

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

McCurtain County, OK

On May 1, 2003, McCurtain County, Oklahoma was hit by an F-2 tornado with wind speeds from 113 to 157 m.p.h.. According to the National Weather Service (Shreveport, LA) the tornado began approximately five miles northwest of Broken Bow and continued southeast for 13 miles, impacting an area 400 to 600 yards wide.

The tornado path was primarily rural, but did continue through heavy rural housing areas. The impacted area is approximately 2,400 acres, and includes land uses of: woodland, 1,100 acres; pastureland, 800 acres; hayland 100 acres; other land, 400 acres (housing developments, farmsteads, and confined animal operations). Approximately 4.5 miles of stream corridor is clogged with storm debris.

According to the local American Red Cross, it was estimated that 75 to 100 homes had received damage including:

- Twelve homes totally destroyed.
- Twenty homes sustaining major damage.
- Thirty-five homes sustaining some type of destruction
- At least 16 poultry houses were destroyed with at least another 10 receiving minor damage.

On Friday morning, the Idabel Oklahoma Field Office staff began providing technical assistance and disaster damage assessments. There were 16 poultry houses destroyed which resulted in exposed litter, dead birds and approximately 100,000 chickens running loose. Immediately, catastrophic dead bird disposal measures were implemented. After close consultation with each impacted poultry producer, it was apparent that immediate action was needed to assist with an emergency catastrophic dead bird, litter and debris removal project. Emergency reports were developed and sent to NRCS State Office.

Damage from an F-2 tornado that struck McCurtain County, Oklahoma on May 1, 2003. This photo shows a poultry house that has been destroyed. Not only was the poultry house destroyed, but owners also incurred a loss in poultry killed by the tornado.



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The Little River Conservation District and McCurtain County Commissioners were informed of the situation and requested Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) assistance. Their major concern was not only the physical damage from the tornado, but the opportunity for the spread of disease among nearby poultry operations. Local integrators (Tyson Poultry, Pilgrim Pride and other poultry producers) were extremely concerned about disease. Thus, biosecurity measures were necessary.

By Monday, May 5, 2003 a multi-disciplinary EWP team was assembled. The damage was assessed, and a plan of action was established. M. Darrel Dominick, State Conservationist declared the catastrophic cleanup to be urgent and compelling due to the potential spread of disease and water quality concerns. State EWP funds were used to fund the immediate actions necessary. NRCS staff prepared for emergency work by contacting all required entities for cultural resources and utilities. A site showing was conducted on Tuesday, May 6, at 1:00 p.m. Two contracts, of approximately \$50,000 each, were awarded on Wednesday, and on Thursday, May 8, 2003 the successful bidders began clean up work.

The “work area” runoff drains into Little River (Oklahoma) which provides water to Millwood Lake, located at Ashdown, Arkansas. This reservoir is the water supply for Ashdown, AR, Texarkana, AR, and Texarkana, TX.



Photographs showing the the varying levels of destruction left in the wake of the F-2 tornado, including dead poultry that presented the possibility for the spread of disease.

The amount of dead poultry presented a special bio-security hazard because of the potential for the spread of disease to other nearby poultry producers as well as to ground and surface waters.



These photographs show the results of the tornado clean-up work.



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