



The conservation of Oklahoma's natural resources is carried out by a number of organizations, groups and individuals.

The goal of this presentation is to explain the roles and activities of some of the groups involved on a daily basis in the state's conservation efforts.

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

A Sea of Grass, Fertile Soil



Early Oklahoma settlers found a land of fertile soils covered with lush native grasses.

The Homestead Act of 1886 provided 160 acres of land to heads of households who would work the land for 5 years.

Settlers were forced to plow up land that was not suitable for cultivation to be able to feed their families.

(Photo: Plowing grasslands. Hughes County, Okla. Nov. 2, 1937. James N. Slack, Soil Conservation Service.)

A Fragile, Unpredictable Land



The landscape of western Oklahoma and neighboring states was flat with few trees. The settling farmers didn't know how fragile the highly erodible sandy soil was, or how unpredictable was the weather.

(Photo: Erosion. McIntosh County, Okla. April 22, 1937. Richard W. Hufnagle, Soil Conservation Service.)



The situation became worse when a severe drought hit the Great Plains in the 1930s. Crops couldn't grow without rain, leaving the land bare to blow in the strong winds.

Over 300 dust storms, called "Black Rollers," swept the Great Plains from 1932 to 1935.

(Photo: Dust storm. Location, date and photographer unknown.)



The blowing wind destroyed crops and stripped the soil from the fields, piling it up over fence rows.

(Photo: Dust over fence. Texas County, Okla. Date and photographer unknown.)



Ironically, droughts like the Dust Bowl were often times of devastating floods -- because when it did rain, there was little vegetation left to hold back runoff water.

(Photo: Flooding along the Washita River. Chickasha, Okla. May 19, 1949. Soil Conservation Service photograph.)



One of the worst floods to occur in Oklahoma was on April 5, 1935. Occurring in the middle of the night on the upper reaches of the Washita River, it caught the community of Hammon off guard and killed 17 people.

The most disturbing element of Oklahoma's floods was the frequency with which they occurred. There were 70 floods between 1923 and 1942 along Wild Horse Creek near Duncan.



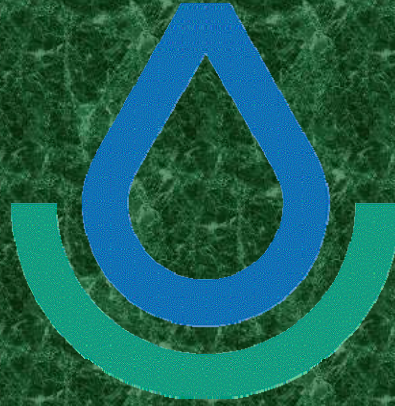
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) started out as the Soil Erosion Service, a temporary agency in the Department of the Interior in 1933. In March 1935 President Roosevelt transferred the funds, personnel and equipment of the agency to the Department of Agriculture.

In April 1935 Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act of 1935, Public Law 46, that established a permanent agency in USDA and changed the name to the Soil Conservation Service. The agency's name was changed again in 1994 to better reflect the agency's modern mission, which had expanded beyond soil conservation to include flood control, water quality work and assistance to urban areas.

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The mission of NRCS is to provide leadership and administer programs to help people conserve, improve, and sustain our natural resources and environment.



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(Logo: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service “raindrop” symbol.)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Technical and sometimes financial cost-share assistance to landusers through local conservation districts.

USDA programs:

- WRP
- WHIP
- EQIP
- CSP



NRCS provides technical and sometimes financial cost-share assistance to landusers through local conservation districts.

NRCS also administers USDA programs assigned to them by Congress such as the Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Security Program.

(Photo: First contract for Conservation Security Program in Oklahoma. Bob and Carol Diemer Ranch, near Tonkawa in Kay County, Okla. Aug. 26, 2004. Susan Henning, Kay County Conservation District.)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

- Engineering design of conservation practices
- Erosion and flooding assistance
- Pasture and rangeland management assistance
- Soils information
- Conservation planning



Examples of the types of assistance NRCS provides include:

- Engineering design and layout of conservation practices
- Help with erosion and flooding problems
- Help with pasture and rangeland management
- Soils information
- Conservation planning

(Photo: Drew Mosburg, at that time a NRCS summer intern in the NRCS Newkirk Field office, now a Soil Conservationist at El Reno. He is assisting Steve Cink, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician from the Newkirk Field office, stake a pond for Joe Burge, a State Cost Share participant for Year 7. The pond is in the Ponca City area. The photo was taken in June 2004 by Hessel Purdy, then District Manager, Kay County Conservation District.)



Conservation Districts are subdivisions of state government, similar to school boards.

In Oklahoma each district has a board of five directors. Two of those are appointed and three are elected.

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

Conservation Districts

Conservation Districts' primary goal is to assist citizens in practicing wise use and management of the state's renewable natural resources, especially its soil and water.



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(Logo: Conservation "C" used by the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, other state associations, and a symbol for conservation districts nationwide.)

Conservation Districts



- Local boards led by local volunteers
- Set local conservation priorities
- Lead by example

Early conservation work was carried out by the Soil Conservation Service. Farmers were not always receptive to suggestions from federal government employees on how to farm. It soon became apparent to USDA officials that if the soil conservation program was to be a success it would have to be carried out through some local entity.

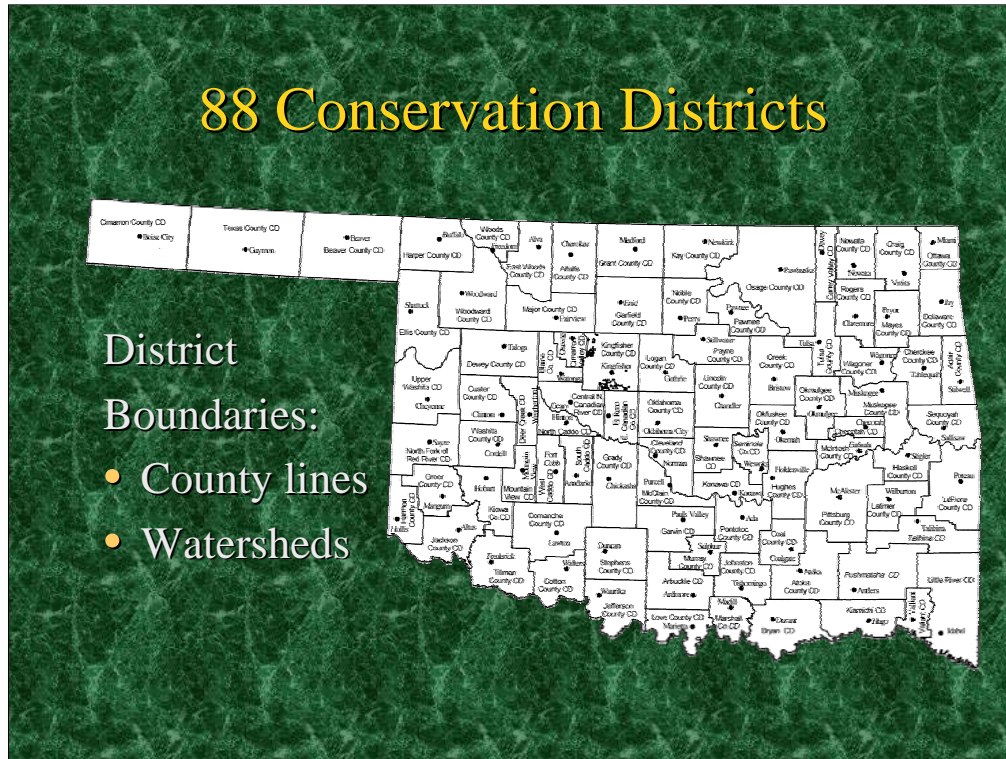
In 1935 a committee appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace recommended that all erosion control work, including new demonstration projects, be undertaken by the Soil Conservation Service only through legally constituted soil conservation associations.

The committee felt that local farmers and ranchers would best know what would be compatible with their own farming style. They also knew that farmers and ranchers would trust a board of local people and would be less fearful that the federal government was going to force conservation programs on them.

By October 1935 a model state law had been drafted that would enable farmers and ranchers to set up “soil conservation districts” as local units of government. In 1937 President Franklin Roosevelt sent this model law that would enable farmers and ranchers to set up “soil conservation districts” as local units of government to the governors of all states, urging its adoption. Later that year Oklahoma became the second to pass and the first to enact a Soil Conservation District Act

(Photo: Kay County Conservation District board of directors. Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Annual State Meeting 2004, Biltmore Hotel, Oklahoma

88 Conservation Districts



Oklahoma has 77 counties, but has 88 conservation districts.

Some districts formed along county boundaries, but others formed on watershed boundaries or simply a geographic area where they found support in the early days of conservation districts.

(Map: Oklahoma conservation district boundaries with office locations represented by red dots)

Conservation Districts

Conservation District boards set conservation priorities in the district and carry out a variety of conservation activities.



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(Photo: A front loader and track hoe at work on a streambank stabilization project in Kay County Conservation District, funded under the Emergency Watershed Protection program. Hessel Purdy,

Conservation Districts

- Ensure a local voice in conservation programs
- Provides the public with conservation information and education
- Serves as a link between local, state and federal conservation agencies



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(Photo: Kay County Conservation District Employee Hessel Purdy demonstrating the Enviroscope model for students.)

Conservation Districts

- Rental equipment:
 - grass drills
 - Bermuda grass spriggers
- Locally administer the state Conservation Cost-Share Program
- Assist individual landusers, tribes, organizations and other state and federal agencies



Some districts rent equipment such as grass drills and bermuda grass spriggers.

Districts administer the Oklahoma Conservation Cost-Share Program at the local level

And provide conservation assistance to individual landusers, tribes, organizations and other state and federal agencies.

(Photo: Chris Janda, Kay County Conservation District engineering aide, delivering a sprigger to a rental customer to plant Bermuda grass.)



Oklahoma Conservation Commission

The state agency that provides assistance and guidance to the state's 88 conservation districts and helps coordinate their activities.

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(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

Oklahoma Conservation Commission

Our vision:

Responsible care for Oklahoma's
natural resources

Our mission:

To conserve, protect and restore
Oklahoma's natural resources,
working in collaboration with the
conservation districts and other
partners, on behalf of the citizens
of Oklahoma.



The vision of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission is:
Responsible care for Oklahoma's natural resources

Its mission is:

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collaboration with the conservation districts and other partners, on behalf of the
citizens of Oklahoma.

(Symbol: The official state seal of the state of Oklahoma)

Oklahoma Conservation Commission

- 1937- State Soil Conservation Committee
- 1945 - State Soil Conservation Board
- 1971 - Oklahoma Conservation Commission



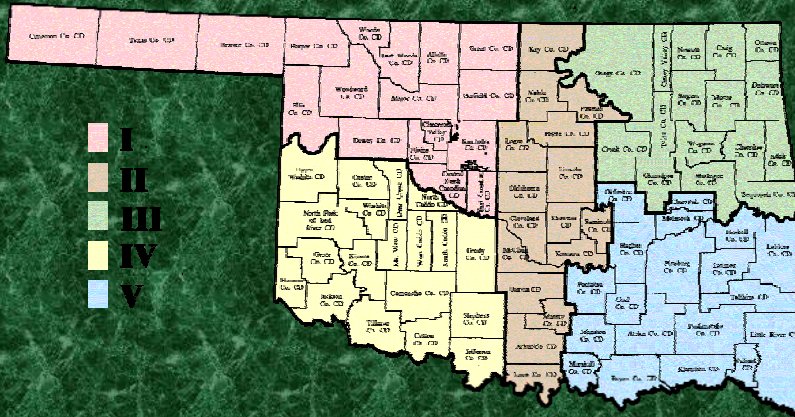
When Governor E. W. Marland signed the Conservation District Enabling Act in 1937, it also created the Soil Conservation Committee that operated under the auspices of the Oklahoma A&M College.

The Act was amended in 1945, abolishing the Soil Conservation Commission and establishing the Soil Conservation Board. The new Board was created as a separate agency, out from under the wing of the A&M College.

In 1971 the agency's name was changed to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission in a Senate bill that also changed districts' names from Soil Conservation Districts to Conservation Districts. It also changed the local board members' designation from "supervisors" to "directors." Some states still retain the title "supervisor" for board members.

(Photo: Oklahoma Conservation Commission meeting, September 2003, state Agriculture Building conference room, Oklahoma City. Mark Harrison, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)

Oklahoma Conservation Commission



A Commissioner for each of five Commission Areas

The governing body of the agency is the actual Conservation Commission; five Commissioners each representing the districts in one of five geographic areas of the state. A requirement is that each Commissioner is a member of their local conservation district board.

(Map: Oklahoma's conservation districts indicating each of the five areas of the state represented by a conservation commissioner.)

Oklahoma Conservation Commission

- Soil conservation and erosion control
- Upstream flood control program
- State's EPA nonpoint source water quality programs
- Environmental education with other state agencies



The Conservation Commission is the state's lead agency for

- Soil conservation and erosion control
- Upstream flood control program
- EPA nonpoint source water quality programs
- and coordinating environmental education with other state agencies

(Photo: Kadashan Lake, Wagoner County, June 1992. F. Dwain Phillips, Soil Conservation Service.)

Oklahoma Conservation Commission

- Reclaiming abandoned mine land
- State Conservation Cost-Share Program
- Geographic database for citizen-filed pollution complaints gathered from all state agencies

The Conservation Commission also

Administers the state program for reclaiming abandoned mine land and the state Conservation Cost-Share Program,

As well as maintaining a geographic database for citizen-filed pollution complaints gathered from all state agencies.



This is a before shot of an OCC Abandoned Mine Land project, called “Bill’s Tipple Site.”

(Photo: Abandoned coal strip mine before reclamation, Craig County, July 1989. Mike Kastl, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)



And this is what it looks like after reclamation.

(Photo: Abandoned coal strip mine after reclamation, Craig County, September 1993. Mike Kastl, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)



The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts is often referred to as OACD.

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

OACD

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes natural resource conservation through various activities as well as communication and cooperation with legislative bodies at the state and national levels.



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OACD

OACD was organized by the state's conservation district directors to serve as a vehicle for unified action by districts and to provide a forum for exchange of information and discussion of issues. OACD is guided by conservation district director members, elected to leadership roles within the association.



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(Photo: OACD Executive Board on March 1, 2005, at the close of the OACD State Meeting at the Biltmore Hotel, Oklahoma City. Standing, from left, Royce Casey, Brent Mynhier, Wayne Sexton, Wayne Spies, Clay Pope. Seated, Scotty Herriman, Richard Parker, Dan Lowrance, Pam Mach. Mark Harrison, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)

OACD

Sponsors

- Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame
- National Land & Range Judging Contest
- OACD Conservation Awards
- OACD Youth Contests
- FFA and 4-H Awards
- Conservation Education



The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts' activities include sponsoring:

The Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame

National Land & Range Judging Contest

OACD Conservation Awards Program

OACD Youth Contests

FFA and 4-H Awards

Conservation Education Events

(Photo: OACD President (2003-2004) Royce Casey presenting youth awards.)

OACD

Promotes

- Conservation Conferences and Workshops
- Public Communication on Conservation Issues
- Legislative Communication on Natural Resource Issues



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(Photo: Conservation Day at the Capitol 2005. Mark Harrison, Oklahoma Conservation Commission)

OACD

In addition, OACD

- keeps local conservation districts informed on conservation issues of concern
- gets involved in legislative matters that affect conservation districts
- provides a link to the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)



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gets involved in legislative matters that affect conservation districts,

And provides a link to the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

(Photo: NACD Annual Meeting, Feb. 9, 2005. Left, outgoing NACD President Gary Mast and incoming President Bill Wilson. Mark Harrison, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)



OACDE stands for the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees.

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

OACDE

- Formed in 1992 by employees of conservation districts
- Forum for district employees' interests
- Legislative voice
- Educational scholarships, events
- OACD & NACD meetings



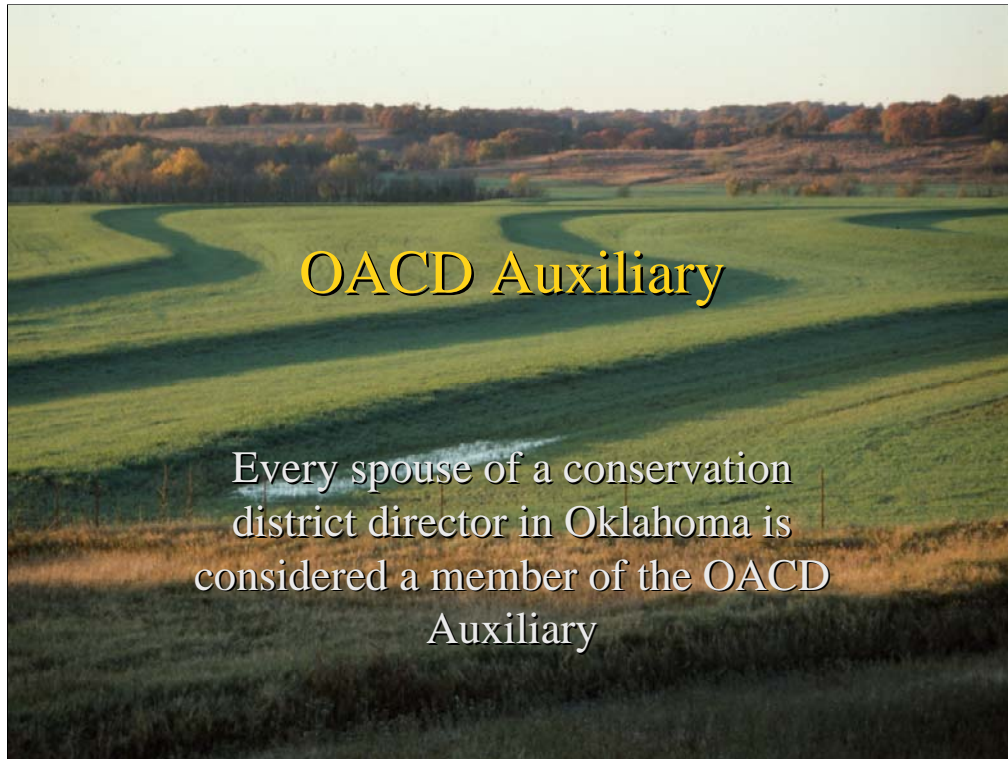
OACDE was formed in 1992 by employees of conservation districts, to provide a forum for their issues of common concern or support.

The association gives district employees a unified voice on legislative issues.

OACDE also supports and sponsors educational activities like the National Land Judging Contest, the Envirothon, the OACD Poster, Essay and Speech Contests, and a student scholarship.

OACDE helps with OACD Area and State Meetings and NACD Regional Meetings.

(Photo: OACDE members Carolyn Tucker, North Caddo Conservation District, and Lisa Young, Blaine County Conservation District, helping score competition cards at the National Land & Range Judging Contest, c. 2005. Mark Harrison, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)



Every spouse of a conservation district director in Oklahoma is considered a member of the OACD Auxiliary.

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

OACD Auxiliary

The OACD Auxiliary plays an active role in supporting OACD activities and sponsoring conservation-related educational contests and scholarships for students.



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(Photo: OACD Auxiliary serving refreshments at the National Land & Range Judging Contest, May 1993. From left, Sally Sawyer, Sylvia Hudson, Joye Hudman and Jeri Grimmett. Mark Harrison, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)



How does it Oklahoma's Conservation Partnership function?

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

Conservation Partnership

How it all Works:

Local Conservation Districts work hand-in-hand with the NRCS and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission to provide the best possible service to landusers. This partnership of local, state and federal agencies has existed for over 65 years.

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Conservation Partnership

How it all Works:

Districts provide assistance to landusers through their staff and through agreements with federal agencies such as the NRCS.



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NRCS provides the technical assistance to the districts though conservation planning, engineering design and established specifications for wide range of conservation practices.

(Photo: Jim Green, Soil Conservation Service, and landowner, Wewoka, Okla., 1982. F. Dwain Phillips, Soil Conservation Service.)

Conservation Partnership

How it all Works:

Local conservation district boards develop conservation priorities for the district through development of annual and long range plans.



Local conservation district boards develop conservation priorities for the district through development of annual and long range plans.

(Photo: Little River Conservation District board meeting, June 14, 2005, in the conference room at the district office in the federal building in Idabel. From left are Terry Baker, board member; Dennis Ward, board member; Karen Beck, district secretary; Ralph Mitchell, secretary/treasurer; and Don Scott, vice chairman. With his back to the camera is Jim Green, NRCS district conservationist, Idabel field office. Tom McCain, chairman, was absent. Photo by Frank Acker, district manager.)

Conservation Partnership

How it all Works:

Local conservation district and NRCS offices provide citizens with sources to obtain conservation information and technical and financial assistance with conservation issues.



Local conservation district and NRCS offices provide citizens a place to obtain conservation information and technical and financial assistance with conservation problems.

(Photo: South Caddo Conservation District/USDA Service Center, Anadarko, Okla., July 30, 2004. Mark Harrison, Oklahoma Conservation Commission.)

Conservation Partnership

All programs and assistance from conservation districts, NRCS and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, marital status or physical disability.

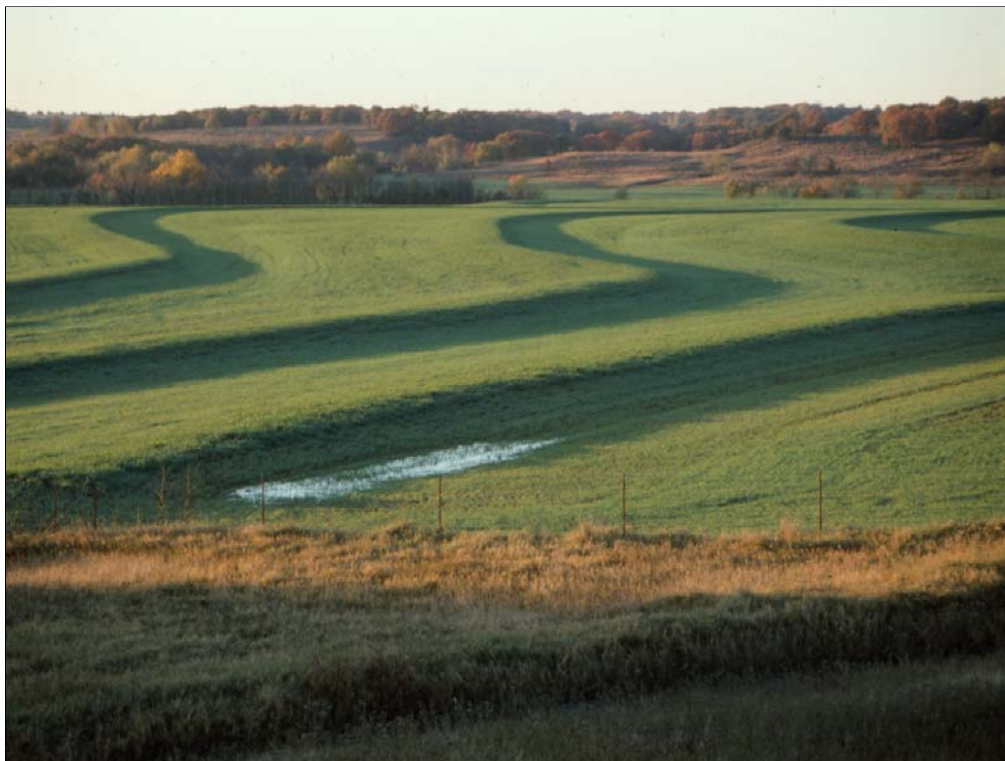
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April 14, 1935 – Black Sunday – Certainly one of the worst days in Oklahoma history.

The state continues to have periodic droughts and high winds, and we may see some dust blow from time to time. But we don't see anything like the dust storms that were a not-uncommon occurrence in the Thirties.

(Photo: Dust Storm. Location, date and photographer unknown.)



April 14, 2005, marked the 70th anniversary of Black Sunday.

April 27, 2005, marked the 70th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

April 15, 2005, marked the 68th anniversary of Oklahoma's Soil Conservation District Act.

Seventy years of conservation have made a difference.

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)

Oklahoma's Conservation Partnership



For 70 years Oklahoma's Conservation Partnership has worked to help land owners and land users conserve the state's natural resources.



Web Sites

- www.okcc.state.ok.us
- www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov
- www.oacd.us
- www.nacdnet.org
- www.watershedcoalition.org

For more information on Oklahoma's Conservation Partnership, here are Internet website addresses for

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission,
Natural Resources Conservation Service in Oklahoma,
The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and
The National Association of Conservation Districts and
The National Watershed Coalition

(Photo: Terraces. Payne County, Okla. November 1998. F. Dwain Phillips.)



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