

Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

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

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NRCS Water Program Builds Private Partnerships

A new Farm Bill program will make it easier for private groups to get involved with farm projects that improve water quality. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program, or RCPP, “puts the partners absolutely in the driver’s seat,” said Jason Weller, chief of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, or NRCS, which runs the program.

RCPP replaces the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative and the Great Lakes Basin Program.

The new program encourages participation from groups that traditionally had little chance to help with farm conservation projects, such as water utilities, certified crop consultants, even banks that want to build green infrastructure, Weller said. The Farm Bill requires that the partners make a “significant” contribution to farm water quality projects. “It doesn’t define what that is, and that’s intentional,” Weller said. The law is fairly open-ended, allowing partners to give farmers both monetary and in-kind support, such as a conservation district’s technical expertise, he said.



NRCS Chief Jason Weller

As a goal, Weller hoped that the partners would match the contributions farmers sought from NRCS, doubling the value of the projects. His wish came true. The 580 initial proposals representing all 50 states sought \$2.7 billion from NRCS while leveraging \$2.9 billion from partners. “There’s a lot of potential here,” Weller said.

RCPP is allotted \$1.2 billion to be used over five years. Because the Farm Bill was enacted late, the first enrollment period allotted nearly \$400 million to cover 2014 and 2015, Weller said.

This summer, NRCS whittled down the 580 submissions to a smaller group that could send full proposals. The agency finished receiving those submissions on Oct. 2, and hopes to announce the chosen projects by mid-November.



Soil health campaign turns two: Seeks to unlock benefits on and off the farm

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/home/?cid=STELPRDB1261962>



Outreach Review

NRCS Oklahoma and Texas Partner to Represent NRCS at AISES Regional Conference

The University of Oklahoma (OU) chapter of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) is committed to the building of community by bridging science and technology with traditional Native values, and works to substantially increase American Indian/Alaska Native representation in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. This year, the AISES Region IV was hosted by the University of Oklahoma in their state-of-the-art ExxonMobil Lawrence G. Rawl Engineering Practice Facility. The agenda included several expert speakers both days to educate others about their respective fields. Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS Oklahoma State Tribal Liaison was a keynote speaker for the conference. Joining Dr. Crouch at the conference was NRCS Texas American Indian Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Manager, Melony Sikes. There were AISES college students from Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana. According to Dr. Crouch, "This was a great opportunity for us to bond with American Indian college students and share with them the career opportunities that NRCS has to offer." The Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) was a sponsor for the conference.



Left to right. Jeffery Calhoun , Carol Crouch, Melony Sikes, Tiffany Smith, Millie Bigler and Jake Evans

On October 11, 2012, at the farm of soil health pioneer Dave Brandt, NRCS's *Unlock the Secrets in the Soil* campaign was born. Since that time, Oklahoma has held dozens of soil health workshops across the state. The two-year birthday of the campaign continued at the conservation workshop held in El Reno, Oklahoma. On October 21, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and the East Canadian County Conservation District partnered to hold a conservation workshop and lunch for producers, Tribes, tribal members and women in agriculture. The workshop was held at the Canadian County Fairgrounds. NRCS state soil scientist, Steve Alspach and NRCS Resource Specialist, Brandon Reavis, provided a soil health demonstration with the NRCS rainfall simulator that illustrated the importance of soil health, benefits of no-till, best management practices for pasture and rangeland. Jeanne Schneider, Lead for USDA Southern Plains Regional Climate Hub, presented on *Climate: Impacts on Pastureland, Crops, Rangeland and Soil Health due to Drought* and Courtney Keck, Canadian County OSU Extension, made a presentation on *How to Get a Good Soil Sample*. Representatives from the USDA NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) provided an overview of their 2014 Farm Bill programs and community based funding opportunities. Debi Carnott, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Water Division, provided an overview of programs available for producers. NRCS District Conservationist, Chris Best, for the El Reno office stated, "A growing number of America's farmers and ranchers are interested in using soil health management systems to improve the health and function of their soil. This workshop provided them valuable information on the topic."



NRCS State Soil Scientist, Steve Alspach and NRCS Resource Specialist, Brandon Reavis, provided a soil health demonstration with the NRCS rainfall simulator that illustrated the importance of healthy soil

Water Resources Review**Status of Oklahoma Watershed Rehabilitation Projects as of 10/20/14**

Watershed	Dam No.	County	Conservation District	Status
<i>In Planning</i>				
Upper Elk	23D	Beckham	North Fork of Red River CD	Sent to NHQ for approval
Boiling Springs	1	Latimer	Latimer County CD	Waiting on funding
Upper Clear Boggy	26	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	Estimated completion 6/1/15
Rock Creek	2	Latimer	Talihina CD	Estimated completion 12/1/15
<i>Planning Completed - Awaiting Design</i>				
Sallisaw Creek	32	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights
<i>In Design</i>				
Quapaw Creek	15M	Lincoln	Lincoln County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/15
Fourche Maline	7M	Latimer	Latimer County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/15
Upper Black Bear	62	Noble	Noble County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/15
Rock Creek	15	Murray	Murray County CD	Estimated completion 2/1/15
Rock Creek	16	Murray	Murray County CD	Estimated completion 2/1/15
Sallisaw Creek	29	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	
<i>Planning & Design Completed - Awaiting Construction</i>				
Barntiz Creek	11	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Intitiate construction 11/1/14
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	
Barnitz Creek	5	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Initiate construction 2/1/15
<i>Rehabilitation Completed</i>				
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	*American Recovery *ARRA
Caney-Coon Creek	2M	Coal	Coal County CD	Reinvestment Act
Sallisaw Creek	26	Adair	Adair County CD	
Ft Cobb Laterals	10	Caddo	South Caddo County CD	
Barntiz Creek	1	Dewey	Dewey County CD	

Zone 1 Review

MAJOR COUNTY – Fairview Field Service Center

The Major County Conservation District and Fairview USDA Service Center partnered with OSU Extension and other USDA agencies to hold a 2014 Farm Bill Informational Meeting at the Major County Fairgrounds on 10/14/2014. There were 75 participants at the meeting that listened to speakers from OSU, FSA, NRCS and RD on various topics concerning the 2014 Farm Bill. Michael Roberts discussed NRCS Farm Bill Programs and opportunities for participation as well as State Cost Share Program opportunities. Cindy Bierig and Matt Howell also assisted with the event.



The Major County Conservation District and Fairview NRCS assisted OSU Extension with an educational event for area 2nd and 3rd grade elementary students. There were 275 participants of whom 250 were students in attendance from Ringwood, Aline-Cleo, Cimarron and Fairview Public Schools. Students learned about local agriculture including sessions on wheat, soybeans, grain sorghum, beef and dairy industries. Michael Roberts presented information on soybeans and also had the opportunity to discuss legumes and soil health briefly with the students. Cindy Bierig and Matt Howell also assisted with the event held at the Major County Fairgrounds in Fairview, OK.



Major County Education Event



Zone 2 Review

Craig County – Vinita Field Service Center

On October 7th, 2014 the Craig County Conservation District and the NRCS Vinita Field Office held the 24rd Annual Outdoor Classroom for area 5th graders. The over 250 students were divided into 8 groups and rotated through the various classes. The classes were lead by area professionals and included the topics of: Soils, Plants, Wetlands, Nature Center, Health and Safety, Entomology, Wildlife and Forestry. Lunch was provided to all by the Craig County Conservation District and generous donations by area businesses.



Craig County Annual Outdoor Classroom

Zone 3 Review

Washita County-Cordell Field Service Center

The Washita County Conservation District and NRCS Cordell FO set up a booth at the Washita County Fair September 4th through the 6th.



Washita County Fair

Zone 3 Review cont...

Garvin County- Pauls Valley Field Service Center

The Garvin County Fair was held in September in Pauls Valley. The Pauls Valley Service Center set up an NRCS information booth and visited with several producers about NRCS programs. They also conducted a tractor safety course by holding their annual Tractor Driving Contest. Pictured here are Brandon Chandler, DC (far right), assisted by Tim Tate (left), and the winner of the contest, Klinton Gibson, of Lindsay, who completed the obstacle course in only 38 seconds.



Tractor driving contest winner -
Garvin County Fair

The Garvin Conservation District hosted a No-Till Field Day on October 8th at the Trey Lam farm, south of Pauls Valley. Professor and Extension Ag Engineer, Randy Taylor, and Jason Warren, Assistant Professor & Soil and Water Conservation Specialist, from Oklahoma State University, spoke on the pros and cons of no-till planting and answered questions from agriculture producers. A demonstration of planting procedures followed a lunch, sponsored by Pettit Machinery. Attending were employees and board members of the Garvin Conservation District, OSU Extension employees, OSU staff, NRCS employees, and local agriculture producers. Trey Lam, new Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, is pictured measuring the depth of seed planting by a no-till drill. Also pictured are some of the area producers learning of the benefits of No-Till drilling, from Professor Randy Taylor.



No-Till Field Day - Garvin County

Zone 4 Review

The 2014 Chickasaw Nation Annual Meeting and Festival was held from September 26 through October 4. This year marked the 54th Annual Meeting of the Chickasaw Nation and the 26th Annual Chickasaw Festival. The locations for the annual meetings included Tishomingo, Ada, Emet, Kullihoma and Sulphur. The annual Chickasaw Festival parade was held in Tishomingo on October 4. The festival included a State of the Nation address from Governor Bill Anoatubby. The theme of the annual meetings and festival was “Strong and Getting Stronger.” The festival had over 46,000 attendees who enjoyed cultural events, fellowship, entertainment, games and information from vendors such as NRCS. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had an informal booth during the festival. State Tribal liaison, Carol Crouch and District Conservationist, Clay Horton represented NRCS. Attendees received the NRCS American Indian Heritage poster, *Backyard Conservation* booklet, NRCS Pollinator poster, bookmarkers, *Hometown Clean* booklet, *Unlocking the Secrets of Soil Health* brochure and information packets on NRCS 2014 Farm Bill programs.



Governor Bill Anoatubby, State of the Nation
Address to the Chickasaw people



Carol Crouch assists festival attendees at
NRCS informational booth

On October 8th staffs from the Stigler NRCS Field Office and the Haskell County Conservation District assisted the Latimer and Leflore County Conservation Districts and the Talihina Conservation District with NRCS personnel from the Poteau and Wilburton NRCS Field Offices conduct the annual Natural Resource Awareness Day event in partnership with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. The event was held at the Robbers Cave State Park near Wilburton, Oklahoma with over 500 students, teachers and workers attending. Fifth grade students and teachers from various schools located in Haskell, Latimer and Leflore counties rotated around to multiple learning stations. The learning stations provided information relative to soil, water, plants, animals, air and human resources. A delicious meal of hamburgers/hotdogs, chips, cookies, and drinks was provided to all in attendance.



Greg Scott, retired NRCS Soils Scientist,
demonstrating and presenting information
about soil health

Zone 4 Review cont...

Haskell County – Stigler Field Service Center



OSU Extension specialists provided information to poultry producers and litter applicators about Applicator Record Keeping tools and New Applicator Technologies at the Stigler KTC on October 6, 2014. There was a total of 38 in attendance. The Stigler NRCS DC presented information about Farm Bill Programs and services available through NRCS.

Pittsburg County – McAlester Field Service Center

Pittsburg County Conservation District with assistance from the NRCS Field Office and Carl Woods, Soil Scientist held their annual land judging contest in McAlester, Oklahoma on September 5, 2014. This event was attended by junior and senior land judging teams from around the area. There were over 70 students that participated. The winner will receive a plaque from the Conservation district at the Banquet to be held in late October.



Pittsburg County Annual
Land Judging Contest
