasha's Women's Service & Family Resource Center accepted non-perishable food items, juice, baby food, diapers, personal care items, and clothes. The Women's Service & Family Resource Center is always in need of these items, and it is important to support this invaluable part of the community.



*Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families food drive*



**Brandon Baker**, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program technician, has **accepted a position with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation** in Marietta where he will be a wildlife area manager for the Cross-timbers Wildlife Management Area. Brandon has been with Zone 3 for four years and in this time, assisted producers in making informed decisions on how to improve wildlife habitat on their property. The top five practices Baker helped producers with were range planting, ponds, brush management, fence, and tree/shrub establishment. We would like to thank Brandon for all of his hard work during his stint in Zone 3!

### McClain/Cleveland Counties Field Service Centers

Unlike crops, electronic devices can live forever. On July 30, 2011, Cleveland County District Secretary Chris Ward and Patti Christian, district secretary for McClain County, worked the **e-Waste recycling event** held at Marc Heitz Chevrolet in Norman, Okla. Chris Ward helped organize the recycling event.

There was no cost to recycle electronic devices such as computers, laptops, fax machines, printers, televisions and much more. The recycling event was a huge success and it is important to remember that our NRCS and conservation districts are always actively involved in their communities with conservation and things that are green.



*E-Waste Recycling event*

"Cease being intimidated by the argument that a right action is impossible because it does not yield maximum profits, or that a wrong action is to be condoned because it pays."

— Aldo Leopold (A Sand County Almanac)



## Zone 4 Review — *Submitted by Jamey Wood*

### Antlers Field Service Center

On August 15, 2011, the Antlers Field Service Center partnered with the OSU Cooperative Extension Service and the Farm Service Agency to present a **program in Pushmataha County on Drought Survival**. Cindy Ward, NRCS district conservationist, provided information on Farm Bill programs available to producers. There were approximately 40 livestock producers who attended to learn how to meet the resource concerns with no water or grass due to the drought conditions.

### Atoka Field Service Center

The Atoka FSC has a **new technician** for their office as of August 1, 2011. **Brian Ringels** returns after previously working for NRCS in 2005 as a soil conservationist. He lives in Cottonwood in Coal County and is married with two children. Welcome back Brian.

### Coalgate Field Service Center

On August 3, 2011, the **pre-bid conference and site showing** was held for the Coalgate City Lake Rehabilitation Project. This site provides drinking water to 85 percent of the people in Coal County. The dam was reclassified from low hazard to high hazard, and the rehabilitation will bring it into compliance with current standards. Joe Freeland, project engineer, discusses the project with potential contractors. The bids will be opened on August 18 and work is expected to begin in October with construction lasting approximately 425 days.



### Poteau Field Service Center

A **tour of the Kerr Center** for Sustainable Agriculture was conducted on July 12, 2011. There were 10 NRCS employees in attendance representing the Hugo, Poteau, Stigler, Wilburton, Idabel, and McAlester TSO offices. Four of the employees present were student trainees. The tour consisted of presentations from the individuals leading the vegetable production trials (organic), goat production trials, agroforestry practices and review of their conservation practices installed using NRCS standard and specifications.

### Stigler Field Service Center

**Grazing Lands training** was conducted on July 27, 2011. Harry Fritzler, state grazing lands specialist, provided the training to 15 employees from the Poteau, Wilburton, Durant, Idabel, Hugo, and Stigler Field Service Centers. Plant identification and forage uses/production were reviewed and discussed on-site. The training was well received with inquiries made about the possibility of having similar trainings in the future.



## Oklahoma Association of RC&D Councils Annual Summit

The Oklahoma Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils recently met in Shawnee, Okla., for their **annual statewide summit**. The focus of the summit was targeted towards 'Moving Forward' with many speakers assisting with strategic planning and roundtable discussions on future opportunities. The evening session hosted an awards banquet with several quest speakers, including Garrett King, representing Congressman Frank Lucas office. During the banquet, **recognitions and awards were given to the coordinators who served the nine RC&D councils.** Congressman Lucas also provided letters and Congressional certificates commending and thanking the coordinators for honorable and dedicated service to the RC&D Councils.



*Pictured left to right are Gary O'Neill, Stacey Cramer, Marty Hern, Angela Williams, Andy Tucker, Tom Lucas, Greg Kendall, Larry Wright, Ron Hilliard and Garrett King (not present: Carl Smith and Scott Pace)*



*Jeff Lockett, president of OARC&D Councils and Ron Hilliard, state conservationist.*

An excerpt from his letter read: *'We face many challenges, folks, and there is no sugar-coating this reality. We face a staggering national debt that threatens our economy and the standard of living we bequeath to posterity; likewise, our rural way of life is endangered by lack of development, access and resources. The coordinators have served you as councils and all of us as Oklahomans in so many ways. Our coordinators have been allies of rural America and a distinguished voice for the interests of diverse peoples and places of Oklahoma. To the outgoing coordinators, I remind you that the seeds that you all have planted in your work will yield fruit long after we all are gone.'*

Ron Hilliard, state conservationist and Gary O'Neill, assistant state conservationist and RC&D program manager, were in attendance and offered Councils words of support and appreciation for the past years' efforts and reminded the councils they were still active and dedicated partners for the agency's conservation agenda. O'Neill provided length of service awards and spot awards to the coordinators.

The individual RC&D councils, along with the state association, also recognized each coordinator with an award and a friendly roasting of their years of service to the Councils.

The Summit concluded with a technical tour of Native American Technologies Company. The wind energy company is working with the Oklahoma Wind Power Initiative and more information can be found at:

[http://www.seic.okstate.edu/owpi/OkWinCharger/WinCharger/JAN\\_FEB2011.pdf](http://www.seic.okstate.edu/owpi/OkWinCharger/WinCharger/JAN_FEB2011.pdf)



*Technical tour of Wind Energy Plant in Prague, Okla.*

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