

CONSERVATION CALENDAR

AUGUST 2018

August 6th - Shawnee CD Soil Health Field Day in Prague

August 9th & 10th - Women in Ag & Small Business Conference in OKC

August 11th & 12th - Blue Thumb Volunteer Training in Sawyer

August 14th - Craig County CD Soil Health Field Day in Chetopa, Kansas

August 16th - Jackson County CD Soil Health Field Day in Altus

August 17th - Dewey County CD Soil Health Field Day in Oakwood

August 22nd - Beef Cattle Women's Association Grazing and Plant ID Workshop in Nowata County

August 27th - Kiowa County CD Soil Health Field Day

August 28th - Blue Thumb Mini-Academy at Cameron University in Lawton

August 29th - Blue Thumb Mini-Academy at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford

August 31st - Grady County CD Soil Health Field Day in Chickasha

For details on specific events visit the calendar on the Conservation Commission website or check with your local conservation districts.



Oklahoma Conservation Commission
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 200
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-521-2384
www.conservation.ok.gov



Oklahoma Conservation Commission



@Conservation_OK



Oklahoma Conservation Commission



Oklahoma Conservation Commission

Conservation Chronicle

Monthly Newsletter of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission
July 2018

Water Quality Shows EPA Regional Administrator the Lay of the Land

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Water Quality division had the opportunity to host the EPA Region 6 Administrator, Anne Idsal, for a tour on July 26th.

The group met at Fourteen Mile Creek near Hulbert, OK in Cherokee County. Fourteen Mile Creek lies on the western edge of the Ozark Highland Ecoregion. On the tour with Regional Administrator Idsal were OCC Executive Director Trey Lam, Area III Commissioner Scotty Herriman, ODAFF Secretary Jim Reese, OCC Water Quality Director Shanon Phillips, OCC monitoring Specialists Wes Shockley and Nathan Carter, and other staff members from EPA and ODAFF.



Wes Shockley (far left) with ODAFF Sec. Jim reese (2nd from left), EPA Region 6 Admin. Anne Idsal (pink shirt), OCC Area III Commissioner Scotty Herriman (far right), and others on a tour of Fourteen Mile Creek near Hulbert, OK.



L-R: OCC Monitoring Specialist Wes Shockley, OCC Monitoring Specialist Nathan Carter, EPA Region 6 Admin Anne Idsal and ODAFF Sec. Jim Reese.

Shockley and Carter were able to show off some of the different techniques and tests used to determine the quality of water. Shockley said, "We demonstrated some of our biologic sampling techniques, including electrofishing and macroinvertebrate sampling. We were able to collect a wide variety of fish and bugs for show and tell, including many sensitive species. Northern Hogsucker and stoneflies to list a couple. Nathan and I related that the diversity and sensitivity of the fish and bug community indicated that the stream was in overall pretty good health but was not without issues, as we pointed out the excessive erosion and sedimentation that was taking place."

OCC Water Quality Director Shanon Phillips said, "Our trip with the regional administrator was a great opportunity to speak with her about ways that EPA is an important partner to the Oklahoma Conservation Partnership by supporting efforts to use voluntary programs to solve water quality challenges."

Following the tour of Fourteen Mile Creek, the group went to lunch where they discussed a variety of topics including OCC's success in having streams and creeks delisted from the EPA 303(d) Impaired Waters list.

Shockley said the tour was great, "I don't believe anyone was seriously hurt other than perhaps Trey's pride when he managed to get the van stuck on the gravel bar. Other than that, it was a great day."

Story submitted by Wes Shockley, OCC Monitoring Specialist.



Area III Commissioner Scotty Herriman & EPA Region 6 Admin Anne Idsal listening to water quality concerns at lunch.

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



Table Top Rainfall Simulator



Kids playing at a Blue Thumb Kids Camp



Attendees at a recent Soil Health Workshop in Clinton



Kids at a Blue Thumb Kids Camp at the Grand River Dam Authority



Lime tree at the Noble Research Institute

Thank you to everyone who submitted pictures. If you would like your pictures in future editions of the Conservation Chronicle please send them by email to christopher.cox@conservation.ok.gov.

PRODUCER/PROGRAM SPOTLIGHTS



OACD Leadership Class at the Noble Research Institute in Ardmore.

Social and societal movements are a lot like agricultural operations. An idea, much like a seed, has to be nurtured, cultivated, and grown into something that people can believe in and grasp. Movements, again much like ag operations, also must be passed from generation to generation so the success of the movement or ag operation can continue to thrive. The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts is doing its part to continue the conservation movement through the OACD Conservation Leadership Class.

The OACD Conservation Leadership Class began in 1997 as a way to encourage Conservation District directors to take a more active leadership role in spreading the conservation message throughout Oklahoma. It is also designed to highlight and enforce the conservation partnership in the state between the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and OACD. This year long course meets every other month for two days to discuss various conservation related topics. The class held its first meeting in February at the OACD State Meeting in Oklahoma City. The class also met in April at the Oklahoma Conservation Commission office in Oklahoma City and in July at the Noble Research Institute in Ardmore.

To participate in the Leadership Class, candidates must be a conservation district director or associate director, fill out an application, and submit a letter of recommendation from their district board. The goal of the class is to "provide directors with a comprehensive overview of conservation in Oklahoma." The leadership class will hear about topics ranging from water quality to soil health to conservation planning. They will also discuss abandoned mine land reclamation, watersheds, threatened and endangered species, and conservation issues on tribal lands.

This year's class features 14 people representing all five Oklahoma Conservation Commission Areas and 12 conservation districts. Ben Pollard, former Oklahoma Conservation Commission Assistant Director and one of the creators of the Leadership Class, believes geographic diversity within a class is important because participants need to know the different issues each region in the state faces.

"I hope they [the participants] get a broad understanding of natural resource related issues in Oklahoma and how they vary from McCurtain County to Cimarron County and I hope they build a network with each other to collaborate on those issues," Pollard said.

Pollard also hopes that this leadership class will inspire the participants to be more politically engaged and pointed out former leadership class members have gone on to run for various local, county, and state offices.

For more information on the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Leadership Class visit www.okconservation.org/leadershipclass.



OACD Leadership Class members playing a conservation trivia game.



OACD Leadership Class at their first meeting at the Oklahoma Conservation Commission offices in Oklahoma City.

AREA 5 SPOTLIGHT



Attendees at the recent Women in Ag Conference in McAlester.

The Ouachita Mountains Resource Conservation & Development Council hosted a Women in Agriculture and Small Business Conference Friday July 20th. Approximately 100 people from across Southeast Oklahoma attended the conference which was held at the McAlester campus of Eastern Oklahoma State College. The conference featured sessions on food modernization, aquaponics, NRCS and Conservation District cost share programs, value added beef, property leasing, and much more.

At the lunch session, which was catered by The Rivers Edge Catering, 13 nominated women were honored for their achievements and one was selected for the Ag Woman of the Year. This year's honoree was Julie

Grant. Julie co-owns the McAlester Union Stockyards in McAlester while volunteering and sponsoring several projects and organizations such as 4-H and FFA.

The Ouachita Mountains RC&D Council will be planning another Women in Agriculture Conference in 2020 at a different location.

The Women in Ag Conference was presented by Ouachita Mountains RC&D, the southeast Oklahoma conservation districts, Eastern Oklahoma State College of Agriculture, OSU Extension, and the Choctaw Nation.

Story submitted by Amy Isbell, District Secretary at Pittsburg County Conservation District



Attendees listening to a presentation at the Women in Ag Conference.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



This month's Partner Spotlight shines on one of our educational partners, Langston University.

Langston University was founded in 1897 as one of two land-grant universities in Oklahoma (OSU being the other). While Langston offers a multitude of degrees, they are most know for their work in agriculture, specifically their research with goats. The E (Kika) de la Garza American Institute for Goat Research has a 320 acre research farm where staff, professors, and students study everything from grazing, to lactation, to goat meat research, and much more. In addition to their research farm and general laboratory facilities, there are specific labs for analyzing milk and fiber. The milk analysis lab also provides analysis for the Goat

Dairy Herd Improvement program. This program serves goat milk producers nationwide. The Langston University School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences is led by the school's Dean, Dr. Wesley Whittaker.

Langston's goals align with those of OCC and the Districts. Dr. Whittaker says the strength of the agriculture program is its commitment to "active research and discoveries to improve the quality of life of people and the sustainability of communities." OCC Executive Director Trey Lam said, "Langston is wonderful partner and we are excited to see our partnership with them grow in the near future."

For more information on Langston University's School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences visit <http://www.langston.edu/agriculture-applied-sciences>.

OCC DIVISION SPOTLIGHT



SOIL HEALTH PRINCIPLES

For this month's focus on an OCC Division, let's zoom in on the Soil Health Education program, concentrating on the Five Principles of Soil Health.

These Five Principles are taught at every one of OCC and USDA-NRCS's Soil Health Field Days. The Five Principles are:

- 1) Keep the Soil Covered
- 2) Disturb the Soil as Little as Possible
- 3) Keep Plants Growing Throughout the Year
- 4) Diversify as Much as Possible With Crop Rotations and Cover Crops
- 5) Rotate Livestock and Flash Graze Livestock

Keep the Soil Covered: Keeping the soil covered is important because it helps regulate the soil temperature. Increased soil temperatures due to a lack of cover can kill the living biology in the soil.

Disturb the Soil as Little as Possible: Tilling and plowing the soil kills the microbiology in the soil and it compacts the soil. No-till or minimal tilling allows producers to keep their soil covered and allows the soil to keep, store, and effeciently use water.

Keep Plants Growing Throughout the Year: Soil is most productive when it has access to nutrients. Keeping something growing year-round allows soil to constantly have nutrients available for year-round use.

Diversify as Much as Possible With Crop Rotations and Cover Crops: The more diversity you plant on the ground, the more diverse the nutrients you have in the soil. With more diverse nutirents, the better all crops will respond.

Rotate Livestock and Flash Graze Livestock: Oklahoma's land developed under grazing animals. Bison would intently graze the land before moving on to the next plot. That land that was just grazed would then have time to recover. If producers can mimic that on their land, their soil health should improve.

For more information on Soil Health, or to schedule a Soil Health event, contact Amy Seiger, Soil Health Coordinator, at amy.seiger@conservation.ok.gov.

AREA 1 SPOTLIGHT



Burned land in Dewey County.

Northwest Oklahoma is, unfortunately, no stranger to wildfires. But, the region experienced one of the more devastating fires in recent memory in April of this year. The 34 Complex Fire in Woodward County and the Rhea Fire in Dewey County combined to burn roughly 350,000 acres, numerous homes and buildings, and several thousand head of cattle. The recovery from those devastating fires has been tough but those affected by the fire have shown their resiliency.

Dewey County Conservation District Secretary Coleta Bratten has helped lead the charge in getting donations and other forms of help to the community. She has coordinated efforts between multiple relief groups and helped answer questions from those effected, all while continuing to keep the Dewey County CD running smoothly. USDA-NRCS has also been able to offer some help through the EQIP program. Over 130 producers applied for funding through EQIP to help get them through these challenging times.

While the recovery efforts have been strong, more help is needed. To volunteer time and resources, contact any of the effected county conservation districts.



Burned house in Dewey County.

AREA 2 SPOTLIGHT

The OACD Leadership Class recently held their second two-day meeting. This meeting was at the Noble Research Institute in Ardmore, OK.

The Leadership Class got a tour of the Noble Research Institute from Education Manager Dr. Frank Harden. On the tour, the Leadership Class learned about the history of the Noble Research Institute, saw the various labs where research is being conducted, and got to see the greenhouses that Noble utilizes to make sure they can study topics like soil health year-round.

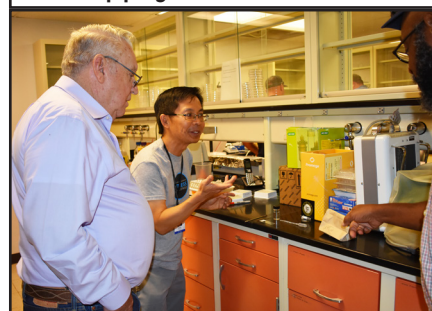
Following a full day at the Noble Research Institute, the Leadership Class met for dinner at Cafe Alley in Ardmore where they heard from Creede Speake of the Arbuckle Conservation District. Mr. Speake, a WWII and Korean War veteran, talked about the early days of conservation in Oklahoma and the lessons he has learned in the decades that he has used conservation practices.

On day two of the meeting, the Leadership Class went through various exercises on team building and learning how to work effectively with others.

The next OACD Leadership Class is scheduled for September 17th and 18th in Tahlequah, OK.



Dr. Frank Harden, Noble Research Institute Education Manager, addressing the OACD Leadership program on a tour.



AJ Bristow (left) and Phil Campbell (right) learning about some of the research being done by Dr. Elison Blancaflor.

AREA 3 SPOTLIGHT



Candice Miller, Blue Thumb Education Coordinator, teaching attendees at Blue Thumb's recent Riverology 101 class.

The Blue Thumb team and various partnering groups hosted teachers from across Oklahoma for Riverology 101 at the Grand River Dam Authority in northeast Oklahoma July 25th-27th.

Wednesday morning, bright and early, they gathered at GRDA's Ecosystems and Education Center, where they spent the day getting to know each other and learning from OSU Extension 4-H, OU Water Survey, Ag in the Classroom, GRDA, and Blue Thumb about water quality, non-point source pollution, and all the ways that they can bring new and exciting hands on learning to their classrooms using Project WET. They also got the chance to take a tour of the Grand River Dam and see how it works from the inside out.

Thursday was spent floating the Illinois River and getting a first hand look at what the teachers learned on Wednesday. The Blue Thumb team stopped at a few points to convey to them the intricacies of rivers and streams, water quality, and even showed them how to kick for bugs and seine for fish.

The learning and fun continued Friday as attendees finished up the classroom work with a few more exercises and demonstrations. The event ended with Blue Thumb showing the teachers how to do the Enviroscape and a few more Project WET activities before the class ended.

Story submitted by Becky Zawalski, Blue Thumb Field Educator



Teachers learning about stream erosion at the Riverology 101 class.

AREA 4 SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS Tribal Liaison, speaking to Cheyenne & Arapaho Workshop attendees about the Farm Bill.

The Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribe, along with OCC and NRCS, hosted a wildfire relief and grazing management workshop in Clinton. Roughly 30 people attended the event that was held at the Cheyenne & Arapaho Community Center.

The event started with a welcome from Nathan Hart, Economic Development Director with the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribe. Attendees then heard from State Statistician Troy Marshall on the importance of the Ag Census. Dr. Carol Crouch gave updates on NRCS programs and Client Gateway. Steve Alspach, NRCS State Soil Scientist, covered a variety of topics including recovering from wildfire, grazing management, and soil health. Caitlin Rotler with the USDA Climate Hub talked about her research and the links between soil health and the climate. Finally, Chris Cox with the OCC and Keith Owen with NACD gave brief updates on their organizations various programs.

Overall, the workshop was beneficial and provided a great outreach event to bring more tribal partners into the conservation fold. Dr. Crouch, the moderator of the event, said, "connecting with our tribal partners allows us to build those relationships and put our conservation ideas into the hands of people and tribes that have meant so much to our state's history."



Keith Owen, NACD South Central Region Representative, speaking at the Cheyenne & Arapaho Workshop.