



2010

Annual Report

Oklahoma

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United States Department of Agriculture  
 **NRCS** Natural Resources  
Conservation Service



# *75 Years of Helping People Help the Land*

## Message From Our State Conservationist

All of us will remember 2010...so much was accomplished by our NRCS employees and our partnerships!

A record number of contracts and financial assistance was provided through all Farm Bill Programs across the state. This Farm Bill is making a huge difference in the Oklahoma conservation landscape.

And to top that, we continued to lead the nation in the Watershed Program. Oklahoma had many American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects. Turkey Creek Watershed Dam No. 3, located in Garfield County, was the nation's first watershed ARRA dam to be complete. Chief Dave White was here to help dedicate the completion, and was able to see some of the good work being done through the Watershed Program.

In 2010, several initiatives were offered across the state to address specific resource concerns and provide conservation opportunities. These initiatives included Agricultural Water Enhancement Program Initiative, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative, Eucha/Spavinaw and Illinois River Sub-basin Initiative, No-Till Initiative, Organic Initiative, and the Quail Habitat Restoration Initiative,

I am proud of all the NRCS employees and partners in the state who assist the landowners to deliver conservation on the land. Thank you again for the support and I look forward to another great year in 2011.

Ronald L. Hilliard  
State Conservationist

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program

### Wetlands Reserve Program

Contracts/Easements: 30  
Acres: 5,440  
Financial Assistance: \$6.2 million

Contracts: 1,213  
Acres: 454,057  
Financial Assistance: \$21.6 million

### Grassland Reserve Program

Contracts: 2  
Easements: 2  
Acres: 4,620  
Financial Assistance: \$3.5 million

# Conservation Program Updates

### Agricultural Water Enhancement Program

Contracts: 17  
Acres: 2,708  
Financial Assistance: \$887,005

### Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

Cooperative Agreements: 1  
Acres: 381  
Financial Assistance: \$275,000

### Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

Contracts: 57  
Acres: 19,361  
Financial Assistance: \$793,241

### Conservation Stewardship Program

Contracts: 920  
Acres: 1.1 million  
Financial Assistance: \$19.5 million

### Healthy Forests Reserve Program

Easements: 4  
Acres: 1,517  
Financial Assistance: \$725,610

## EWP Update

In 2010, the Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) completed 16 stream stabilization projects and 14 debris removal projects. These projects were in response to damage done by four different weather events in 2009.

NRCS financial assistance totaled \$1,561,350 and local sponsor in-kind service provided \$724,867.

As a result of the work completed, there were 2,800 feet of stream bank stabilized, 19 bridges protected, and 21,965 feet of debris removed from 72.2 acres watershed drainage areas.

The economic benefit of these projects is estimated to be \$7,508,750.

## Oklahoma ARRA Update

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. Funding was provided to restore frequently flooded land to its natural state, rehabilitate aging watershed structures and establish floodplain easements.

Oklahoma received \$13.45 million for the rehabilitation of seven dams, \$1.45 million for two new watershed construction projects, and \$1.3 million for 17 remedial watershed repair projects.

In 2010, construction was completed on all 17 ARRA remedial watershed repair projects. Of the two new ARRA watershed construction projects, one (Turkey Creek 3) was completed, and construction was started on the other (Turkey Creek 8). Of the seven ARRA rehabilitation projects, construction was completed on one, construction was underway on three, and the remaining three will be under construction in 2011.

The ARRA has proven to be a prime example of what federal, state, and local agencies can accomplish when working in a solid partnership.

## RC&D Update

The Oklahoma Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) is a unique public private partnership whose purpose is to encourage and improve the capability of volunteer, locally elected, and civic leaders in designated RC&D areas to plan and carry out projects for resource conservation and community development.

In 2010, utilizing a federal investment of \$1.12 million through the USDA-NRCS, Oklahoma RC&D areas returned \$9,412,413 back to the state's economy. Each dollar

invested returned more than \$8, due to local, regional, statewide, tribal, federal and private partners:

New Businesses Developed .....	27	Acres Conserved for Recreation.....	17,193
Businesses Retained or Expanded .....	305	Tourism, Historic, Cultural or Museum Sites Enhanced.....	88
Monetary Support for OK Businesses.....	\$3,168,705	Rural Fire and Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Projects ..	18
Value Added Products Assisted to Market.....	65	Community Healthcare Improvements .....	42
Agritourism Venues Opened or Expanded .....	125	Wastewater Systems Improved or Repaired.....	15
On Farm Jobs Created or Retained .....	188	Tribal Nations Working as Project Partners .....	26
Off Farm Jobs Created or Retained.....	188	Dollars Leveraged for Project Completions.....	\$9,412,413

# You're doing fine Oklahoma!

## Oklahoma ARRA Project Makes President's Top 100 List

Sallisaw Creek Watershed Dam No. 18M, recently recognized by the President and Vice President as a top '100 Recovery Act Projects That Are Changing America', was one of only two NRCS ARRA projects in the nation, to make the list.

The dam, a rehabilitation project located in Adair County, was classified as high-hazard due to a 2006 study that showed 24 homes, a church, and a water treatment and pumping facility would be inundated if the dam failed. Rehabilitation of the dam will provide \$20.7 million in flood-reduction benefits over the dam's 100-year life. The lake created by the dam provides 3,000 acre-feet of municipal water storage for the Stilwell Area Development Authority.

The dam will be brought up to current safety standards. The height of the dam will be raised by 3.4 feet and existing spillways will be replaced.

Partners for this project include the Adair County Conservation District, the City of Stilwell, the Stilwell Area Development Authority and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Partner funding for the project is more than \$2.1 million and the federal portion of the cost share is more than \$4.1 million.

## Initiative A Good Fit For Oklahoma

First funded in FY2010, Oklahoma has two Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) areas: the High Plains Ogallala Area (Texas, Cimarron and Beaver counties), and Jackson County Area, (all of Jackson County). Implemented through EQIP, the program provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement practices which will conserve water used in agricultural operations.

AWEP is initiated through agreements with partners, including the High Plains RC&D and Jackson County Conservation District.

Conservation is accomplished in Jackson County by encouraging use of subsurface drip irrigation (also known as micro-irrigation) and improved center pivot technologies that help producers make more efficient use of water. Area producers formed an irrigation district to assure that all members have an equal portion of water for irrigation from Lugert-Altus Lake. In 2005, the district served more than 46,000 acres of cropland. In dry years, producers are allocated less water for irrigation. The producers have always sought ways to make the limited water they get in the leaner years, go further. That is why AWEP fits so well with the goals of Jackson County producers and landowners. In the first year, NRCS obligated \$702,897 in Jackson County, and 2,032 acres were enhanced through the program. District Conservationist Stacy Riley, Altus Field Service Center, reports that more than 75 percent of the funding allocated to Jackson County was in subsurface drip or microirrigation and center pivot irrigation systems.

Using the AWEP program, producer Sam Vinyard installed a micro-irrigation system on the property he manages that is served by the irrigation district, and a center pivot system on the property he manages from well service. Vinyard noticed differences, the most significant being the center pivot leaves corners of the field unproductive, while the drip irrigation allows the whole field to be productive...which is consistent with the goals of the irrigation district.

Vinyard added that drip irrigation has allowed him to extend the use of his allocation of water and helps him significantly reduce wind erosion on his fields because it enables him to use no-till practices. He also gets more from the nutrients he typically sprays on his crops because he can apply them through his drip irrigation system. The nutrients are applied where they will do the most good, near the roots.

Vinyard said, "For me, it is definitely the way of the future, most people who aren't looking at switching to this technology probably are not planning on farming for very long." With the increased interest in micro-irrigation, the NRCS initiated training for engineering staff that will allow them to provide the most current technical advice to producers in the area. It is projected that micro-irrigation technology will be useful across the state.