



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

### **NRCS Chief joins House Ag chairman to highlight projects that will protect lives, provide jobs in Oklahoma**

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Communities across the nation, including in Oklahoma, will benefit from a \$262 million investment to rehabilitate dams that provide critical infrastructure and protect public health and safety. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Jason Weller and Representative Frank Lucas, chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, were in Oklahoma to recognize the importance of this announcement to agriculture and communities nationwide.

“This investment will protect people and property from floods, help keep our water clean, and ensure that critical structures continue to provide benefits for future generations,” Weller said. Families, businesses and our agriculture economy depend on responsible management of dams and watersheds, and we are continuing to provide that support to these communities.”

A number of the projects to be funded are in Oklahoma and Weller noted that Oklahoma had the first full watershed plan and structure completed by USDA on private lands in the 1940s. From the 1940s through the 1970s, local communities using NRCS assistance, constructed more than 11,800 dams in 47 states. These watershed management projects provide an estimated \$2.2 billion in annual benefits in reduced flooding and erosion damages, and improved recreation, water supplies and wildlife habitat for an estimated 47 million Americans. Weller said that funding provided through this announcement will provide rehabilitation assistance for 150 dams in 26 states. Funds will be used for planning, design, or construction. 500 dam sites will be assessed for safety through NRCS’ Watershed Rehabilitation Program. Overall an estimated 250,000 people will benefit as a result of improved flood protection made possible by these rehabilitated dams.

Watershed Dam No.62 in the Upper Black Bear Creek Watershed of Noble County will be included in a USDA-funded rehabilitation partnership project. Currently awaiting rehabilitation design, the dam provides protection against flooding to about 550 Oklahomans who live and work downstream. Watershed Rehabilitation Announcement: <http://youtu.be/8656GaCZHY0>



Watershed announcement in Noble County: L-R

Dan Sebert, Natl Watershed Coalition; Gary O’Neill, NRCS Okla State Conservationist; NRCS Chief Jason Weller, speaking; Frank Lucas, House Ag Chairman; Mike Thralls, Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission; Governor Mary Fallin; Gordon Johnson, Mayor City of Perry; State Senator Ron Justice; State Representative Dennis Casey



## Chicken Harvest/Urban Ag Producer Outreach Event

**Saturday June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014** – The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), McClain County Conservation District, Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and Redbud Farm and Vineyard (Redbud Farm) of Goldsby, OK partnered to host a chicken harvesting and urban agricultural producer outreach event. The event was held at the Redbud Farm in Goldsby. Redbud Farm utilizes a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) certified chicken harvesting system to process the chickens. This equipment is available to the public semi-annually, in the spring and the fall and is rented out in order for other local growers to process poultry. “Producer’s that live both in the area and in other parts of the state can bring as many or as few chickens as they want to our harvesting events where we humanly slaughter, de-feather, clean and bag them. They are then able to have a healthy and locally grown alternative to store bought chicken” said Susan Boehrer, co-owner of Redbud Farm and Vineyard.

On Saturday the group of 16 adults and 4 children harvested 361 chickens. Susan stated that this was by far the highest number of chickens they have harvested, and she expects interest to continue to rise as word gets out about their equipment. “For now we do about 4 days a year, two in the spring and two in the fall, but we may be increasing that number very soon,” she said.

NRCS District Conservationist Wynea Buford and Soil Conservation Technician Matt Irby were both on site for the event and provided information on NRCS programs available to small urban producers, as well as information for larger, more traditional farmers. Many of the participants were unaware of the opportunities available through NRCS before the event. We hope that this partnership with Redbud will continue as their harvesting events grow. That will give us more opportunities to reach out to new and non-traditional producers,” said Ms. Buford.



The group looks on during lunch as District Conservationist Wynea Buford provides information about USDA Farm Bill programs



Wynea's 1<sup>st</sup> Harvested Chicken and ready to bag, cleaned, natural grown and processed chicken



## Earth Team Volunteers are Valuable Partners

Karsten Mathis and Kasey Jo Blevins are volunteering as Earth Team volunteers this summer in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Stillwater state office. This is Karsten's second summer and Kasey Jo's first summer to volunteer. Karsten decided to become an Earth Team volunteer to learn more about what NRCS does and spent last summer in the Purcell field office to learn about implementing NRCS engineering practices for producers. This summer Karsten and Kasey are assisting with the soil health and farm bill workshops that are being held across the state. Karsten plans to pursue a career with NRCS and plans on attending the University of Oklahoma. Kasey Jo plans to go to Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine. Kasey Jo stated, "I live in a rural community and I am involved in 4-H and I thought being a NRCS volunteer would give me an opportunity to work with producers that I will be assisting when I complete college." Karsten stated, "I plan on returning next summer to continue to learn and I enjoyed working in outreach this summer." According to Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison, "The Earth Team provides a great opportunity to our youth to learn about what NRCS does and what career opportunities NRCS has to offer. I am very proud of my grandchildren; Kasey Jo and Karsten, for donating their time to NRCS."

Left to Right: Art Muller, Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN), Kasey Jo Blevins, Earth Team volunteer, Keisha Wolfe, CPN and Karsten Mathis, Earth Team volunteer greets District Conservationist, Shawn Fleming, and producers at the Tribal soil health and Farm Bill Workshop held July 15.

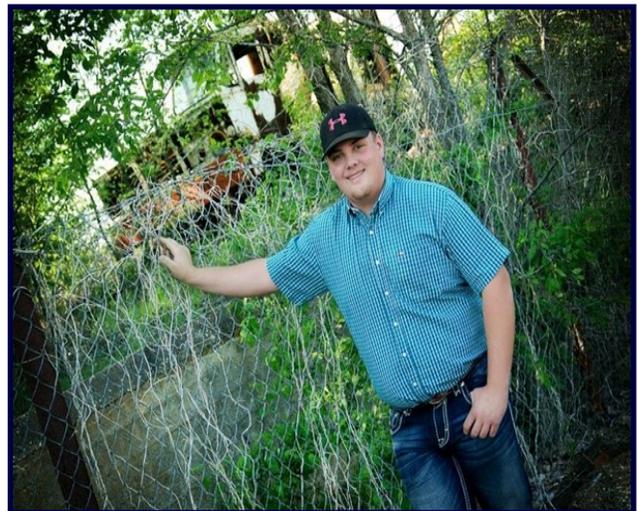


## NRCS Student Interns

NRCS Oklahoma had 10 student interns this summer. (See Student Interns) Derrick Boone offered some information "About Me"

I am currently enrolled at Murray State College in Tishomingo, Oklahoma with plans to transfer to Oklahoma State University in the fall of 2016. I am currently working toward an Agricultural Education degree with a minor in soil science. Following graduation my hopes are to work for the NRCS or in an agriculture related field. I am currently a student intern at the Durant USDA Field Office. I am very blessed to have this opportunity to be able to gain more knowledge, skills and be able to meet new people that I know will be beneficial to me and my future career.

I have recently obtained my State FFA Degree, while currently striving toward my Honorary American Degree, with hopes of obtaining National FFA Degree. I own a small cattle operation consisting of 21 crossbred cow/calf pairs. My hobbies are my cows, fishing, hunting, and just being around my family. With family comes pleasure, and with pleasure comes happiness.



Thanks for reading!

## Ag Producers Learn About Benefits of Cover Crops at Dewey County Field Day

Dewey County, Okla. - On July 8, more than 80 agriculture producers from across the state gathered in Dewey County to learn about the benefits of integrating conservation practices such as cover crops into their farming operations at a field day hosted by the Dewey County Conservation District and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Dewey County producer and Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) board member Jimmy Emmons led attendees on a tour of five fields planted in different cover crops and discussed his experience with conservation practices.

"I've been using cover crops for three years and have been an NRCS demonstration farm for two," says Emmons. "By participating in the soil health project, I feel like I'm helping to restore the land my grandpa bought in 1926."

Cover crops are grasses, legumes or small grains grown between regular grain crop production periods for the purpose of protecting and improving the soil. In addition to preventing soil erosion due to wind and water, cover crops can provide a variety of other benefits when implemented into farming and ranching operations including adding organic matter and nutrients into the soil, providing weed control, improving soil structure and increasing water capacity. Emmons produces wheat, canola and alfalfa as well as raising livestock. His cropland management strategy includes no-till and conservation tillage, as well as cover crops to help improve the health of his soils. He says that implementing these conservation practices has helped him to protect the soil from wind erosion and extreme heat, which helps to slow down water evaporation.



Dewey County producer and OACD Board Member Jimmy Emmons (left) and NRCS State Soil Scientist Steve Alspach, tour a field that has been planted with cover crops



## NRCS Soil Health Seminar July 15, 2014



On Tuesday July 15<sup>th</sup> the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development (RD), Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Craig County Conservation District (CCCD) held an informational meeting at the Craig County fairgrounds in Vinita. Erik Friend, district Conservationist for Craig County provided conservation program information to assist land managers in finding solutions to their resource concerns. The film "The Creeping Menace" an OSU production on Eastern Red Cedar control was shown. Housing and farm loan details were presented by RD and FSA. The details of the new programs for livestock

were offered up by Delores Qualls, County Executive Director for FSA.

James Dixon, District Conservationist of Washington County, provided information on the benefits of soil health and demonstrated the effects on differing land conditions on the erosion process and its effects on soil quality. Breakfast was provided to all participants and presenters by the Craig County Conservation District.

### Sac & Fox Nation & NRCS Partnered to Provide Soil Health Education to Tribal Members

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), State Tribal Liaison, Dr. Carol Crouch and Soil Scientist, Jeremy Dennis were invited to participate in the Sac & Fox Nation’s annual Homecoming and Health Fair that was held on July 11, at their new Learning Center, located at their Tribal Headquarters in Stroud, Oklahoma. There were over 1,000 Sac & Fox tribal leaders and members that attended the event. NRCS soil scientist, Jeremy Dennis, delivered a soil health demonstration with a rainfall simulator. Many of the tribal members have their own gardens; the NRCS demonstration helped them have a better understanding of the benefits of having a healthy soil. Jeremy Dennis stated, “Soil health is more than just having a healthy soil. Having good soil health means having a healthy food supply which means a healthier you and for the generations to come.”



Jeremy Dennis, NRCS soil scientist, conducting the soil health demonstration with tribal members



The Sac and Fox Nation Color Guard and Veterans provided the opening ceremonies before the blessing and traditional warrior song

### Upcoming USDA Farm Bill Workshops & Soil Health Demonstrations

August 5, 2014	Frisco Center-Canton, Oklahoma Exhibit Hall –101 S. 4th Street	Farm Bill Programs Soil Health Trailer	5:00 PM
August 7, 2014	OSU Extension Center-Enid, Oklahoma 316 Oxford	Farm Bill Programs Soil Health Trailer	5:00 PM
August 11, 2014	Goodwell, OK-Oklahoma Panhandle State 323 Eagle Ave., Science & Ag Building	Farm Bill Programs Soil Health Trailer	5:00 PM
August 12 2014	Southwest Technology Center-Altus, Oklahoma Seminar Rooms A & B-711 W Tamarack Road	Farm Bill Programs Soil Health Trailer	5:00 PM
August 14, 2014	Pontotoc Co Agri-Plex & Convention Ctr-Ada, OK 1710 N Broadway, Ste 3	Farm Bill Programs Soil Health Trailer	9:30 AM
August 20, 2014	Cherokee Nation Tribal Headquarters Tahlequah, Oklahoma	Farm Bill Programs Climate Change Impacts	9:30 AM
Sept 04, 2014	Annual Tribal Consultation-Shawnee, OK Reunion Hall North-CPN PowWow Grounds	Farm Bill Programs Climate Change Impacts	10:30 AM

## OTCAC, NRCS and Summer Interns Participated at the 2014 Choctaw Nation Youth Summit

The Choctaw Nation Event Center was the site for the “Xtreme Attitude” Youth Summit that was held on July 9, 2014. The Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were sponsors for the youth summit. Other Oklahoma Tribes sponsoring the event were the Choctaw Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and the Citizen Pottawatomie Nation. The youth summit continues to grow each year as youth and young adults from all over the state of Oklahoma flock to this annual event. There were approximately 1,300 people that attended this event; with 1110 of them being youth. Youth between the ages of 14 to 21 attended the summit from Atoka, Bryan, Carter, Choctaw, Coal, Garvin, Haskell, Hughes, Johnston, Latimer, LeFlore, Love, Marshall, McCurtain, Murray, Pittsburg, Pontotoc, and Pushmataha Counties. Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison; Derek Kelso, Soil Conservationist; NRCS student interns; Derrick Boone and Tegan Neighbors represented NRCS at the summit. The summit was designed to motivate and inspire youth and young adults to continue their education and possible career opportunities that are a possibility in their future. Crouch stated, “Having two of our NRCS summer interns at the summit provided the opportunity for them share their educational and career paths with the students. I was provided the opportunity to introduce Derrick and Tegan on stage and inform the youth about the NRCS pathways program.” Crouch added, “The summit provides a great opportunity for NRCS to share with our future leaders and employees what NRCS does as an agency; helping people protect our lands for future generations.”



Left to Right: NRCS student trainee, Derrick Boone; Choctaw Princess, District 10; Choctaw Nation color guard; Choctaw Princess, District 9 and NRCS student trainee, Tegan Neighbors



“Xtreme Attitude” Youth Summit

## National Women in Agriculture Association Workshop

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) participated in a National Women in Agriculture Association's (NWIAA) workshop that was held at the NWIAA's Agriculture Sustainable Science Academy, in Oklahoma City, on July 22, 2014. The NWIAA has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison, was invited to attend the workshop to represent NRCS. It is NWIAA's pledge to work with children in urban communities to put education on the forefront and that includes how to grow and eat healthy while helping their environment to be healthier for everyone. Dr. Crouch provided an overview of the NRCS soil health initiative, *Unlock the Secrets of Soil Health*. She will be working with NRCS soil scientists and Rod Shaw, District Conservationist, to schedule a soil health learning session that will include the NRCS rainfall simulator demonstration for the youth that are involved in the NWIAA community garden. In addition, she provided attendees with information and web sites so they could learn more about the Farm Bill programs, Earth Team Volunteer and Pathways program.



## Climate Change Impacts on Conservation Systems, Feral Hog Control, Biological Control of Noxious Weeds and Animal Traceability Workshop

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA) and other USDA agencies partnered with the Citizen Potawatomi Nation to hold a conservation workshop and lunch on Wednesday, July 16, 2014. The workshop was held at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Pow Wow grounds, in Shawnee, Oklahoma. There were 82 local farmers, ranchers, Tribes, tribal members, youth and women in agriculture in attendance. USDA agencies with informational booths were; NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD), Risk Management Agency (RMA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), APHIS and INCA.

Jeanne Schneider, Lead for USDA Southern Plains Regional Climate Hub, presented on *Climate: Impacts on Pastureland, Crops, Rangeland and Soil Health*. Kevin Grant, biologist with the Oklahoma Fish and Wildlife, presented on *Feral Hog Control & Management*. Bill Williams, US Geological Service (USGS), provided an overview of USGS programs and projects with Oklahoma Tribes. Jane Breckenridge, with the Euchee Butterfly Farm, provided an overview on how to develop a butterfly farm or a Native Butterfly garden. Paul Knight, Conservation Planner, Southern Plains Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), provided an overview of BIA conservation planning process and services available to Oklahoma Tribes. Chris DeFreese, with RD, covered RD programs and community funding opportunities. April Taylor, Sustainability Scientist, provided information on training opportunities through the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nation South Central Climate Science Center. According to Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison, "The workshop was a huge success because of our partners and NRCS relationship with OTCAC to hold these types of workshops."



Left to Right: Earth Team volunteers, Kasey Jo Blevins, Karsten Mathis; Doyle Bacon, Choctaw Nation; Liana Waggoner, NRCS intern; Curtis Washington, Iowa Nation; Shawn Fleming, NRCS District Conservationist and Tony Wright, NRCS Soil Conservationist



During the break, Kirk Schreiner, District Conservationist, consults with Jana Sue Evans, with the Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma and provided his contact information for the NRCS USDA Service Center in Lawton, Oklahoma

## OK NRCS Personnel Update

### Positions Filled

**Chris Best** was selected as the District Conservationist for the El Reno Field Service Center and entered into duty May 18, 2014. Chris was previously the Soil Conservationist at the Fairview Field Service Center.

**Charles Rogers** was selected as the District Conservationist for the McAlester Field Service Center and entered into duty June 15, 2014. Charles was previously the Soil Conservationist at the Jay Field Service Center.



**Matthew Elliot** was selected as the District Conservationist for the Stillwater Field Service Center and entered into duty June 29, 2014. Matthew was previously a District Conservationist in Hutchinson, KS.

### Departures

**Marques Hunter**, Civil Engineer for the Pauls Valley Technical Service Office, was selected as Zone Engineer in Anderson, South Carolina. His last day in Pauls Valley was May 9, 2014.

**Robin Lynch**, Soil Conservation Technician for the Shawnee Field Service Center, was selected for a position with the Department of Interior-Office of Surface Mining. His last day in Shawnee was June 13, 2014.

**Heath Sand**, Design Engineer for the Stillwater State Office, was selected as Civil Engineer with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Tulsa. His last day was July 11, 2014.

**Joe Freeland**, Project Engineer for the Pauls Valley Watershed Office, was selected as Civil Engineer with the National Design, Construction & Soil Mechanics Center, NRCS-Ft.Worth, TX. His last day was July 11, 2014.

**Gregg Hudson**, Geologist for the Stillwater State Office, was selected as Geologist with the National Design, Construction & Soil Mechanics Center, NRCS-Ft.Worth, TX. His last day was July 11, 2014.

If you have questions about the report, or have an outstanding conservation success story in your county, Please contact Sarah Hasenmyer at [sarah.hasenmyer@ok.usda.gov](mailto:sarah.hasenmyer@ok.usda.gov), or Tom Lucas at [tom.lucas@ok.usda.gov](mailto:tom.lucas@ok.usda.gov)

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## *OK NRCS Summer Interns*



### **Interns**

NRCS Oklahoma had 10 student interns this summer:

Front Row L-R: Cha Blongshia-Jay Field Service Center, Todd Giager-Claremore Field Service Center, Brandon Taylor-Fairview Field Service Center

Back Row L-R: Kaden McCombs-Frederick Field Service Center, Tegan Neighbors-Atoka Field Service Center, Derrick Boone-Durant Field Service Center, Justin Morgan-Pawnee Field Service Center, Liana Wagner-Shawnee Field Service Center, William Greuel-Nowata Field Service Center, Payton Osbon-Guymon Field Service Center