

# Barnitz Creek Watershed Project

## Custer and Dewey Counties

### Protecting Our People - Protecting Our Natural Resources



*This is one of 129\* examples of how local, state and federal government agencies have worked together to utilize the Natural Resources Conservation Service Watershed Program to address natural resource needs and improve the quality of life for thousands of Oklahomans.*

#### **Barnitz Creek Watershed Project**

The Barnitz Creek Watershed Project includes 76 flood control dams, 56 in Custer County and 20 in Dewey County.

Prior to the construction of the flood control dams and installation of conservation practices in the watershed severe flooding damaged crops, killed livestock and eroded the land. The 3,614 acre flood plain in the watershed flooded an average of five times annually between 1923 and 1942.

Local landowners joined with the Custer County and Dewey County Conservation Districts to develop a watershed project plan in 1952 with assistance from the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service). The plan encompassed 178,654 acres of mostly agricultural lands.

The dams were constructed with the assistance of the NRCS Watershed Program.

Flood control Dams No. 1,5,11, and 14 have been rehabilitated to bring them up to current dam safety standards and extend their benefits for another 100 years. These dams are classified as high hazard dams and needed upgrading to ensure they remained safe.

The Custer County and Dewey County Conservation Districts provide operation and maintenance of the 76 dams with assistance from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

#### **Barnitz Creek Watershed Project Benefits –76 Dams**

- Dams provide \$741,423 in average annual benefits from reduced flood damages
- Provides flood protection for 225 farms and ranches
- Provides flood protection for 25 major bridges and many smaller bridges and county roads
- Created or enhanced 1,734 acres of wetlands
- Reduces sedimentation of streams and rivers by 520,184 tons of soil annually
- Impounded water has created fish and wildlife habitat, waterfowl nesting areas and livestock water

The Barnitz Creek Watershed Project is one of 129\* projects in Oklahoma that have been planned and implemented by local people with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

2,107 flood control dams have been constructed in 61 Oklahoma counties. The watershed projects that also include thousands of conservation practices provide over \$94 million in average annual benefits.

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.



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