

# Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

With technical assistance from NRCS District Conservationist Mary Hern, Barney Hawkins of Cherokee County, developed a wildlife habitat management plan integrating his goals and objectives with the habitat needs of the deer, quail and turkey.



photo: NRCS Oklahoma

## Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program is a voluntary program that helps landowners develop and improve wildlife habitat on private lands. Interested landowners seek natural resource planning assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other federal, state, and private organizations to develop conservation plans that improve wildlife habitat on land that is compatible for livestock use. Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program dollars help implement the actions identified in the plan. The compatibility of agriculture and wildlife programs benefits all.

Wildlife is one of Oklahoma's natural resource treasures; the interest of landowners in the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and cooperation by technical experts to implement the program are testimony to that fact. In 2002, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Oklahoma continued technical assistance to over 353 participants in the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and serviced over 560 applications for cost-share through the program. In 1998, the Wildlife Habitat

Incentives Program provided just under \$1 million for habitat improvement. In 1999, the program provided over \$300,000 for financial assistance to landowners. While the program was not funded in fiscal year 2000, the \$775,000 provided through the Agriculture Risk

Protection Act, funded over 130 applications for improving wildlife habitat on over 42,000 new acres. Oklahoma still has over 160 applications on file needing additional funding.

Reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program will have increasing funding each year of the Farm Bill through 2007. In

2003, Oklahoma received \$400,000 in financial assistance, approving 26 new contracts for wildlife habitat improvement on 7,878 acres.

### Program Applications

With financial assistance through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and technical assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and its partners, private landowners are restoring, enhancing and creating habitat for prairie chicken, bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, bald eagles, and dozens

**"Without the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, it would have taken me 20 years to install all these practices. A good program and good assistance", claims Barney Hawkins, Cherokee County landowner.**

