

Oklahoma Flood Control Dams Prevented \$320 Million in Damages During 2007 Storms

Protecting Our People - Protecting Our Natural Resources

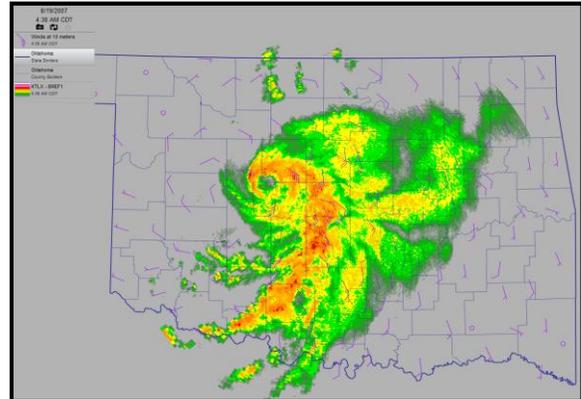
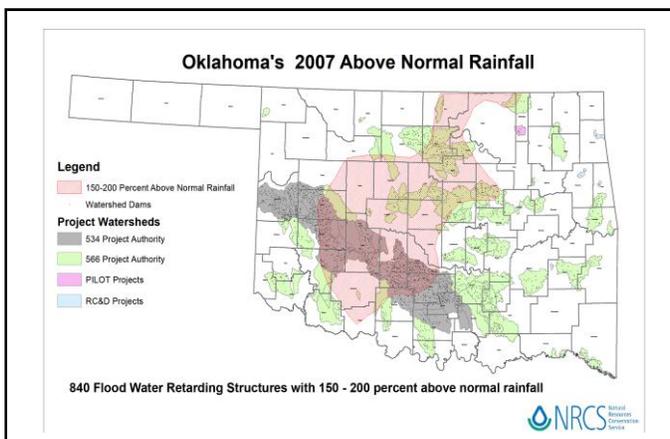
This is one of many examples of the benefits of the flood control projects across the state that are planned and organized by local people with assistance from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Watershed Program. These projects address natural resource needs and improve the quality of life for thousands of Oklahomans.

Major Storms Occurred in Oklahoma in the Spring and Summer of 2007

Oklahoma had an unusual high amount of rainfall in 2007. Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City had recorded 56.95 inches of rain by the end of December. This broke the all-time annual rainfall record of 52.03 inches set in 1908. The normal average annual rainfall is 35 inches.

The high rainfall amounts in the state during the spring and summer again proved the value of flood control dams. These dams were constructed by local units of government (usually conservation districts) with the assistance of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Program. There were 2,105 dams in the state in 2007 (2,107 in 2011). The 2,107 dams provide an estimated \$81 million in average annual benefits from reduced flooding.

However, just in the period from May to September 2007, about 850 of the dams provided an estimated \$320 million in benefits. It is estimated that another \$48 million in reduced flooding benefits would have been realized if the remaining 300 planned dams had been constructed.



Remnants of Tropical Storm Erin reorganized over Oklahoma resulting in heavy rainfall in the western and central parts of the state.

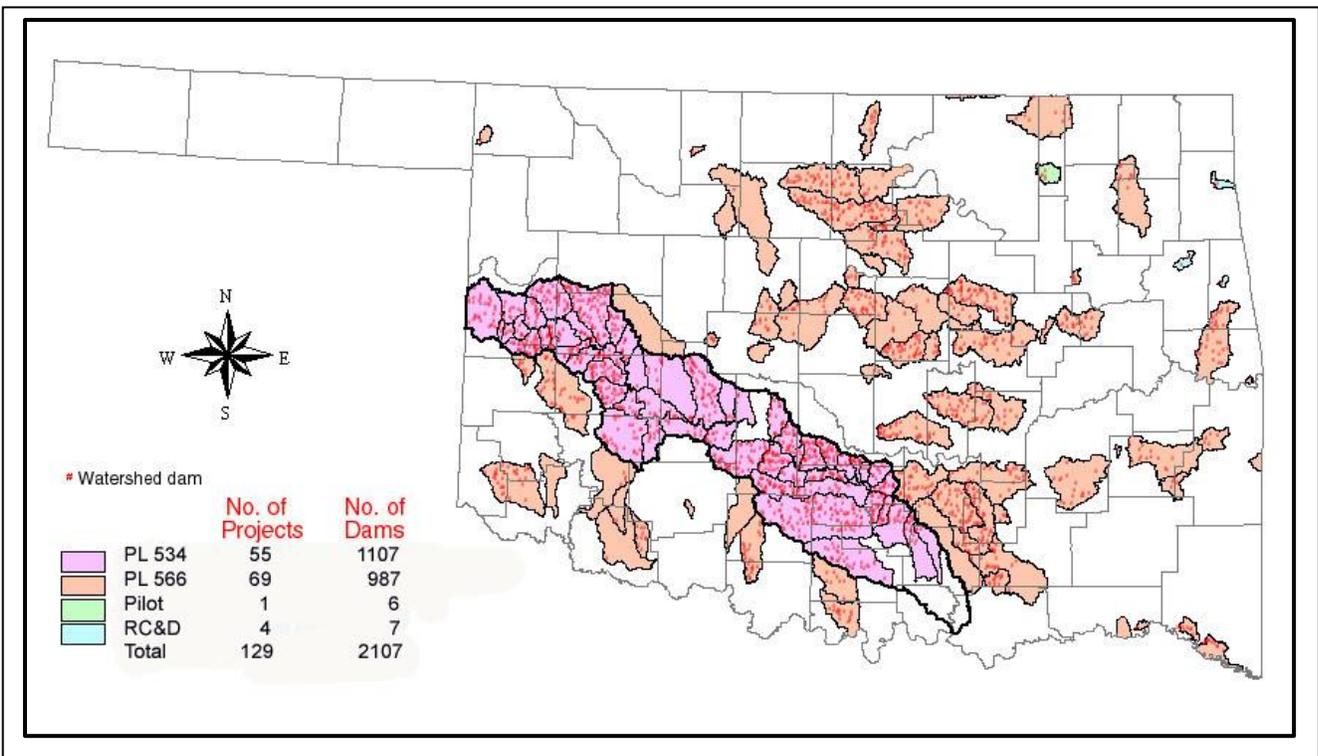
An especially unusual event occurred in Oklahoma in August 2007. Tropical storm Erin came up from the Gulf of Mexico and reorganized over Oklahoma becoming an even stronger storm resembling an overland hurricane.

The storm stalled over the central and western part of the state August 18-19th, delivering high winds and producing up to 13 inches of rain in some locations. Norman, Oklahoma, received seven inches of rain in seven hours. The area around the town of Geary, 50 miles west of Oklahoma City, reported over 11 inches of rain and over eight inches of rain fell in less than 12 hours in Caddo County.

Flood control dams prevented an estimated \$30 million in damages during this two day storm. "Although flooding occurred, damage would have been much worse if not for the flood control dams," said Mike Thralls, executive director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. "Sometimes the benefits of the dams go unnoticed during storms, but a storm of this magnitude really highlights how important the dams are to the state," said Thralls.



Flood control dams impound water during heavy rainstorms and slowly release it through a pipe through the dam over a period of several days or weeks. This reduces the amount of rainwater that reaches a stream or river immediately after a storm and reduces flooding.



There are 129 watershed projects in Oklahoma that have been planned and implemented by local units of government (usually conservation districts) with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

For additional information about watershed projects in the state visit the Oklahoma Conservation Commission website at: <http://conservation.ok.gov> or visit your local conservation district and NRCS office.