

# Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

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

## NRCS SOIL HEALTH CAMPAIGN GAINS MOMENTUM

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The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Health Campaign is picking up momentum in Oklahoma. Ray Archuleta, Conservation Agronomist at the NRCS East National Technology Center in Greensboro, NC, heads up the national campaign called “Unlock the Secrets of the Soil”. Archuleta recently made presentations at both the Oklahoma Organic Conference and the Oklahoma No till Conference. He has said by using soil health principles to increase soil function, every 1% increase in organic matter results in the land being able to hold 17,000 to 25,000 gallons of water per acre.

Oklahoma NRCS recently released their long term Soil Health Strategic Plan and their Annual Plan for this year. The plan calls for the appointment of a State Soil Health Technical Committee that would include producers and conservation partners, utilizing on-farm demonstration projects, and providing training to staff and partners. NRCS has identified soil health teams for each quadrant of the state that will serve as points of contact for identifying training and technical needs of employees, partner employees and farmers.

Gary O’Neill, Oklahoma State Conservationist for NRCS, added “Soil has always been the foundation of NRCS’s mission. It is my vision to have Oklahoma become a leader in the Southern Plains region on how to best protect this resource while increasing production for Oklahoma farmers and ranchers. This campaign will provide an opportunity to advance and integrate soil health systems into our everyday conservation strategies”.



Ray Archuleta, Conservation Agronomist, Presenting at the Oklahoma Organic Conference

## ENGINEERING REVIEW

### Joe Freeland Conducts Webinar for ASDSO

The Association of State Dam Safety Officials is a non-profit organization with the purpose of improving the safety of dams by providing many resources to the dam safety community. One area in which they excel is providing relevant technical training in dam safety that also satisfies continuing education requirements for engineers.

Joe Freeland recently conducted a webinar for ASDSO entitled “Quality Assurance and Field Inspection for Dam Construction Projects”. Approximately 340 students logged in to the 2 hour webinar and many more are expected to view the archived presentation. This course was a broad overview of the construction inspection process used to provide quality assurance oversight on earthen dam construction, repair or rehabilitation projects.

Joe is the Project Engineer in the Pauls Valley Watershed Construction Office. He has been in this position for 25 years and has been involved in construction work on over 150 dams. He also serves on a national instructor cadre where he teaches courses in construction inspection and contract administration.



Joe Freeland, Project Engineer, Oklahoma Pauls Valley Watershed Office

## OUTREACH REVIEW

### American Farmers & Ranchers/Oklahoma Farmers Union 109th Annual State Convention

American Farmers & Ranchers/Oklahoma Farmers Union (AFR/OFU) wrapped up the organization’s 109th annual state convention at the Embassy Suites & Conference Center in Norman on February 22. The event featured educational speakers and entertainment, the annual business meeting of Oklahoma Farmers Union and AFR Mutual Insurance Company, discussion and adoption of AFR/OFU legislative policy and officer elections. This year’s convention theme was “Go, Gather, Grow.”

“This year’s convention theme represents who we are as a company and as an organization,” said AFR/OFU President Terry Detrick. “We are a forward-looking organization that focuses on our team work, service to others and responsibility to the future.”

The two-day event featured educational speakers such as NRCS State Conservationist Gary O’Neill, Deputy Secretary of Environment Tyler Powell and National Farmers Union Director of Advocacy Communications Brittany Jablonsky. Convention attendees learned about controversial legislative issues, the use of prescribed burn and other environmental topics, consumer challenges for agriculture and the U.S. food system and much more.



Gary O’Neill, Oklahoma State Conservationist

**WATER RESOURCES REVIEW**

**Status of Oklahoma Watershed Rehabilitation Projects as of 3-21-14**

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>Dam No.</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Conservation District</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>In Planning</b>				
Upper Elk	23D	Beckham	North Fork of Red River CD	12/1/2013
<b>Planning Completed - Awaiting Design</b>				
Sallisaw Creek	32	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights
<b>In Design</b>				
Quapaw Creek	15M	Lincoln	Lincoln County CD	Pending
Bartiz Creek	11	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 6-15-14
Barnitz Creek	5	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 9-30-14
Fourche Maline	7M	Latimer	Latimer County CD	Estimated completion 5-1-15
Cottonwood Creek	16	Canadian	East Canadian CD	Estimated completion 8-1-15
Upper Black Bear	62	Noble	Noble County CD	
Sallisaw Creek	29	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	
Rock Creek	15	Murray	Murray County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/14
Rock Creek	16	Murray	Murray County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/14
<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	33	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending
Sallisaw Creek	28	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	
Sallisaw Creek	30	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	
<b>Under Construction</b>				
Ft Cobb Laterals	10	Caddo	South Caddo County CD	Estimated completion 4-1-14
Bartiz Creek	1	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 8-15-14
<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	*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
Upper Clear Boggy	34	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	*ARRA
Caney-Coon Creek	2M	Coal	Coal County CD	
Sallisaw Creek	26	Adair	Adair County CD	

\*American Recovery Reinvestment Act

## ZONE 2 REVIEW

### Payne County - Stillwater Field Service Center

The National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center (NTGIS) invited the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to participate in their annual workshop. The tribal workshop was hosted by the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma in Stroud, Oklahoma. The workshop focused on bringing Tribes together to provide outreach, networking and education regarding geospatial technologies. NRCS State Tribal liaison, Dr. Carol Crouch, provided an overview of NRCS services, programs and her role as the new tribal liaison. The workshop was made available through webinar for tribes in the south central region.



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**There were 53 tribes that joined the workshop through webinar and 24 Oklahoma Tribes were in attendance**

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## ZONE 3 REVIEW

### Caddo County - Anadarko Field Service Center

Soil Health and cover crop field day held in Apache. Over 35 producers were in attendance to see the rainfall simulator in action.



### Jackson County - Altus Field Service Center

The 2014 Red River Crop Conference was held in Altus on January 28th and 29th. Don Skiles (Altus DC), Diana Neumeier (Altus RMS), John Dee Butchee (Jackson County Conservation District Manager), and several Conservation District board members attended. Several NRCS and Conservation District directors and employees from neighboring counties were also present. The employees attended the sessions and discussed the new material with many of their producers who also attended. Over 300 people attended over the two days.

## ZONE 3 REVIEW CONT...

### Kiowa County - Hobart Field Service Center

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS), the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and the Kiowa County Conservation District partnered to hold a soil health and USDA programs workshop on Tuesday, February 25, 2014. The workshop was held at the Western Technology Center, in Hobart, Oklahoma. Local farmers, ranchers, Tribes, tribal members and women in agriculture attended the workshop.

The NRCS rainfall simulator was utilized to demonstrate the importance of soil health by NRCS soil scientists Jeremy Dennis and Clay Salisbury. Harry Fritzler, NRCS rangeland specialist, presented on the importance of best managements practices to maintain healthy and productive rangeland. Travis Tacker, OSU extension, provided training on how to get a good soil test. Representatives from the USDA NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Rural Development (RD) provided valuable information pertaining to opportunities for participation in various Farm Bill Programs and services available through USDA agencies. NRCS State Tribal liaison, Carol Crouch, provided informational packets regarding opportunities for socially disadvantaged, limited resources and beginning farmers.

According to Will Brock, NRCS District Conservationist for Hobart, "This conservation workshop was designed not only to provide producers with information about USDA Farm Bill programs that are available, but information on conservation issues such as soil health, rangeland management and soil testing methods."



Producers receive "hands on" demonstration on the important of soil health through the rainfall simulator

**Will Brock, NRCS DC, Hobart, provided an overview of NRCS conservation programs to producers.**



### Murray County - Sulphur Field Service Center

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, NRCS partnered with the Murray County Conservation District staff, Tammy Curry (District Secretary) and Chuck Pyka (Watershed Aide), along with the District Board, in assisting with their 59th Annual Meeting & Dinner (co-sponsored by our local banks). Murray County likes to take this time to recognize their Conservationist of the Year; John Sparks was the 2014 recipient. Sparks is a person who has shown himself as a forward thinker when it comes to putting conservation on the ground and being a good steward of the land. The guest speaker this year was our very own Grazing Land Specialist, Harry Fritzler. He gave an insightful talk to over 80 folks about the change on our land, in relation to Juniper encroachment, that began once the Fire Cycle was smothered out. We also took advantage of this event to conduct our yearly survey to gather the local communities input on natural resource concerns for Murray County.



Chairman-John Cagle, 2014 Honoree-John Sparks, Acting Murray County DC-Brandon Chandler

## ZONE 4 REVIEW

### Hughes County - Holdenville Field Service Center

Hughes County Conservation District (HCCD) gave a Non-Point Source pollution education program for students at the Stuart 4H after school program and at Wetumka Elementary in January with a total of 145 students reached.



HCCD hosted a retirement party for district engineering aide Alvin Foster which was attended by over 100 people from across the state. Alvin had a combined 25 years in with the Conservation District and Hughes County Commissioners District #1 and #2.

HCCD gave a presentation to 43 students at the Calvin 4H after school program called "A Duck's Tale". The students learned about migration, habitat needs, habitat destruction, predation, and extinction. They were able to see what happens to the duck numbers when change in habitat occurs along migration routes. The kids played the role of ducks, ducklings, predators, hunters or farmers.




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Calvin 4-Hers playing the "A Duck's Tale" game in the Resource Trunk.

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HCCD will be meeting with the Alabama-Quassarte Tribe to present "A Duck's Tale" to their youth group and are currently working with the Muscogee Creek Nation to set up a two day Earth Day Festival in Okmulgee. The first day of the festival will be on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and will focus on soil, plants, trees and recycling. The second day of the festival will be on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and will focus on water, wildlife and recycling.

## ZONE 4 REVIEW CONT...

HCCD was selected as a winner of this year's EPA License Plate grant. The funding will be used to create a soil tent called "World Beneath Our Feet" and participants will walk through roots, earthworm tunnels and see the soil horizons. They will learn about the different types and colors of soils here in Oklahoma and the tent will be handicap accessible.

For more information on our programs visit us on our webpage at <http://hughesccd.webs.com> or on either our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Hughes-County-Conservation-District/629920750385167> or our twitter page at <http://www.twitter.com/HughesCoConsvDi>

### **Pittsburg County - McAlester Field Service Center**

The Pittsburg County Conservation District Youth Board held their annual campout/fishing trip recently. District Manager Bradley Hamilton and District Conservationist Russell Wright pose with the youth at a Pittsburg County watershed structure site.



(Pictured from left NRCS District Conservationist Russ Wright, Madeline Camp from Haileyville, Hannah Huddleston from Kiowa, Jessica Gibson from Haileyville, Easton Daniel from Kiowa, Paxton Nix from Kiowa, PCC District Manager Bradley Hamilton, OSU student and PCCD summer technician Justin Morgan, Bryce Wilson from Crowder, Sydney Shelton from Frink-Chambers, and Jared and James Morgan from McAlester)

During the campout/fishing trip the students learned about the functions and benefits of flood control structures while enjoying the obvious benefits of fishing. The Youth Board raises funds by working at the concession stand during the Pittsburg County Livestock Show and use those funds to take educational trips in the summer. The youth also enjoy a fun day at Six Flags and a Texas Ranger game each year.

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**ZONE 4 REVIEW CONT...**

NRCS partnered with the Choctaw Nation and their Career Development Department to conduct soil health demonstrations at their Career Opportunities Expo held on February 26, 2014 in McAlester, Oklahoma. The event was held at the Southeast Expo Center in McAlester, Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation, Choctaw Nation Career Development Division and the Choctaw Nation Scholarship Division sponsored the event. The theme for the career expo was *Winds of Change*.

Chief Gregory E. Pyle and Assistant Chief Gary Batton of the Choctaw Nation provided a welcome to all participants during the opening ceremonies. There were 170 exhibits at the career expo. The exhibitors included: federal and state agencies; Oklahoma universities; fortune 500 companies and small and large companies from across Oklahoma. The total number of attendees at the expo was estimated at approximately 1600. The attendees were junior and seniors from twenty-nine (29) high schools and adult and high school students that are currently enrolled in seven (7) Oklahoma Technology Centers located in Southeast Oklahoma. There were 94 veterans in attendance who are currently enrolled in classes at a Technology Center.

Greg Scott, NRCS retired soil scientist; now working for OCC, conducted soil health demonstrations that unlocked the secrets that the soil hold and illustrated the importance of soil health. Derek Kelso, NRCS liaison for the Choctaw Nation and Dr. Carol Crouch, State Tribal liaison, shared with attendees the different careers that NRCS has in the field of Science technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) .



**Opening Ceremonies**



**Veterans enjoy soil health demonstration**



**Greg Scott, OCC Soil Scientist, with students from southeast Oklahoma. Students enjoyed the soil health demonstration**

**Seminole County - Wewoka Field Service Center**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS) participated in the Indian Country Food and Agriculture workshop. The workshop was sponsored by the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and was held on February 19, at the Grisso Mansion, in Seminole, Oklahoma. Providing the welcome were Principal Chief, Leonard Harjo and Assistant Chief, Lewis Johnson. Attending the workshop were Tribal leaders, tribal members and women in agriculture.



**Tom James, District Conservationist, provided Farm Bill information to American Indian producers**

**The Indian Country Food and Agriculture Workshop were well attended by Tribal leaders and tribal members**

