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# Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

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**VISION: Productive Lands Healthy Environments MISSION: Helping People Help the Land**

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## John Mueller named Acting NRCS State Conservationist for Oklahoma

John Mueller has been named Acting State Conservationist for the USDA-NRCS in Oklahoma. He assumed the duties on January 14, 2013 after being appointed by Jason Weller, Acting NRCS Chief in Washington, D.C. Mueller replaces Ronald L. Hilliard, who retired after 36 years of service.

Mueller returns to Oklahoma with a strong conservation ethic, a passion for working with farmers and ranchers and a stellar career in watershed development, rehabilitation, conservation structure design spanning over 27 years in four states.

John Mueller grew up on a small ranch in DeWitt County, Texas. After graduating from Texas A&M with a degree in Agricultural Engineering, he joined the NRCS and has held positions in four states, including Oklahoma. His first assignment in Oklahoma was as the Field Engineer at Duncan where he served three years. He was named Geo-Tech Engineer at the State Office in Stillwater, and was later promoted to Assistant State Engineer in Oklahoma. After serving in Stillwater for eight years, he returned to Texas in 2002 as the Texas State Engineer. Mueller and his wife, Kate have one daughter, Julia, who is a student at Elon University in North Carolina.

Mueller said "I am pleased to have an opportunity to serve in this capacity, and to renew friendships with people in the various conservation partnerships. I look forward to meeting other people that are now involved in conservation partnerships." He added that "Oklahoma is well known nationally for its locally led partnership approach to place conservation on the land. The recent Ken Burn's documentary on the Dust Bowl came at an appropriate time since Oklahoma is in the worst drought since the 1930's. As a result of the drought and the documentary, conservation has become a hot topic at coffee shops in rural towns all across Oklahoma."

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## Engineering Review - submitted by Chris Stoner

**Baumann AML Reclamation Design Project**: Baumann Abandon Mine Land Reclamation Project is located near Talala, Rogers County, Oklahoma. The project area was strip mined for coal during the 1940's. The pit that was left open as a result of the strip mining was determined to be a safety hazard. The project has been designed to eliminate the hazard of steep sided water filled pits. The spoils from the mining operation were placed in windrow type mounds and are rough and uneven, making the area difficult to utilize for any farming or ranching activity similar to what it was used for prior to the mining operation.

The project area is approximately 92 acres. The materials that were removed from the strip pit during the mining operations were spoiled on the opposite side of the pit. These spoils will be placed back in the pits. The project area will be graded to drain to a constructed waterway. The collected site runoff will be carried by this vegetated waterway to the portion of the mine pit that will not be reclaimed. A sediment pond will be constructed to capture any sediment from the project area.

The AML project design was completed by Heath Sand, Brian, Dillard, and Tracy Potter. The partnership project with OCC-AML section has been a positive and rewarding experience. The project will be constructed in the coming fiscal year.

### Supplemental Geologic Investigation Is Underway at Cottonwood Creek Floodwater Retarding Structure (FWRS) No. 16 in Canadian County, Oklahoma

Rig NRCS driller Dan Wilkinson (left), and helper Randy Banning

Gregg Hudson measuring outcrop near plunge pool

Drilling and sampling at Cottonwood Creek No. 16 was completed on December 15, 2012. Gregg Hudson, Geologist in the NRCS State Office in Stillwater, contracted with the Texas State Office to utilize their drill rig to complete the field investigation. Dan Wilkinson, Geologist with the Texas staff, operated the drill rig, and Randy Banning, Construction Inspector in the Stillwater Watershed Office, provided the drilling assistance. This was the first collaborative effort for drilling services between the two states. The supplemental geologic investigation is being conducted in advance of designing the proposed changes in the rehabilitation plan to bring the dam and it's appurtenances into compliance as a high hazard classified structure.

# Water Resources Review - submitted by Bill Porter

Status of Oklahoma Watershed Rehabilitation Projects as of 1-17-13

| Watershed | Dam No. | County | Conservation District | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **In Planning** | | | | |
| Rock Creek | 15 & 16 | Murray | Murray County CD | Estimated completion 2-1-13 |
| **Planning Completed - Awaiting Design** | | | | |
| Sallisaw Creek | 32 | Sequoyah | Sequoyah County CD | Pending Landrights |
| **In Design** | | | | |
| Quapaw Creek | 15M | Lincoln | Lincoln County CD | Pending |
| Barntiz Creek | 11 | Dewey | Dewey County CD | Estimated completion 12-15-13 |
| Barnitz Creek | 5 | Dewey | Dewey County CD | Estimated completion 2-15-14 |
| Fourche Maline | 7M | Latimer | Latimer County CD | Estimated completion 9-15-14 |
| Cottonwood Creek | 16 | Canadian | East Canadian CD | Estimated completion 4-15-14 |
| Cobb Creek | 3 | Washita | Deer Creek CD | |
| Upper Black Bear | 62 | Noble | Noble County CD | |
| Sallisaw Creek | 29 | Sequoyah | Sequoyah County CD | |
| **Planning & Design Completed - Awaiting Construction** | | | | |
| Cottonwood Creek | 54 | Logan | Logan County CD | Pending Landrights |
| Sallisaw Creek | 34 | Sequoyah | Sequoyah County CD | Pending Landrights |
| Sallisaw Creek | 33 | Sequoyah | Sequoyah County CD | Pending |
| Ft Cobb Laterals | 10 | Caddo | South Caddo County CD | Estimated start 4-1-13 |
| Barntiz Creek | 1 | Dewey | Dewey County CD | Estimated start 4-1-13 |
| Sallisaw Creek | 28 | Sequoyah | Sequoyah County CD | |
| Sallisaw Creek | 30 | Sequoyah | Sequoyah County CD | |
| **Under Construction** | | | | |
| Caney-Coon Creek | 2M | Coal | Coal County CD | Estimated completion 4-1-13 |
| Sallisaw Creek | 26 | Adair | Adair County CD | Estimated completion 4-15-13 |
| Upper Clear Boggy | 34 | Pontotoc | Pontotoc County CD | Estimated completion 2-15-13 *ARRA |
| **Rehabilitation Completed** | | | | |
| 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 | Washing- | 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 | |

## Water Resources Review cont....

| Watershed | Dam No. | County | Conservation District | Status | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **Rehabilitation Completed** | | |
| Sallisaw Creek | 18M | Adair | Adair County CD | | *ARRA |
| Sugar Creek | L-43 | Caddo | West Caddo County CD | | *ARRA |
| Upper Clear Boggy | 35 | Pontotoc | Pontotoc County CD | | *ARRA |
| Cobb Creek | 1 | Washita | Deer Creek CD | | |
| Upper Clear Boggy | 36 | Pontotoc | Pontotoc County CD | | |
| Cottonwood Creek | 15 | Kingfisher | Kingfisher County CD | Decommission | *ARRA |
| Turkey Creek | 9 | Washita | Washita County CD | | |
| Upper Clear Boggy | 33 | Pontotoc | Pontotoc County CD | | *ARRA |
| Sugar Creek | L-44 | Caddo | South Caddo County CD | | *ARRA |
| | | | | *American Recovery Reinvestment Act | |

## Zone 1 Review - submitted by Lanny Miller

### Woodward County - Woodward Field Service Center

December 6th the Zone 1 All Employee Meeting was held at the High Plains Technology Center in Woodward. Main speakers were; Lanny Miller, ASTC(FO) – moderator and awards presentation, Joe Buford, Resource Conservationist – Stillwater, presentation on CDSI, David McKay, Civil Engineer – Woodward TSO, safety film, and Larry Hood, Soil Conservationist & Zone 1 Representative on the Oklahoma Civil Rights Committee – El Reno FSC, Diversity film. A catered meal was enjoyed before a failed attempt to surprise Lanny with a Mini-Retirement Party from the zone that appreciate him, his hard work and dedication to the mission and to those whom he supervises. Wishing upon him a happy retirement and joy in a new life adventure but a sad farewell to a great supervisor! Mr. Lanny you will be missed.

Lanny Miller, presented with a small token of appreciation from Zone 1

# Zone 2 Review - submitted by Chad Kacir

## Okmulgee County - Okmulgee Field Service Center

An information meeting for prescribed burning was held on October 11th, 2012 at the Okmulgee County Fair Grounds with 22 in attendance. The meeting was sponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Tribal Advisory Council, Okmulgee County Conservation District, NRCS and OSU extension. Extension Specialists presented topics on Mesonet Fire Tools for weather prediction, benefits and uses for prescribed burns, and forming a Burn Association. Ron Goedecke, NRCS DC, presented Developing a Burn Plan.

## Payne County - Stillwater Field Service Center

David Hungerford, District Conservationist in Stillwater, attended the Central Oklahoma Cattle Conference and manned a booth there to provide outreach for NRCS programs and other conservation activities. The conference was held at the Payne County Expo Center on Friday, January 25, 2013 from 8:00am until 3:30pm. The following topics were discussed:

2013 Cattle Market Outlook

Negotiating Leases with Oil Companies

Commercial Fertilizer vs. Poultry Litter

Pasture Management Following a Drought

Ammoniation of Low Quality roughages

The Stillwater FO participated in a Career Expo at the Meridian Technology Center in Stillwater on December 5, 2012. More than 1100 8th Grade students attended the Career Fair from the following communities: Perry, Morrison, Agra, Carney, Coyle, Frontier, Pawnee, Mulhall-Orlando, and Guthrie.

# Zone 3 Review - submitted by Stacy Riley

## Comanche County - Lawton Field Service Center

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), Comanche Nation of Oklahoma and the Comanche County Conservation District partnered to sponsor a conservation workshop to discuss current Ag policies that impact producers; brush management, soil health and funding opportunities for local tribes and tribal landowners and farmers and ranchers in southwest Oklahoma. The workshop was held on Thursday, December 5, 2012 from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM. The workshop was hosted by the Comanche Nation at their Tribal headquarters in Elgin, Oklahoma. According to Kirk Schreiner, District Conservationist for Comanche County, "the conservation meeting was designed not only to provide producers with information about conservation programs available, but a workshop on conservation issues such as soil health, invasive brush and agriculture employment and oil spill prevention laws."

Soil Health Demonstration with NRCS Soil Scientist Clay Salisbury

Rainfall Simulator

## Garvin County - Pauls Valley Field Service Center

On December 3, the Pauls Valley Service Center participated in the local Christmas Parade of Lights. Employees of the office loaded their families and friends into a wagon and showed their spirit of the season. The agency was easy to recognize as a large pair of Belgians pulled the wagon through the packed downtown streets. The warm December night lead to thousands of spectators enjoying the light displays.

# Zone 3 Review cont....

## McClain County - Purcell Field Service Center

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, the McClain County Conservation District and Farm Service Agency (FSA) partnered to hold an appreciation Christmas luncheon at the USDA Service Center in Purcell, Oklahoma, on December 6, 2012. NRCS, FSA and McClain County board members were invited to the annual luncheon that was held from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. A special invitation was extended to McClain County landowner, Mr. Hollis Gallup and his wife Nancy, to join the conservation boards and USDA employees. Hollis Gallup has been farming for over fifty six years and was recently selected as the producer of the year for the Oklahoma Conservation Commission area II region.

From Left to Right:

McClain County board member, Ted Idleman and McClain County producer, Hollis Gallup

Hollis has completed three NRCS Environmental Quality (EQIP) contracts and is currently enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Hollis has implemented sound conservation practices for 26 years in McClain County. He is no stranger to the importance of erosion and flood control; during his career as a contractor he assisted with the construction of 663 flood control structures in Oklahoma.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service and the McClain County Conservation District partnered to hold an *Open House* and locally led meeting on December 6, 2012 at the USDA Service Center in Purcell, Oklahoma. An Open House was held from 9:30 to 10:30 am and again from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. The Open House was designed to provide the opportunity to provide producers with conservation information on funding opportunities through USDA Farm Bill Programs and technical assistance provided by NRCS. The locally-led meeting was held from 2:30 to 3:30 pm. The locally-led meeting is an essential element of the locally led conservation process that provides the opportunity for input from conservation agencies, businesses and producers who have an interest in natural resource management. The locally led meeting provided the opportunity for attendees to review local conservation resources concerns, conservation action plan and how their identified resources concerns were implemented in the ranking of producer applications for the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program. The meeting was a success because local community stakeholders came together for the common good of protecting and preserving their natural resources in McClain County.

McClain County Landowner visits the NRCS office during the Open House

# Zone 4 Review - submitted by Jamey Wood

## Haskell County - Stigler Field Service Center

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Haskell County Conservation District offices in Stigler welcome Travis Jones to our staff. Travis will be serving as Rangeland Management Specialist for Haskell County. Travis is joining the NRCS after a 9 year Firefighting and Prescribed Fire career with both the USDA National Forest Service (Coconino National Forest, Sedona AZ) and USDOI National Park Service (Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Sulphur OK). Jones was born and raised in Alva, Oklahoma and holds a degree in Rangeland Ecology and Land Management from Oklahoma State University graduating in 2003. Travis is married and he and his wife have a one and a half year old son. Jones says that he is excited to start working with Haskell County producers and is thankful for the hospitality already shown to him in Haskell County.

## McIntosh County - Eufaula Field Service Center

The Eufaula Field Office partnered with OSU Extension and the McIntosh County Cattlemen's Association for an **Outreach Meeting** on December 11, 2012 at the Checotah Community Center. There were 141 people attending the meeting. Jacob Worley, District Conservationist for McIntosh County, informed everyone about current NRCS programs and answered several questions about conservation concerns. News on 6™ chief meteorologist **Travis Meyer** was at the meeting and gave a presentation on the current drought in Oklahoma and his predictions for how much longer it will persist. Travis Meyer was very different in person than how he appears on Channel 6. He is a genuine country boy and he is still involved in farming and ranching in the Tulsa area. He even took time for a photograph with a certain Eufaula DC. The meeting was very successful and 175 steaks with all the trimmings were served during the meeting.

Jacob Worley, DC, McIntosh County and Travis Meyer, Oklahoma Meteorologist

# Zone 4 Review cont....

## McCurtain County - Idabel Field Service Center

**District's Partnership Helps Ensure WRP Success** – Conservation District and USDA/ Natural Resources Conservation Service partner to accelerate the development of conservation practices on Oklahoma's newest Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) project in McCurtain County, Oklahoma.

Little River Conservation District and the Idabel NRCS office are working hand-in-hand to complete the 1,047 acre WRP project in southern McCurtain County. District employees have been assisting with applying herbicide, mowing and tillage operations for weed control, preparing seedbeds to plant heavy bottomland native grass mixtures and "Bumpers" Eastern Gama Grass buffers. "By being able to utilize the assistance of the local conservation district, NRCS was able to speed up the process of getting conservation work completed on the site" stated Idabel NRCS District Conservationist Scott Pace. The WRP projects, when complete, will encompass over 37,000 linear feet of dikes in 10 units and 7 water control structures throughout the site for wetland restoration. The site will be planted to both native bottomland hardwood tree species and native grasses that were present on the landscape prior to settlement. The WRP is located on private lands adjacent to the Grassy Slough Wildlife Management Area WRP. "The Little River Conservation District is always looking for opportunities to implement conservation in McCurtain County and appreciates the opportunity to work together" says Frank Acker, District manager, Little River Conservation District.

Little River Conservation District Manager, Frank Acker (left), Scott Pace, USDA/NRCS District Conservationist and Equipment Manager, John Burnett load Gama grass seed into drill for planting